

*Gaps and Limitations of the Rural Development
Plans of the CEE New Member States*



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**REPORT
on**

***Gaps and Limitations of the Rural Development Plans
of the CEE New Member States***

Warsaw, July 2004

IUCN Programme Office for Central Europe



Halt the loss of biodiversity

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Preface

The Council of Europe and NGOs are calling for a halt to the loss of biodiversity by 2010, and thereby for renewed impetus to achieve the commitments made by the European Union at the Gothenburg Council in June 2001. The goal of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 is the subject of several key international agreements¹. Each recognises the rapid degradation of ecosystems and habitats, the increasing threats to many species populations, and the urgent need to take action to halt the decline in irreplaceable natural resources. The ‘Message from Malahide’², elaborated by a wide coalition of stakeholders, reiterates the need to better integrate environmental concerns into existing EU policies. Improving the sustainability of the use of natural resources and agricultural activities is necessary to reach the targets of the European Union Sustainability Strategy. In Malahide, IUCN – The World Conservation Union, launched the Countdown 2010 Initiative. This initiative invites political actors to embark on monitoring and take action to achieve political commitments by joining forces³.

The European Union’s Rural Development policy is at the heart of these concerns. All powers should be mobilized, especially in the New Member States, to ensure the protection of existing agri-biodiversity leads to the renewal of Europe’s rural areas. In the Declaration of Cáceres, the participants of the Co-operation Forum on Rural Development in an Enlarged Europe⁴ declared that treating Rural Development as an adjunct of agricultural policy was no longer sufficient. From 2007, a European Rural Development Fund should bring together the funding of rural development programmes from EAGGF-Guidance and EAGGF-Guarantee and the Structural Funds, and the European Commission should develop a strategy framework for a coherent European Rural Development Policy matching European, national and regional

¹ A concise overview can be obtained from <http://www.countdown2010.net/conventions/index.html> .

² The Irish EU presidency organised from 25 to 28 May 2004 a stakeholders’ conference to identify policy needs and renewed targets for biodiversity action.

³ More information about the aims and how to join at <http://www.countdown2010.net> .

⁴ Held in the City of Cáceres, Spain, from 2 to 4 June 2004. Over 300 delegates from 20 countries took part in this event, including 50 people for the PREPARE network in all 10 of the new Member States or Accession Countries of Central Europe.

funds, that reflects the typology of rural areas and the Commission's priorities. Additionally, the LEADER programme should be continued to complement these approaches. In a letter to Commissioner Fischler, dating from 7 June 2004, a group of European NGOs⁵ expressed their concern about the options for post-2006 Rural Development set out in the document on Extended Impact Assessment⁶ prepared by the EU Commission. Their key concern is to prevent the Rural Development Pillar from weakening and to ensure sufficient integration of environmental aspects, in order to achieve the EU's Gothenburg commitment to halting biodiversity decline by 2010. Agri-environmental schemes would play a key role, and therefore the agri-environmental programmes should remain compulsory for each Member State. The Good Farming Practice as the minimum requirement for agri-environment and Less Favoured Area (LFA) payments should not be replaced by cross-compliance, and the LFA categories should be re-established according to environmental objectives and targets. In particular, the NGO experts oppose reducing the EU Commission's co-financing rates, since this made Rural Development schemes less appealing for Member States and would overturn decisions reached by the Agriculture Council less than a year ago.

About this report

For the period 2004 – 2006, the new Member States have drawn up their national Rural Development Plans (RDP). The documents contain the envisaged expenditures for measures co-financed by pillar II of the CAP⁷ and payments agreed on the basis of the 'Rural Development' provisions in the Accession Treaties. The RDP therefore substantially influences the development of rural areas in the new Member States.

For the time being, the implementation of the RDP is just beginning and some of the sub-measures proposed under this planning document are delayed and therefore not yet available. However, a close look at the design of the various sub-measures, the preparation of the institutional framework, as well as the available funding possibilities shows the priorities and allows for judgments to be made on the possible effects and uptake of different measures and, ultimately, of the RDP in general.



The following pages present a NGO perspective of the current achievements and bottlenecks connected with the implementation of the Rural Development Plan in 8 Central European new Member States (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia). The displayed results have been gathered by the IUCN Programme Office for Central Europe⁸, Warsaw, by interviewing NGO experts in the new Member States listed above. Most of them are also IUCN members, who have been directly involved in preparing parts of the RDP. All have experience in the field of environmental protection and

⁵ Leading representatives of BirdLife International, WWF, the European Environmental Bureau, IFOAM, Friends of the Earth Europe (FoEE), Greenpeace, and Eurogroup for Animal Welfare signed the letter.

⁶ Extended Impact Assessment: Rural Development Policy: Post-2006. DG Agriculture. 2004.

⁷ The Rural Development Regulation (EC) No.1257/99, amended by Regulation (EC) no. 1783/2003.

⁸ For more information : www.iucn-ce.org.pl, e-mail: central.europe@iucn.org .

are actively involved in training and involving actors in rural areas⁹. The experts' judgment on the status of preparation of the Rural Development Plan (RDP) measures concentrates on those measures which are highly relevant to safeguarding biodiversity-rich countryside and vibrant rural communities.

Their preliminary assessments were guided by the sustainability paradigm and thus attempted to consider possible economic, social and environmental effects of the RDP. The anticipated 'bottlenecks' described in this report might well impede the overall effectiveness of the RDP expenditures. The country experts were asked to consider the following aspects:

- 1) 'Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010' – how will the RDP support the maintenance of agricultural habitats and in particular, of Natura 2000 habitats and species?
- 2) 'Involving stakeholders' – Has this process been adequate and how satisfying has the involvement of NGOs been in the design of the RDP?
- 3) 'Information flow' – how well are farmers informed about the possibilities and requirements of the RDP?
- 4) 'Attractiveness of the RDP' – do the financial incentives of different sub-measures seem adequate to ensure uptake by (especially 'small') farmers?
- 5) 'The RDPs' effects on the sustainable development of rural areas'.

1) „Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – Supporting the maintenance of Natura 2000 habitats and species by RDP finances”

All new Member States have submitted their national lists of potential Natura 2000 territories, which are now awaiting approval by the European Commission. For those habitats under agricultural use, the Rural Development Plan may provide for financial support. The preparation for compensatory payments for land owners or users of Natura 2000 sites is being developed; while some new Member States have already a payment system in place, others have not yet developed advanced solutions. All new Member States plan to make use of pillar II payments to support the management of Natura 2000 sites, but their approaches vary; some new MS include the Natura 2000 sites into their system of Less Favoured Areas (LFA), or foresee specific agri-environmental measures and/or top-ups to already existing agri-environmental measures. However, some approaches lack sufficient funding and/or geographical scope.

In all new Member States, the RDP provides financial instruments to improve environmental standards; the 'meeting EU standards' measure varies in scope – Estonia and Slovenia especially address the demands deriving from the Nitrate Directive and aims to decrease point source pollution from agriculture¹⁰. In Latvia, support under this measure is available for improving manure storage constructions and for the preparation of fertilisation plans (in environmentally vulnerable zones). Less Favoured Areas (LFA) payments and agri-environmental measures can be effective tools to provide financial support to the management of Natura 2000 sites.

⁹ A list of country experts that contributed to this report can be found in the annex to this report.

¹⁰ improvement of animal manure / slurry management. In Estonia, the amount of support is 80 EUR per LU a year, whereas the total amount per applicant cannot exceed 25 000 EUR a year and 75 000 EUR per period. The annual average EU financing support for the years 2005–2006 is EUR 10.8 million, total expenditure 2004–2006 is 40.4 million EUR.

Czech Republic: The Special Areas of Conservation (so called 'bird areas') system of compensation is nearly finished. The financial instruments for the compensation of other Natura 2000 sites under agricultural use are currently being elaborated. In the Czech highlands, the RDP might contribute to developing and maintaining a rich biodiversity, by transforming arable lands to grasslands (the majority of organic farms are situated in these regions). In the lowlands a real danger of biodiversity loss exists, due to a new tendency of intensifying farming activities.

Estonia: A significant share of Estonia's designated Natura 2000 areas consists of semi-natural habitats. From 2005, the agri-environmental programme will provide the measure 'management of semi-natural habitats'¹¹. The MoA currently plans to provide from 2005 additional payments (+15%) for some agri-environmental measures in Natura 2000 areas (environmentally-friendly management scheme¹², organic farming¹³, and the 15% top-up might also be paid for the management of semi-natural habitats¹⁴). The agri-environmental measures further foresee support for local endangered breeds (Estonian cattle and Estonian native horse) and the establishment, restoration and maintenance of landscape elements. However, the final decision about these payments and top-ups has not been made. For an effective maintenance of biodiversity in rural areas, the scope of the above mentioned measures should be broadened. For semi-natural habitats it has to be assured that support for the most valuable habitats is guaranteed.

Hungary: The Hungarian RDP provides measures aiming at the 2010 target of halting biodiversity loss in the EU. The measures focus on the environmental challenges. Priority is given to developing environmentally friendly agriculture, rational land-use, and landscape management. While under the agri-environmental programme the measures 'integrated production' and 'organic production' are implemented horizontally (country-wide), the High Nature Value scheme is restricted to certain zones. Farmers may benefit from supplementary measures as a top-up to agri-environmental measures (e.g. maintenance of rare plant varieties). Some examples of biodiversity related sub-measures are: wetland creation, maintenance of natural wetland habitats, fishponds, endangered breeds in livestock measures, long-term set-aside in HNV areas.



The 'Support of Less Favoured Areas or areas under environmental restrictions' are also an important measure; Natura 2000 sites will overlap with these once they are approved.

The measure Afforestation of agricultural land provides an additional incentive for enhancing the ecological potential of forests and their biodiversity (e.g. indigenous plantations). 'Support of semi-subsistence farms undergoing restructuring' and 'Facilitating compliance with the EU environmental protection, animal welfare and hygienic stan-

¹¹ in 2003, support for management of semi-natural habitats was paid on 18 000 hectares (administered by the MoE). From 2005, the MoA will finance this under the RDP. According to expectations, the area of supported semi-natural habitats will increase from 30 000 ha in 2005 to 40 000 ha in 2006.

¹² expected to be implemented on 5% of Estonian agricultural land.

¹³ in 2003, 4% of Estonian agricultural land was under organic farming.

¹⁴ The restoration of semi-natural habitats is planned to remain financed by national funds administered by the Ministry of Environment, i.e. not using RDP finances.

dards' also can help to halt the loss of biodiversity: by keeping the traditional farming structure, by keeping up with the environmental protection regulations of the EU, reserving the landscape and the contributing to a diverse agriculture.

It is not decided yet whether article 16 for compensatory payments on Natura 2000 sites will be used in Hungary. The RDP states that the opportunity given by article 16 will not be used from the start. Natura 2000 sites – after their approval by the EU Commission- may be included in a later phase after due preparation and communication with the EU. According to the Substitute Under-Secretary of the MoE¹⁵, Laszlo Haraszty, 'we are concentrating on the preparation and the approval of the Natura 2000 sites, the question of who will implement the tasks and from which source can be left for later.'¹⁶

Two options are being discussed: 1) obligatory restrictions for farmers in Natura 2000 areas, using LFA payments for compensation, or 2) let the farmer choose from the given choice of agri-environmental measures for financing the Natura 2000 management. Complementary measures (e.g. protection against erosion) can be used as top-ups for other agri-environmental measures. The second option bears the threat that maintaining Natura 2000 sites on farmland will in the end not be compulsory, since farmers enter agri-environmental measures on a voluntary basis. In conclusion, several direct and indirect schemes are built in the RDP to target biodiversity protection.

Latvia: The Latvian RDP foresees compensatory payments for potential Natura 2000 territories under measure 9.2 of the RDP: 'LFA and Areas with Environmental Restrictions'. The sub-measure 'Areas with Environmental Restrictions' (especially for Natura 2000 sites) shall be implemented from 2005. The compensatory payment is calculated generally without taking into account different environmental conditions of particular sites. The amount of payment for Natura 2000 sites differs, depending if an overlap between different categories of LFA areas occurs – from 38 EUR/ha (if not overlapping) to 26 EUR/ha (if overlapping with 3rd category LFA). Shortcomings:

Firstly, to be eligible for these payments, the farmer has to keep the land in 'good agricultural condition', which means among other things that grass has to be cut and taken off the site before 1 August. This prescription contradicts the management requirements of biologically valuable grasslands in Latvia. Secondly, as explained in the handbook for Single Area Payments¹⁷, payments cannot be granted for those lands, which have not been continuously managed for two years – in Latvia, 60% of valuable grasslands have not been managed for several years. This restriction would exclude the majority of owners of valuable grasslands from accessing the LFA funds, in open contradiction to the Habitats Directive, which requires the maintenance of a favourable conservation status of habitats and species of EU importance.

In theory, the Latvian RDP provides measures (such as agri-environment) favourable for biodiversity protection, but unless these measures (e.g. late mowing) are outlined to farmers, they will not be applied. The amount of money allocated for the intensification of farming is many times exceeding the amount allocated for other methods. Currently about 50% of Latvia's agricultural lands are abandoned, including in some areas up to 80% of the valuable grasslands, – if these grounds will be farmed intensively, the biological diversity will decrease. In some regions (e.g. in Zemgale, a region with rich soils) the available direct payments (production support) pose a threat of overexploiting agricultural lands. For very remote regions, the RDP measures provide a possibility for re-start agricultural produce on lands that

¹⁵ Ministry of Environment and Water

¹⁶ on the "Environmentally friendly farming" open day in the Parliament (21st, May 2004)

¹⁷ can be found on the home page of the Rural Support service (www.lad.gov.lv)

had been abandoned in the middle of the 90ties. The sub-measure 'Preservation of Biodiversity in Grasslands' will provide support for management of these territories.

Lithuania: Environmental restrictions on Natura 2000 areas are included in the measure 'Less-favoured Areas and areas with environmental restrictions'. Thus, it is prohibited to change the land use objective – transforming meadows and pastures into arable land, changing the hydrological regime is therefore forbidden, if the area's protected conditions would worsen. The LFAs are further divided into Less Disadvantaged Areas (LDA) and Highly Disadvantaged Areas (HDA), compensatory allowances will vary from 59 euros in LDA to 79 euros in HDA. Overcompensation will be avoided by restricting the area eligible for the full amount of compensatory allowance to 70 hectares of land. Additional hectares will receive half rate (50%) payments. It seems that the measures prioritising biodiversity conservation and maintenance will not be implemented successfully due to low payments and high requirements. Low payments for valuable meadows and wetlands management cannot guarantee an effective conservation of biodiversity in agricultural habitats; farmers simply may choose more attractive measures.

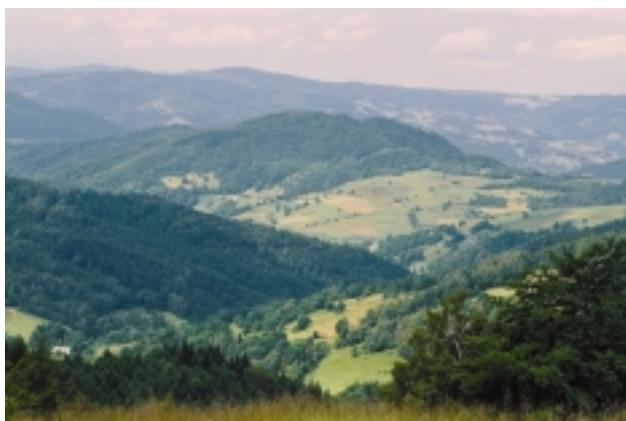
Poland: The Polish RDP does not foresee specific compensation payments for potential Natura 2000 sites under the LFA measure, although some protected areas or potential Natura 2000 sites will be situated on territories eligible for LFA payments. The 3 types of LFAs applied in Poland are: 1) mountain areas from 500 m above sea level and higher 2) lowlands with limitations for agriculture due to environmental conditions and with social problems, and 3) areas with specific problems in sub-mountain region having a high value for tourism. Many protected areas and/or potential Natura 2000 sites have been included into the priority areas for implementing agri-environmental measures – some of them as pilot sensitive areas (the 4 priority sensitive areas all host potential Natura 2000 sites). The priority areas for implementing agri-environmental schemes leave out many important habitats and should be extended considerably. In 2003, when the priority areas were designed, the official authorities had not finished the final list of potential Natura 2000 sites, nor had shadow lists prepared by NGOs. Additionally, the agri-environmental programme received low political priority. Therefore, until lately, no specific support for potential Natura 2000 sites had been planned under the Polish RDP. A proposal from July 2004 is to provide a 20% top-up to all agri-environmental payments (excluding organic farming) for farmers managing potential Natura 2000 sites.

The RDP will give the chance for protecting the biodiversity of rural areas in Poland. In some LFA areas, positive effects on biodiversity can be expected, because the LFA payments might stop land abandonment. Implementing the Code of Usual Good Agricultural Practice as a pre-requisite for LFA and agri-environmental payments will decrease the pressure on the environment deriving from agriculture. But since the implementing period for this plan is rather short, firstly the agri-environmental measures are poorly funded, and secondly the environmental criteria for defining the LFA have been insufficient, the effects of the plan will be minor. Additionally, farmers received too little information as to spark their interest in these rural development measures; not many farmers can be expected to enter the programme in its first year. The biodiversity protection ability of the RDP will thus be little. This being said however, farmers will receive substantial financing (from direct payments and from RDP measures) and will start to use it – a fair share of this money might be used for the

intensification of their agricultural activities¹⁸; decline in biodiversity on (formerly) extensively managed farmlands can be expected.

Slovakia: farmers managing potential Natura 2000 sites can apply for support under the LFA measure (category E). However, this measure will only be available for a few SPAs (protected areas according to the Birds Directive) from 2005. Compensation measures are hence rather weak. Important measures for biodiversity protection are missing (e.g. protection of old animal breeds, and the promotion of good agricultural practice for biodiversity).

Slovenia: To stop the decline in biodiversity, the Slovenian agri-environmental programme (SAEP) receives a decent budget and has, since 2004, 22 different measures from which eligible farmers can choose¹⁹. While most of them are indeed biodiversity-oriented (different habitat protection measures, organic farming etc.), some will have little positive impact on



biodiversity (e.g. the measure 'Integrated production'). Other RDP measures are not directly linked to biodiversity preservation. Some contradictions within the SAEP weaken its ability to protect the existing biodiversity. An increase of agri-environmental payments (for all 22 measures in Slovenia) is foreseen for areas with special nature conservation standards: +20% for agricultural land in national parks, +15% for agricultural land in regional parks, +10% for agricultural land in other protected areas/areas with special nature conservation status, including Natura 2000.

2) „Stakeholder consultation on the planning of Rural Development Plans – too little involvement of civil society.”

The country experts, who contributed to this report, have at varying levels been actively involved in the preparation of the Rural Development Plans in their countries – Being asked about the adequateness of the stakeholder consultation on the RDP design (measures and allocation of funds), all experts expressed that they were dissatisfied with the way civil society (NGO's) had been involved in preparing the plan, with Latvia being the exception to the rule. The perceived shortcomings varied – however it was broadly felt that changes to the RDP have not been announced in due time to allow for genuine consultation, and the opinions of NGO's were not sufficiently reflected by the state institutions preparing the plan.

Czech Republic: Mainly on the level of ministries (MoA, MoE and partly also MoLD²⁰) and their professional institutes the co-operation and consultation process was very fruitful and contributed to the acceptable consensus. At the lower levels of public administration, the

¹⁸ Investing in fertilisers, plant protection chemicals and new and heavy machines can be expected

¹⁹ Slovenia can already build on experiences: as early as 2001 Slovenia started the national agri-environmental programme, at the beginning solely funded from the national budget, therefore making them most progressive country in Europe.

²⁰ Ministry of Local Development

consultation process (by means of special meetings) was seen to be adequate in form and content. However, NGO involvement in this process was insufficient; only some agricultural NGOs like Agricultural Chambers participated.

Estonia: Involved in the consultation process on the design of the Estonian RDP were representatives of farmers' and other organisations connected to agriculture and rural life (e.g. Estonian Farmers Federation, Movement of Estonian Villages and Small Towns 'Kodukant', Estonian Agricultural Producers Central Union) and the Chamber of Estonian Environmental Associations (Eesti Keskkonnaühenduste Koda), which represents 11 Estonian environmental NGOs, had been involved. Beside these, several environmental NGO's and experts were involved in designing the agri-environmental measures. Although several NGO's made their proposals concerning RDP, the involvement of NGO,s in 'every-day' designing process could have been more intensive.

Hungary: Approximately 80 forums were held on the level of Micro regional managers, the County Agrarian Chambers and the Rural Parliament, on which NGOs, local governments and farmers participated. This wide public consultation process started from the 5th draft of the RDP document as a part of the prescribed, formal process by the EU Commission. 8 working groups were set up for each of the measures, to ensure their appropriateness and effectiveness. They held two, quite formal common meetings before the 3rd draft of the RDP was ready. Then the draft was displayed via the ministry web page, which gave 3–4 weeks for comments and recommendations. However, results of this online consultation were not included in the revised document. Although recently the communication between the MoEW²¹ and the MoARD²² improved and NGOs can now send delegates to different governmental committees. It cannot be said that a consultation process is long standing and obvious for governmental officials. Whether NGO opinions have been seriously reflected or just collected to satisfy the legal requirements of stakeholder consultation during the policy making process varies between the different ministries or departments.

Latvia: In 2000, the Advisory Council of Agriculture and Environmental Protection was established by the MoA to supervise the elaboration of legislative acts and policies in field of environmental protection in agricultural lands, as well as for supervising the elaboration and implementation of Agri – environmental measures under SAPARD. The Council consists of representatives from various organisations, such as governmental institutions (MoA and MoE, Agency of Environment of Latvia, Rural support Service) scientific institutions, the Latvian Agricultural Advisory and Training Centre and agricultural and environmental NGOs. This Council was involved in the elaboration of the RDP. Nevertheless, the elaboration of the RDP was not considered transparent enough, the information was not timely presented on the home page of the MoA and in some cases there was not enough time for comments. In general, the involvement of the non-governmental organisations and associations of all agricultural sectors and environmental NGOs in the process of elaboration of RDP was satisfactory.

Lithuania: The most active social and economic partners taking part in the development of this Rural Development Plan were the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Lithuanian Forest Owners Association, Lithuanian Fund for Nature, Farmer's Union, Chamber of Agriculture and others. Among all partners there was

²¹ Ministry of Environment and Water

²² Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

only one environmental NGO- Lithuanian Fund for Nature. Such level of involvement by environmental organisations was insufficient.



Poland: There is no tradition of stakeholder consultation in Poland. The state authorities and NGO's are inexperienced in organising information flow. When starting their preparations on the RDP, the Ministry Office presented the outlines of the Plan on some meetings and seminars, but the information was vague and not broadly disseminated. Few stakeholders were present at those meetings, their consulting role not having been made clear. The main consultations about the scope of the RDP happened between the MoA+RD and the ARMA²³, the

National Advisory Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development (main advisory institution), the Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture, and research institutes working on agriculture and rural development issues. During this phase environmental NGOs were not invited to participate. From the first draft of the RDP in October 2002 onwards, all subsequent main versions of the RDP have been put on the Ministry website, but displaying the Plan on the Ministry website was the only 'consultative' action undertaken. General or detailed information about the process of consultation was not provided – nor was indicated if someone would incorporate comments made, or at which date and to whom these would have to be sent. To consult the documents therefore was only possible for a very limited highly informed group of individuals with Internet access. Finally, the Ministry Office send out the document of the Plan to some organisations, asking them for comments – but the time frame was very short and for many organisations commenting on the RDP with its diverse issues was not possible. Some of them commented only on parts of the document, e.g. individual measures of the agri-environmental programme.

Consultation on the agri-environmental programme took place, however not every case involving NGO's: The scope of the agri-environmental programme differed in almost each draft of the RDP, the latest written documents not easily accessible for NGOs to comment on them. When in the summer of 2003 some NGOs became aware that the agri-environmental programme would be significantly reduced – from 14 measures down to only 5 – they organised a protest and strong lobbying activities for changing this decision, especially for re-including the 4 most valuable packages for biodiversity protection. More than 40 organisations took part in this protest, which thanks to having been supported by the European Commission and other big international organisations succeeded; the Ministry changed its decision and re-included some of the formerly deleted schemes.

Slovakia: Very little NGO involvement.

Slovenia: Stakeholder consultation did involve some NGOs, but NGO input was rather limited, with the exception of Slovenian Rural Development Network that focused mostly on social and economic issues. Few environmental NGOs were invited and also the input of those was rather meagre. Even out of the few that have been invited not all of them participated, which shows lack of capacity, lack of awareness of the importance of RDP and perhaps also some lack of interest of environmental NGOs.

²³ and Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture (future paying agency)

3) „How well are farmers informed about the possibilities and requirements of the Rural Development Plan?”

Informing the farming community about the financial opportunities and preparing them for the requirements deriving from RDP, are the determining factors for the uptake of RDP measures. Generally, the NGO experts who were interviewed said that communication needs to be improved, especially for those measures related to rural development (pillar II) – payments related to an increase and intensification of agricultural production have been more strongly promoted by the Ministries of Agriculture.

How well are farmers in your country informed about the possibilities and requirements of the Rural Development Plan?								
	CZ	EE	HU	LV	LT	PL	SK	SI
Very good								
Sufficient								X
More or less sufficient	X					X		
Unlikely to be sufficient		X		X	X		X	
Definitely insufficient			X					
Don't know								

Czech Republic: After minor ‘starting problems’ it is supposed that the existing administrative staff will be able to inform farmers about the different measures of the rural development programme and manage their access to them.

Estonia: Information was made available only on a general level (e.g. through newspapers, TV etc). There had been a few information activities, like trainings for farmers about detailed requirements, application procedures etc. Special information days on agri-environmental measures took place, where other area payments were briefly introduced to farmers, but in general the number of information days were insufficient. An important tool for dissemination of information is the paying agency’s (ARIB) newspaper, which is periodically sent to all farmers who have applied for different kinds of support. The guidelines for applicants are further available in printed version and downloadable from the web page of ARIB.

Hungary: Problems to obtain the RDP document, even upon request, and information was only shared from the day of the plan’s approval onwards. According to the communication strategy defined in the RDP, the public must have access to all documents after the submission of the plan; currently²⁴, the 14th draft of the RDP is examined by the EU Commission, while the website of the MoA&RD has the 13th version without any annexes. During public consultations (social reconciliation) it was expressed that there is a huge lack of information available for stakeholders and potential beneficiaries (for people interested in the possibilities deriving from the RDP). The existing advisory system is a network of appointed officials – local experts with direct connection to the ministries, who receive first hand information. For the wider public, including the farming community, information seems to be kept to a minimum. The disadvantage of such information policies illustrates in the following example: Hungarian farmers had the option to choose between opting for the new support

²⁴ information as of 15 June 2004.

system (different agri-environmental measures under the RDP) and staying in the previous system (National Agro-environment Programme). The vast majority of farmers (90%) gave up the old system, because they were not well-enough informed that even if they stayed in the old system, they could switch to the new support once the RDP has been approved. Currently farmers are without any compensation. Provisionally the new program can start in September 2004, and even if there are talks about a possible compensation for this period, the money is still not in the farmers' pockets. A more consultative approach would have prevented this unpleasant situation.

Latvia: The Rural Development Plan is a rather complicated document, which requires even from the experienced reader an effort to understand its implications when reading it. Many farmers lack the capacity to study the plan themselves. Thus, they have to rely on information provided by the responsible agencies. The information to Latvian farmers was poor and fragmented, because the elaboration of RDP was only finished at the beginning of May 2004. The level of competence of the Paying Agency (Rural Support Service) is in many cases very low and the staff working there is not able to provide farmers with competent advice on support payments. Although the farming community had shown great interest in the rural development measures, there was no precise information on the possibilities and requirements for applying for different measures. Information was given on how to generally register for subsidies – all willing farmers were urged to fill in preliminary registration forms and to submit within a period of 5 months all requested documents to the local offices of the Rural Support Service (Paying Agency). Farmers received some information through mass media (newspapers, TV, radio). Statistics show that only half of the 140,800 economically active farms have fulfilled all formalities and will be able to receive payments (on roughly 1.6 mil ha UAA)²⁵. As for payments for biological (organic) farming and biologically valuable grasslands, farmers are not well informed about them and these two measures are often confused. The campaign on how to apply for Single Area and LFA Payments was carried out by the Ministry, informing farmers about requirements to receive these payments (but excluded information on agri-environmental measures that have different requirements). As the result – farmers were more or less informed about payments for intensive farming, but not well informed about other measures.

Lithuania: Between the different regions (counties) of Lithuania, the quality of information spread varies. While in some counties farmers are well informed about SAPARD (in pilot areas) and RDP measures, in other counties farmers do not receive sufficient information on the possibilities and requirements. The information strategy and the Plan are prepared separately by the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Paying Agency, which results in an insufficient promotion of RDP measures. The resulting poor information can exemplarily be seen in the fact that the Ministry of Agriculture had to prolong the application procedures for direct payments for crops and lately started intensively promoting the measures, since they observed that farmers did not apply as actively as expected.

Poland: The information provided for farmers by the authorities and advisory bodies was oriented to direct payments. The big information campaign strongly supported by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development was organised to push farmers to submit their

²⁵ Approximately 80,400 farmers (57% of all economically active farms) filled in the preliminary registration forms. They own or use 1.834 million hectares UAA. About 87% of these farmers will be eligible for RDP payments (about 49.6 % of all economically active farms in Latvia).

applications for direct payments to the paying agency. No similar information campaign was organised to inform farmers about other measures – within the RDP or the SOP²⁶.

Slovakia: There was no information campaign about the financial opportunities of pillar II measures.

Slovenia: The agricultural chamber disseminated information and publications on the different RDP measures quite well at the basic level; however it was much more difficult to obtain adequate detailed information. In addition, not all the farmers are active enough to benefit.

4) „Attractive packages and adequate administrative support as prerequisites to ensure sufficient uptake of Rural Development measures”



Small farmers²⁷ play an important role for safeguarding biodiversity, because of their generally low intensity farming methods and the rich mosaic of habitats they maintain. Crop and area related payments create substantial benefits for especially bigger farms. Small farms can receive vital support from Rural Development measures, if the measures are designed in such a way as to provide adequate financial incentives. In the new Member States, support for semi-subsistence farms is an important measure to support the land stewardship function of

farmers. Farmers, as the potential beneficiaries of the RDP measures, can take up the designed measures on a voluntary basis. The smaller the farm, the more important it is that advisory agencies provide detailed information about the opportunities deriving from the RDP. The foreseen RDP measures do not in all cases provide sufficient incentives to assure their uptake by small farmers.

Czech Republic: The application procedure is very complicated and not easily understood by the ‘small farmer’. To find out about the requirements for using the financial incentives a professional consulting aid is absolutely necessary.

Estonia: The planned payment rates under the RDP are slightly higher and therefore more attractive for farmers, if compared to payments, which were available from national funds before. However, this is not the case for all measures. The requirement of assuring 5-years contracts (in the case of agri-environmental and LFA measures) is hampering farmer’s interest

²⁶ Sectoral Operational Programme on Agriculture and Rural Development.

²⁷ The term ‘small farmer’ is not an exact category and it will vary in different EU Member States. But it can broadly be used to describe an agricultural holding that employs a small number of farm workers (normally family members), who are fulfilling various different tasks on the farm with little degree of specialisation, utilising a modest agricultural area. In particular, a ‘small’ farmer cannot afford to hire a full-time office consultant, nor does he possess the ability to spend a substantial part of his working time on paper works. A small farm is entitled to comparatively small financial support; hence it is not worthwhile to invest much time on checking possibilities for financial support.

in them, as the payment rate that is proposed to them when entering the contract probably will not be sufficient in 5 years. Furthermore it is difficult to for the farmers to get 5-years land use contracts. The support rates for the measure 'Meeting standards' are quite low compared to the high investment needs necessary to meet environmental standards. In comparison with many other new Member States, the foreseen payment rates for similar measures in Estonia are rather low.

There are approximately 34 thousand semi-subsistence farms in Estonia. The RDP provides measures that could indirectly support the existence of small-scale farms, but the general application procedure is complicated and does not encourage farmers to apply, especially if they just own a few hectares. Although the financial incentive is a key factor for the measures' uptake, several other factors (application procedures, availability of information, training and advisory services) must also be stressed. In Estonia, the lack of information could be the most important constraint for uptake. Farmers (especially smaller ones) are also often afraid of bureaucracy connected with applying for support. As modulation or maximum payment levels per applicant are not implemented in Estonia, implementation might be more attractive for bigger farms.

Comparison of Rural Development Plans in 8 CEE countries²⁸

According to preliminary figures, the chosen priorities under the new Rural Development instruments seem more balanced than under SAPARD, but are still disappointing. **Only about 13% of all Rural Development funds** under the two new instruments are planned to be spent on **Agri-Environmental Programmes** (compared to 27% in the EU-15). This needs to be radically improved in the next period.

The table shows preliminary financial allocations for individual measures within the RDPs only (not the programmes under Structural Funds). Only about 18% of all RDP funds in the region are foreseen for agri-environment. There will be, however, big differences between the priorities chosen in various countries. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia probably will not shift any money back to the first pillar and seem willing to spend between a third and a half of RDP funds on Agri-Environmental Programmes. The Czech Republic in particular plans to use almost the whole RDP for agri-environment and Less Favoured Area payments. On the other end of the spectrum, Poland and Lithuania will shift as much money as possible (20%) back to the first pillar and use most of the remainder for measures aimed at "restructuring and modernisation" of their farming sector. They plan to spend at most 10% of RDP funds on Agri-Environmental Programmes.

Preliminary structure of Rural Development Plans in CEE-8 for 2004-06

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Hungary	Czech	Slovakia	TOTAL (CEE 7)
Shift-back to the 1st pillar	14%	9%	20%	20%	0%	0%	19%	15%
Less Favoured Areas	18%	54%	24%	27%	11%	45%	47%	30%
Agri-Environmental Prog.	30%	8%	10%	10%	41%	49%	15%	18%
Afforestation of farmland	6%	0%	4%	3%	3%	3%	1%	3%
Early retirement of farmers	0%	2%	23%	18%	11%	1%	0%	13%
Meeting EU standards	22%	18%	13%	7%	23%	0%	5%	9%
Semi-subsistence farming	7%	8%	5%	10%	5%	0%	1%	7%
Setting up producer groups	0%	1%	0%	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Technical assistance	2%	1%	1%	1%	5%	1%	3%	2%

Source: Friends of the Earth Europe, 2004. *EU Enlargement and Agriculture: Risks and Opportunities*.

²⁸ This excerpt is taken from the publication Friends of the Earth Europe, 2004. *EU Enlargement and Agriculture: Risks and Opportunities*. (to be published soon)
<http://www.foeeurope.org/publications/> (forthcoming)

Source: Friends of the Earth Europe, 2004. *EU Enlargement and Agriculture: Risks and Opportunities*.

Hungary: The 'Support for semi subsistence farms undergoing restructuring' measure is especially targeting the typical obstacles 'small' farms have to face. However, the eligibility criteria states that it can be used for 5–10 ha farm size and that '*Basically, the farmers whose applications will be assessed favourably will be those who already have the required production tools and a minimum level of knowledge of professional know-how and who have already taken the first step towards market-oriented production, but presently lack some other conditions for professional or business development.*'²⁸

Those, who are smaller, can make use of the measure 'Supporting the establishment and administrative operation of producer groups'. They can alternatively benefit from Agri-environment measures (where the size for eligibility can be 0,5 ha under certain conditions and/or locations).

Latvia: There are no financial incentives targeted especially at small-scale farmers. The payments, if summarized for different measures (e.g. Single Area Payments + LFA+ Natura 2000 payments + valuable grasslands payments) come up to ca 230 EUR/ha that sometimes is considered to be good money for small-scale farmers. At the same time, the expenses of maintaining biologically valuable grasslands exceed significantly the expenses of maintaining cultivated grasslands (more complicated conditions, with wet areas and complicated relief) and the income from products (e.g. hay) is insignificant due to the low quality of hay. If a farmer wants to maintain biologically valuable grassland, often 230 EUR/ha is not even enough to do simply this.

The RDP's general aim to support the diversification of activities is expected to ensure higher flexibility in agricultural markets and to ensure a stable level of income, thus supporting also small-scale farming. The measures 'Diversification of Rural Economy' (Single Programming Document, Priority 4) and 'Support for Semi-subsistence Farms' are being implemented with a view to encouraging this process. The commercial development of farming and increasing the income of at least 30% of existing semi-subsistence farms is envisaged. Statistics show that approximately 70 000 farmers have signed agreements to fulfil obligations and receive payments²⁹.

Lithuania: The payments for different RDP schemes, especially agri-environmental measures, do not present a real incentive for farmers to ensure their implementation: the payments for the 'organic farming scheme' vary from 29 to 232 EUR/ha, the 'rare breeds scheme' – 29 to 506.85 EUR/ha. For the measure 'management of meadows', only 64 EUR/ha are foreseen and for the 'management of wetlands and marshes' 101 EUR/ha. Such low payments do not encourage farmers to participate in the measures. These incentives are half of the amount originally proposed by the LGF³⁰.

Poland: Eligible farmers can take up all RDP measures on a voluntary basis. Whether they participate in their implementation will therefore depend on the attractiveness of individual

²⁸ This excerpt is taken from the publication Friends of the Earth Europe, 2004. *EU Enlargement and Agriculture: Risks and Opportunities*. (to be published soon) <http://www.foeeurope.org/publications/> (forthcoming)

²⁹ Approximately 80,400 farms from a total of 140,800 economically active farms (owning or using 1.834 million ha UAA) filled in preliminary registration forms. Of these about 87 per cent (70,000 farmers) have signed RDP agreements.

³⁰ Lithuanian Fund for Nature, Environmental NGO involved in the preparation of the RDP, proposed payments should amount to approximately 200 euros for wetlands management and 130 euros for meadows management.

measures (preliminary and permanent requirements in comparison with expected financial compensation). In the Polish RDP, the proposed financial sources for all measures are rather modest, but some can be interesting for farmers and provide real support for them. For small farmers, the LFA measures and agri-environmental measures are of great importance, but to be eligible for e.g. agri-environmental measures, most farmers will have to undertake extra efforts to fulfil the eligibility criteria³¹.

Slovenia: For very small farmers and ageing farmers it is not very appealing to join the RD³² programme and implement different measures, because the required administrative work which is seen to surpass the current financial benefits. The simplified unified form for all agricultural payments introduced in 2003 has somewhat improved this situation. The farmers' interest in the measures depends on the type of measure they are eligible for and the related payment; for instance, for a very small organic farm (up to 5 ha) with grassland, per area payment may seem less attractive than for a larger farm. Another obstacle is the absence of formal renting contracts; the farmers can only get payments for the land they have contracted officially (written contract), which is in Slovenia often not the case.

5) „The Rural Development Plans' contribution to the sustainable development of Europe's rural areas”



The Rural Development Plan covers an implementation period of 3 years (2004–2006), some of the planned measures will only be available with a delay from 2005 onwards. This limits the effects the financial incentives can have on a sustainable development of rural areas. The RDP is one policy instrument that has to be complemented by other financing tools, to ensure the appropriate long-term development of rural areas. It is necessary that the objectives of the RDP also be integrated into the funding priorities of other programmes, in particular the

Sectoral Operational Programmes (SOP) on Agriculture and Rural Development and in national support for other investments. The concepts of agri-environmental measures and LFA schemes can safeguard the sustainability of rural areas, although in most countries their scope and funding should be improved. The RDP measures will only bear significant effects, if farmers see them as real support. To achieve this, in many new Member States improvements need to be made. There is still a danger of a decline in biodiversity and a depopulation of rural areas, since the amount of money allocated for intensification of farming exceeds in many new Member States the amount allocated for environmentally friendly and socially sound methods.

Estonia: Among other objectives, the Estonian RDP aims to increase agricultural producers' interest in sustainable use of environment, including introduction of more environmentally

³¹ E.g. drawing up farm management plans which have to be approved by nature conservation authorities to be eligible for agri-environment payments in Natura 2000 areas.

³² Rural Development

friendly technologies and techniques, maintaining biological diversity and natural landscapes. The Strategic Environmental Assessment of the plan states that environmental impact of RDP measures is positive or neutral, additionally impact of direct support and top-up can have negative impact on waters in some regions. Measures like LFA and the Semi-subsistence farm measure contribute also towards the sustainability of marginal areas and small-scale farming- both are very important for safeguarding the sustainability of rural areas.

Hungary: The general objective of the Hungarian RDP is to facilitate the sustainable development of rural areas, promote multifunctional environmentally aware farming and improve employment and income-earning conditions, in order to extend the population-retention power of rural regions.

The national Agro-environment Programme, operating from 1999-2000 gave the basis for the agri-environment measures in the RDP, and was drafted after profound scientific surveys. Following these, the whole territory of the country was divided into zones of environmental sensitivity. The agro-ecological potential of Hungary thus was drawn up, naming the potentially best agriculture practices for the different zones, considering the long-term viability³³. However, the National Development Plan (NDP) and its Sectoral Operational Programme for Agricultural and Rural Development (SOP ARD), which was intended to form the basis for the RDP, viewed sustainability from the economic aspect. The two documents (SOP ARD and the RDP) should have the same driving force and strong relations in their objectives. Only by political commitment can one be assured that the financial resources are being allocated in such a way as to safeguard the sustainable development of rural areas.

Latvia: For some regions with rich soils that are located near large cities overexploitation of agricultural land might occur. Whereas in remote regions there will be no farmers available to take care of the land; land abandonment might lead to habitat loss. As payments do not differ substantially among different regions, the amount of payment in many cases will be too small to avoid changes in land use (e.g. from agriculture to building of private houses). Positive effects will come from payments under the Less Favoured Areas and Areas with Environmental Restrictions” measure, however they may not be sufficient to return people to depopulated rural areas.

Lithuania: The Commission has criticised the Lithuanian MoA, since the Agri-Environmental Programme provides with its very limited number of (four) horizontal measures only a few tools to address the environmental problems and risks of Lithuania’s rural areas. For the next programming round (2007-2013) this policy area needs further development. Even though the sustainable development is one of the RDP priorities, the ways of achieving this target are as currently inadequate.

Poland: The Polish RDP will not guarantee a sustainable development of rural areas as the real priorities when drawing up the plan differed from the formally stated priorities; most important RDP measures, such as agri-environmental schemes, have a very limited scope and financing.

Slovakia: RDP has just started. Its effectiveness to contribute to a sustainable rural development is however viewed rather sceptically.

³³ The scientific report showed, that 1/3 of the cultivated land should be changed in the means of farming practices, mainly from intensive arable land to more extensive farming systems

Slovenia: Unfortunately, the Slovenian RDP is not considered to lead to a sustainable rural development. A good budget for LFA and agri-environmental measures is accompanied by a very weak and insufficient budget for structural measures. To guarantee a sustainable development, they must be complementary. The RDP also still hosts some inner contradictions. A major weakness is for example that the compensatory payments within agri-environmental measures can be combined in such a way that in the end organic farmers receive less support than their colleagues pursuing integrated production with lesser restrictions. This could discredit the agri-environmental programme as a whole, as discussions with many farmers have shown.

Conclusion

The NGO experts who contributed to this report are united in their view that the effects of the Rural Development Plan on a sustainable development of rural areas will be minor. This is partly due to the short implementation period and weak funding. In many cases, the responsible authorities seem to lack sufficient understanding of the importance the aims of the CAP's pillar II have for people and environment in rural areas. In regard to the Community's aim to halt the biodiversity loss by 2010, and the current discussions on financing Natura 2000, Agri-environmental measures and Less Favoured Areas play a significant role for achieving the sound commitments.

All powers should be mobilised, especially in the new Member States, which host valuable nature assets and a high agri-biodiversity, which needs conscientious support now. The current Rural Development policy needs a wider scope and allocation of funds to lay the track for the sustainable development of rural areas.

Lacking the understanding for the importance of Rural Development measures might also be the underlying course for the delay in the preparation and implementation of pillar II measures. Although the Accession Day was originally planned to take place much earlier and, after moving it twice, was finally agreed to be May 1st, 2004, the measures are still not fully implemented, nor finally agreed between the European Commission and the new Member States. The question remains whether the communication between the European Commission and the national levels needs to be improved.

The European Economic and Social Committee stated in its opinion on 'Appropriate environmental technologies', adopted 31 March 2004, that there is a need for appropriate rural solutions and that '[...] in every single case, solutions have to be sought which are geared not only to technical feasibility and technical effectiveness but also pay close attention to the local situation and the situation of local people. [...]'³⁴ Many small investments into rural areas are currently not undertaken due to a lack of flexibility in administering them; many new Member States lack the financial and administrative capacity. Since the money or staff time to co-fund small local initiatives has tight limits, a tendency towards realising few but big investments can be observed. To avoid a weakening of rural areas, stronger investments into the existing infrastructure of small and medium sized enterprises, including small farming enterprises, is needed.

³⁴ Cited from paragraph 2.2, EESC, NAT/203, Appropriate environmental technologies. Brussels, 31 March 2004.

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Agricultural engineer and geographer by training, the contact person undertook in the past research in agriculture, rural space and environment. Since 1993, NGO activities in rural development, water management and sustainable agriculture.

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CEET 's main activities are connected to agri-environment and organic farming. The NGO participated in the preparation of the Estonian agri-environmental programme, including the preparation and implementation of nationally funded agri-environmental pilot projects, and was also participating in the preparation of different agri-environmental measures of the Estonian Rural Development Plan.

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The contact person coordinates the agri-environment Working Group at the CEEWEB policy office. Participated at the Agriculture and Environment Advisory Group meeting of the EU Commission, discussing the Extended impact assessment: Rural Development policy post 2006 document on policy issues prepared by the EU Commission. Also involved in the ad hoc working group on the BAP³⁵ on Agriculture.

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The Latvian Fund for Nature (LDF) is a member of the Advisory Council of Agriculture and Environmental Protection. It was a partner of the Ministry of Agriculture in the preparation of agri-environment to be implemented under SAPARD and established the basis for further programming of this measure under Rural Development Plan.

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³⁵ Biodiversity Action Plan

The Lithuanian Fund for Nature is an NGO working on environmental policy and management, nature protection and site management, agriculture and rural development, as well as ecological education. The contact persons' main fields of activities are the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and agri-environmental programmes. Currently they implement the project "Strengthening capacity for Agri-environmental Programming and Implementation in Lithuania" together with experts from the Netherlands.

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The contact person was involved in the preparation of the RDP in different stages; since 2000 regular participation in preparatory seminars for the national Agri-Environmental Plan, commenting some of its versions, also giving lectures and preparing articles to disseminate information about the plans. In 2003, she was the co-ordinator and co-author of the *Ex-ante* Evaluation of the RDP, prepared by the Institute for Sustainable Development.

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The non-governmental Living Planet civic association prepared the first version of the Slovakian agri-environmental programme (1998-2001), which was after delivery to the MoA partly included into the RDP. No further involvement in the preparation of the RDP. The contact person is currently developing new methods for the evaluation of the ecological stability of rural countrysides.

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The Institute for Sustainable Development is a private non-profit institute active in research and development projects in the fields of organic farming and sustainable rural development; in the past it prepared proposals and comments for/on the RDP, also involved in some working groups established by the Slovenian MoA for the preparation of detailed proposals for RDP measures, lobbied for some national RDP measures at EU level. Good Cooperation with the Slovenian organic farmers' umbrella (USOFA).

IUCN wants to express its gratitude to the above listed experts and to Mr Martin Konecny, Friends of the Earth Europe, for generously supplying the table on page 13.

IUCN – THE WORLD CONSERVATION UNION

Founded in 1948, The World Conservation Union brings together states, government agencies, and a diverse range of non-governmental organisations in a unique worldwide partnership; over 1000 members in all, spread across some 140 countries.

As a union, IUCN seeks to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

The World Conservation Union builds on the strengths of its members, networks and partners to enhance their capacity and to support global alliances to safeguard natural resources at local, regional and global levels.

EUROPEAN PROGRAMME 2005–2008

The IUCN European Programme mission is to contribute to a sustainable Europe by influencing policy development and implementation for biodiversity and landscape conservation, restoration and sustainable use inside and outside Europe. In practical terms, the mission translates into the following objectives:

Supporting the Union in Europe and the EU – Improved support framework for the global work of IUCN through the EU and other European partners; improved European membership services, including capacity building

Understanding the main drivers of biodiversity change – Improved knowledge of biodiversity change and effective conservation measures at landscape, ecosystem, habitat and species levels

Financing nature conservation – Efficient incentive frameworks for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use are available and understood

Linking education, science, policy and practice – National and supranational (EU) policies, multilateral agreements, processes and institutions are more supportive of biodiversity conservation and ecologically sustainable use

Managing our natural heritage – Ecosystems are managed in a sustainable manner, reconciling social, economic and biodiversity objectives

The European Programme seeks to make IUCN's voice heard through providing authoritative information and policy products, whilst applying the expertise in the European constituency of IUCN. These will be the result of integrating the diverse expertise of the Commissions, members and the worldwide IUCN secretariat to address the key drivers of biodiversity loss. The IUCN European Programme provides the platform for bringing the expertise together, coordinating development of the products and obtaining financial resources.

Countdown 2010

'Countdown 2010' is an initiative of IUCN, its members and partners to raise awareness on biodiversity and to monitor the progress of a unique political commitment by all EU heads of State, and the pan-European Environment Ministers to 'halt the loss of biodiversity in Europe by 2010'. This ambitious goal forms a part of the EU Sustainability Strategy, and was reinforced by the 5th Environment for Europe conference in 2003.

The IUCN Programme Office for Central Europe – current fields of activities

The IUCN Programme Office in Warsaw has a ten years experience in providing information on current topics related to biodiversity management. The office's expertise in compiling and disseminating information to key societal actors currently serves four major fields of activities:

- Ecological Networks – development of the ecological network in Ukraine. Uniting world experience to support a Global ECONET
- Agriculture – integrating environmental and consumer organisations of the CE region into the discussion of the European agricultural policy reform, and Integrating biodiversity protection concerns into the development of rural areas by linking instruments of the future Natura 2000 sites with Rural Development Plans in the CE region
- Forestry – raising awareness and building capacity among private forest owners in the CE region, developing nature conservation guidelines for afforestation projects
- Fishery – sustainable management of fresh-water fisheries in 19 countries of Central and Eastern Europe

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