



Workshop on “Implementation of biodiversity monitoring requirements according requirements to the Habitats Directive in the EU Member States”

3-4 March Sigulda, LATVIA

FINAL REPORT

Opening and introduction, by Ms. Heidrun Fammler, IK “Heidrun Fammler”

Ms. Fammler welcomed the participants and highlighted that biodiversity monitoring issues were raised and partly discussed in many of previous BEF seminars. During these seminars participants stressed that there is a need to discuss biodiversity monitoring issues in a separate event. Further she introduced the goals of the event and gave an overview on the participants of the seminar.

Ms. Fammler introduced to the participants the project “Implementation of the Biodiversity monitoring requirements in accordance with the EU Birds and Habitats Directives through facilitation cooperation and stakeholders networking in the Baltic States” and informed about the main donor of the project – Phare Cross Border Cooperation Program.

SESSION I NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EU MEMBER STATES ON MONITORING AND REPORTING OF CONSERVATION STATUS DERIVING FROM THE HABITATS DIRECTIVE.

Reporting for the Habitats Directive – the proposed reporting format by Mr. Doug Evans, European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity (*for the handouts, please see the seminar folder*)

Mr. Evans gave an overview on implementation of Natura 2000 in the EU Member States. He pointed out the current status of Natura 2000 designation in the Baltic States (in Estonia 16%, Latvia 13% and Lithuania 2% of national territory is covered by Natura 2000 sites).

Further he introduced the communication process on monitoring issues within the EU institutions. There have been several meetings of the scientific working group, which has discussed conservation status assessment and the reporting according to the Habitats Directive. The proposals, derived from these discussions were given to EU Member States for commenting. First comments have been already received and discussed within the scientific working group. Mr. Evans informed that although the

Habitats Committee voted against accepting the document, the received comments show that the general ideas are agreed.

Mr. Evans stressed that European Commission will provide guidance on conservation status assessment, however common standard for implementation of monitoring within the EU will not be set up. Therefore implementation of biodiversity monitoring is up to each Member State.

One of the key-discussions issues in the process is definition of favourable conservation status (FCS). Mr. Evans admitted that the common agreement of FCS is not reached however, the principle is clear – “long term survival assured”.

Mr. Evans informed that there would not be a special requirement to report on “typical species”, there is a suggestion to include it in the reporting part “structure and function”.

Further Mr. Evans illustrated the foreseen challenges to assess the conservation status. One of them is related to the time periods which are measured and taken for interpretation. The statement on the assessment of threats and conservation status depends a lot on what are the trend periods on which are assessed. The other challenge is interpretation of the species/habitats natural range, which is not defined in the Habitats Directive. Natural range occurs to be dynamic and often does not correspond to the historical and potential range. It is more complex to define natural range of vagrant species.

For some species defining favourable reference values is problematic as demands a lot of biological knowledge..

Further Mr. Evans concentrated on the reporting format for the Habitats Directive. He introduced to the reporting requirements and presented the main categories for the assessment: favourable, unfavourable-inadequate, unfavourable-bad, unknown. The assessment matrix was introduced, Mr. Evans stressed that it is very complicated to define unfavourable-inadequate status. Regarding the reporting format for the Birds Directive, Mr Evans informed that such is not developed yet, and even draft proposal is not available also. It is not foreseen to develop the reporting format for the birds species in the nearest future.

Mr. Evans informed participants that the guidance document, is under preparation. The aim of this document is to help to fill in the reporting format. The document will be developed based on the practical examples. There are plans to put the document on Internet therefore this will give a possibility to update it regularly.

During the discussion the issue on assessment of the conservations status in the transboundary regions was raised. Mr. Evans explained that in transboundary case, the assessment should be done by the countries of the region together; however the reporting to the EC should be done by each country individually. The complexity of the assessment in the transboundary region was illustrated with an example on Estonian-Latvian bear population. Most of the population is located in Estonia however some “visitors” from the population regularly come to Latvia (depending on the year, amount of inhibits coming to Latvia vary between 1 and 10). In this case, it is very difficult to assess the favourable conservation status for bear population in Latvia; therefore the assessment of whole population in the transboundary context is crucial.

Regarding the common standards for the biodiversity monitoring in all EU Member States, Mr. Evans pointed out that such harmonization of methods would be very difficult and most likely would not be accepted on the political level.

Participants have also discussed the availability of data for the reporting and use of best expert opinion in case of insufficient amount of real data are gathered. It was

recognized that the best expert opinion approach is the cheapest option and in many cases quite objective. It was admitted that there is a possibility of misinterpretation of data. However since the reporting results will be examined and compared between the neighbouring countries, this will help to avoid the most of misinterpretation. During the discussion on the availability of data it was stressed that a lot of data can be used for monitoring, which was gathered for other purposes.

SESSION II OLD AND NEW EU MEMBER STATES BIODIVERSITY MONITORING SYSTEMS AND THEIR COMPATIBILITY WITH THE EU REPORTING REQUIREMENTS DERIVING FROM THE HABITATS DIRECTIVE

Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting experience related to requirements of the Habitats Directive in the UK by Mr. James Williams Joint nature Conservation Committee (*for the handouts, please see the seminar folder*)

Mr. Williams gave an overview on the biodiversity monitoring system in the UK. He informed that there is a lot of data gathered to fulfill different international requirements as well as to serve the UK needs. Further he introduced the principles of the common standards monitoring system (CSM). The data gathered for implementation of this system is used for judgment-based assessment of feature condition. It is implemented in 6 years cycle and serves as early warning system to address the management needs of national and international protected sites. Based on the monitoring results, the features assessment leads to different conclusions of species/habitats condition: favourable-maintained, favourable-recovered, unfavourable-declining, unfavourable-recovering, unfavourable-no change and destroyed. In this case favourable condition has a different meaning as favourable conservation status (FCS) described in the Habitats Directive. CSM assessment defines the state of the features on a site at a point of time and it does not include the forward prognosis as it is done to assess favourable conservation status. The other key-difference from FCS is that CSM covers only designated sites and it does not include the assessment of status outside protected areas. For the assessment of FCS there is a need to include the information from other monitoring schemes. Mr. Williams stressed that CSM is a very good tool for practical assessment of management needs of the protected areas.

Further Mr. Williams illustrated with practical examples the assessment of conservation status to fulfil the reporting needs for the Habitats Directive using the CSM data. He stressed that assessment based on the CSM data assess only part of the existing species/habitat area. To balance the assessment of the conservation status of species/habitats in the whole country is very challenging since there is no detailed monitoring data outside protected areas where the proportion of occurring species/habitats is quite high (in the illustrated examples up to 50% of species/habitats was occurring outside protected areas).

Mr. Williams foresees that for reporting on conservation status assessment there will be a lot of cases of unfavourable condition, however he stressed that European Commission does not expects to see favourable condition at the first time but rather is willing to be informed about what the measures the member states are taking to reach the favourable condition.

Mr. Williams concluded that fulfilling the reporting requirements would be a very challenging task for the Member States.

In the discussion the issue on financing of monitoring was raised. It was highlighted that European Commission is considering to co-financing the monitoring however no details are clear at this stage.

Biodiversity monitoring in Hungary and its relations to the Habitats Directive by Mr. Andras Krolopp, Central and Eastern European Working Group for the Enhancement of Biodiversity (*for the handouts, please see the seminar folder*)

Mr. Krolopp gave an overview on implementation of Natura 2000 in Hungary: 20-21% of the total territory is protected under Natura 2000. According to the Hungary's proposal 6 habitat types, 16 plant and 39 animal species are included in the annexes of the Directives. The biggest problems related to implementation of the Natura 2000 are some legislative gaps, use of agricultural maps as a basis for Natura 2000 designation, lack of financial recourses.

The biodiversity monitoring system in Hungary is based on the requirements of Biological Diversity Convention. The National Authority for Nature Conservation is a coordinator of biomonitoring. One full time employed expert in every national park with a help of different experts and NGOs does practical implementation of the biomonitoring. The monitoring activities are implemented in a frame of 10 different programs. It is foreseen to have the 11th program, which would be dedicated for monitoring implementation according to the Habitats Directive. Mr. Krolopp stressed that the Hungarian monitoring system has strong scientific approach, more detailed than reporting is demanded by the Habitats Directive .

Further Mr. Krolopp listed the challenges, which Hungary is facing for implementation of biomonitoring: no clear guidance from the EC, lack of capacity and financial recourses, there is no way to integrate data, which are gathered outside the biomonitoring program. Although a lot of data are gathered in a frame of monitoring programme, the results do not reflect the "state of nature", since there is a lack of harmonized assessment of the data.

Mr. Krolopp opened a discussion on purpose of biodiversity monitoring as such, and how it contributes to stop declining of biodiversity at the EU level. He expressed his concern that implementation of the monitoring requires large financial recourses, but it can bring only the limited information, not answering what actions needs to be taken in the future perspective. In the discussion it was pointed that the monitoring should serve for understanding the biodiversity trends and it should include the prognostic tools, which would help to assess future perspectives. Another important reason for the implementation of biodiversity monitoring is to assess how the Habitats Directive is implemented in the EU Member States and reaches its goals.

It was stated that implementation of biodiversity monitoring in the UK requires 12,5 mln. £ every 6 year. Even this sum is quite high; it still makes only 10% of the costs which are required for management of the site. Such proportion between management and monitoring is considered to be very normal.

Current status of biodiversity monitoring and views how to implement the EU monitoring and reporting requirements according to the Habitats Directive in Estonia by Mr. Hanno Zingel, Estonian Environmental Information Centre (*for the handouts, please see the seminar folder*)

Mr. Zingel informed that biodiversity monitoring system in Estonia is implemented since already 1994. The implementation of the monitoring is done in a frame of

different projects and subprograms. There are app. 600 plots where a habitat monitoring is carried out however monitoring does not cover all habitats listed in the annexes of the Habitats Directive. Ten subprograms are implemented for monitoring of species (e.g. subprograms on birds, ants, fresh water habitats and species). Regarding the monitoring of marine areas, Mr. Zingel stated that principle of monitoring is the same, however the techniques and methods differ from those of terrestrial monitoring.

During the discussion it was pointed that Estonia so far has not tested the proposed reporting format, however it is foreseen that filling in the reporting format will be more challenging with regard to habitats rather than for species.

Current status of biodiversity monitoring and views on how to implement the EU monitoring and reporting requirements according to the Habitats Directive in Latvia by Mr. Martins Grikis, Latvian Environment, Geological and Meteorological Agency (*for the handouts, please see the seminar folder*)

Mr. Grikis stated that Latvia is currently on the stage of developing a new biodiversity monitoring program. He highlighted the current biodiversity monitoring program which was created in 2001 and is a part of the national monitoring program. The biodiversity monitoring program has 16 subprograms. Part of them is operational (implemented regularly). Others are non-operational (implemented not regularly). Some of the subprograms are partly overlapping with each other; however there is no double collection of data, but if needed the same data are used for different subprograms. Overlapping between the subprograms is one of the key-reasons to initiate development of a new monitoring program. It will not have fundamental changes, but rather some modifications. Another argument for having a new monitoring program is fulfilment of the reporting obligations according to the Habitats Directives.

Mr. Grikis informed that practical implementation of biodiversity monitoring is done by subcontracted experts. The Latvian Environment, Geological and Meteorological Agency has a data gathering and coordination role.

He pointed out problems related to implementation of biodiversity monitoring. The data gathered within the program are rather general and they do not fulfil the reporting needs for the Habitats Directive. The monitoring program does not include the assessment of the conservation status. Another key-problem is that currently the biodiversity monitoring is implemented mostly in the existing protected areas, therefore monitoring does not illustrate the state of the biodiversity in the whole country – outside the protected areas.

During the discussions the issue on monitoring of accidentally killed animals was raised. Latvia has such separate monitoring subprogram; however it is non-operational program and so far has not been implemented. In the discussion it was stated that the Habitats Directive foresees the monitoring of accidentally killed and captured animals, however it is not clear how such monitoring should be implemented. Germany informed that they proposed to have such monitoring since the gathered data on accidental killing (e.g on the roads) would give information about the intensity of infrastructure development. Further in the discussion it was supported that information on accidentally killed animals can be very useful for infrastructure developers. Data can be used to identify the areas of more intensive accidental killing and some conservation measures can be implemented there.

Current status of biodiversity monitoring and view on how to implement the EU monitoring and reporting requirements according to the Habitats Directive by Mr. Vytautas Narusevicius, Lithuanian Environmental Protection Agency (*for the handouts, please see the seminar folder*)

Mr. Narusevicius introduced participants to the new biodiversity monitoring program, which has been just recently approved in Lithuania. The program is set up on the basis of different international requirements (e.g., Ramsar, Bern, Helsinki Conventions, Birds and Habitats Directives). The main aims of the program are: i) to allow halting of biodiversity loss till 2010; ii) establish conditions for conservation and sustainable use of natural resources; iii) to form a background for effective and reasonable management/ monitoring of problematic and invasive species.

The biodiversity-monitoring program is a part of the National Monitoring Program, which still has other monitoring programs included e.g. monitoring of water and ecosystems (forest vegetation, benthos and soil invertebrates). These monitoring programs are coordinated between each other. Biodiversity monitoring includes monitoring of all species/habitats of EU concern; however it includes also other components like monitoring of fishing quotas, natural resources, invasive species and others. The monitoring is planned to be done within 6 years period. The monitoring activities will be carried out not only in the protected areas, but also 25% of monitoring should be implemented outside protected areas.

Further Mr. Narusevicius gave an overview on the institutional set-up for the implementation of the biodiversity monitoring in Lithuania. The main institutions responsible for the reporting on the implementation of the Habitats Directive are the Ministry of Environment and the Environmental Protection Agency. For the data collection and analysis different scientific institutions, e.g., State Protected Areas Service (only analysis) and administration of the Protected Areas (only data collection) are responsible. The Ministry of Agriculture will also have a role in the implementation of monitoring; however the concrete role is not yet defined.

The main challenges with regard to implementation of biodiversity monitoring in Lithuania is lack of human resources and precise methodology. The methodology on the conservation status assessment is also not yet defined.

During the discussion development of monitoring indicators was discussed. Lithuania so far has not yet developed indicators, but foresees doing it when the methodology for monitoring will be implemented.

Biodiversity monitoring in the Czech Republic and its compatibility to the reporting requirements for the Habitats Directive by Mr. Jan Plesnik, Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection (*for the handouts, please see the seminar folder*)

Mr. Plesnik explained the role of Nature Conservation and Landscape protection Agency in the Czech Republic. This institution was established by the Ministry of Environment and it is as technical/expert authority on nature conservation issues within the country. Further he gave an overview on the Natura 2000 implementation process. The Natura 2000 network set-up process was financed from the state budget sources. At first stage the intensive data collection was carried out, app. 700 external experts and app. 100 experts from nature conservation authorities were involved in this process. Further data were inserted in the digital databases and analyzed. Based on this analysis the network of Natura 2000 areas was proposed. Further the

Parliament adopted the proposed areas, which cover 18,2 % of the national territory. The establishment of the Natura 2000 was followed by number of consultations with concerned stakeholders and development of guidelines for management of Natura 2000.

Further Mr. Plesnik concentrated on implementation of biodiversity monitoring to fulfil reporting requirements for the Habitats Directive. The monitoring program is prepared in the frame of the project (implemented in the period of 2001-2005), which was initiated by the Ministry of Environment and implemented by the Agency of Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection. Before the project there were several individual monitoring programs implemented in the Czech Republic by state nature conservation authorities and scientific institutions. However a lot of concerned species have not been monitored; lack of data analysis was also obvious. Nevertheless it has created a good basis for the development of new unified monitoring system. Mr. Plesnik informed that the ongoing project has proposed the monitoring system, which would fulfil the reporting requirements required by the European Commission. The project has developed methods for monitoring; some of them were tested on the field. The approach to assess the favourable conservations status was also developed. The developed monitoring scheme is submitted to the Ministry of Environment for approval.

Further Mr. Plesnik informed that the experts of the Agency tested the proposed reporting format for the Habitats Directive. Testing was done for 5 selected species. Testing results showed that the proposed reporting format in principal is good; however there are some problems, which still needs to be solved, like defining natural distribution range, thresholds for changes in populations, typical species for a natural habitats type.

Statements from other EU Member States on biodiversity monitoring systems in their countries and its compatibility to the reporting requirements for the Habitats Directive.

Austria (*keynote by Mr. Thomas Ellmauer, Federal Environmental Agency*) does not have a comprehensive Biodiversity monitoring system, but there is a new concept in the development process which is foreseen to be finished in 2005. In the new proposal it is planned to improve the key-factors and to define indicators for monitoring as Austria considers it is a very crucial part of the monitoring.

Currently biodiversity monitoring is based on sectoral monitoring systems, such as:

- forest inventory (the oldest and the most comprehensive monitoring, which includes not only economic indicators, but also biodiversity indicators)
- water quality monitoring (gathers a lot of data, which includes a lot of relevant information for the reporting for the Habitats Directive)
- agri-environmental measures monitoring (started since 1995, does not include much relevant information for the reporting for the Habitats Directive)
- monitoring of bird species (contains very comprehensive information, currently is in the process of change, which will result inclusion of the data gathered from amateurs, therefore foreseen to be very detailed and even more comprehensive).

There are also some special monitoring programs implemented for some species groups like brown bear, otter, lynx.

Mr. Ellmauer informed that there is prepared a manual on the conservation status assessment of the habitats and species, which include also the gap assessment of the

current monitoring system (the biggest gaps are related to the monitoring of invertebrates, bryophytes, grassland habitats types).

Germany (*key-notes by Mr. Axel Ssymank and Mr. Christoph Eiden, Federal Agency for Nature Conservation*) has large amount of data, however a lot of data are very specific and regional.

Monitoring is implemented separately in each lender where the decisions on finances and responsibilities are taken as well. Thus the quality of monitoring varies a lot between the lenders. The data gathering methods are also not harmonized between the lenders. However there is quite detailed reference data available on distribution of species.

Currently lenders are implementing a detailed mapping of the existing Natura 2000 areas. This work is planned to be finished by the end of 2006.

Further the approach of biodiversity monitoring implementation was illustrated in the example from one of the lenders.

It was concluded that German biodiversity monitoring systems are rather complicated to use for Natura 2000 purposes and so far monitoring does not fulfil the requirements on the reporting for the Habitats Directive.

In **Sweden** (*key-note by Mr. Mora Aronsson, Species Information Centre*) sufficient financial recourses are allocated for monitoring, however the biggest problem the country is facing is related to lack of human recourses to implement the monitoring (especially in the Northern part of Sweden). In order to improve the situation, there are plans to apply analysis of satellite images.

The biodiversity monitoring in Sweden has started in 1994. Currently the concept for Natura 2000 monitoring is developed.

Mr. Aronsson pointed that high frequency monitoring is integrated in the management system of protected areas

Further he introduced to the species gateway database (www.artportalen.se), which provides a lot of data, which can be used further for analysis and reporting. The quality check of the data in the gateway is mainly done by NGOs, which are very competent.

Mr. Aronsson listed the challenges, which Sweden is facing with regard to biodiversity monitoring:

- To make good reference values
- Common habitats and species – for some of them no inventories have been done
- Poorly known habitats and species

Denmark (*key-note by Mr. Knud Erik Nielsen, National Environmental Research Institute*) has started its biodiversity monitoring program on the habitats and species listed in the Habitats Directive in 2004. For each habitat type the monitoring indicators are developed, however results of the first monitoring are not available, therefore the indicators so far cannot be assessed.

Denmark is currently mapping the habitat types in the designated Natura 2000 areas. Based on the results of the mapping the network of monitoring stations will be selected.

Mr. Nielsen pointed out that the habitat dynamics (changing from one habitat type to another due to natural succession) brings a big challenge for implementation of the monitoring.

Regarding the methodology of biodiversity monitoring, Mr. Nielsen stressed that defining good methods for monitoring should be considered in order to have minimum visual estimations, since different persons implementing monitoring can interpret it differently and the data gathering would not be objective.

SESSION III PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION ASPECTS: DATA GATHERING, CONSERVATION STATUS ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING (Presentation and interactive discussions in the working groups)

WORKING GROUP I

Data gathering to fulfil the monitoring needs for species and habitats of Community Importance by Mr. Mora Aronsson, Species information centre, Sweden (*for the handouts, please see the seminar folder*)

Mr. Aronsson divided his presentation into data gathering for species monitoring and for the habitats monitoring.

He started his presentation by illustrating what data needs to be gathered for the monitoring of **species** (range, area covered e.g. number of sites, size of the population, habitats – assessment of suitable habitats) and what data is available based on the Swedish experience (Red list information, NGO surveys, other species surveys). Illustrating this, Mr. Aronsson stressed that there is a lot of data available gathered from the monitoring, which can be used for the analysis and reporting.

Regarding collection of the data for the **habitats** monitoring, Mr. Aronsson stated that the following data needs to be collected: range of the habitat, area covered, structure and function of the habitat and the data on typical species for the habitats. He pointed out that in Sweden the data on structure and function is incomplete. However for the reporting in 2007 it should be relied on the data, which is available.

Regarding the data on habitats, Sweden has data available from landscape and forest monitoring systems, detailed surveys of wetland and semi natural grasslands. Habitat mapping can also be done based on the data from satellite images, however it cannot cover all types of habitats.

During the discussion it was pointed out that the data illustrating the state of biodiversity outside Natura 2000 areas can be used from the protected areas, which are not included in the Natura 2000 network. However most of such areas do not contain species and habitats included in the annexes of the directives.

Regarding the satellite images, Mr. Aronsson informed that this method could be applied to monitor some of the forest habitats, heathlands, some of marine habitats (lagoons estuaries etc.). Grasslands and spruce forest habitats are not possible to identify applying satellite images. However this method is developing very fast, therefore it is foreseen that in future some more information can be gathered by this method. EC is initiating a lot of projects to develop satellite techniques, which are also focused on the monitoring of Natura 2000.

Mr. Aronsson stated that in Sweden one of the main challenges is data on the habitats of the species, especially for the more common species. The problem is to define the typical habitat for the species since the habitats for the same species can be very different. Definition of the habitat for the species requires a lot of ecological knowledge.

Another challenge is that for some species historical data on the status of the species might appear quite opposite to the current situation if deeper investigations are done.

However such situation is expected to be illustrated in the reporting to the EC and can be justified presenting the newest available data.

Discussion developed on the availability of data and how much data European Commission is expecting to get. It was pointed that countries should be pragmatic and report on the data what the countries have. Additionally it was highlighted that the monitoring is a supportive tool to reach the main goal – favourable conservation status of the species and habitats, therefore the reporting should not be made just for the sake of the reporting, but it should give contribution to the Member State on how much the goals of the Habitats directive are reached.

WORKING GROUP II

Concept of the assessment of the conservation status in Austria by Mr. Thomas Ellmauer, Federal Environmental Agency (*for the handouts, please see the seminar folder*)

Mr. Ellmauer started his presentation with describing the different level of the conservation status assessment on the spatial scale. He pointed out biogeographical, Natura 2000 and single site (locality) levels. The presentation was focused on the conservation status assessment on the locality level.

Mr. Ellmauer presented the experience from the project, which was implemented in Austria with the main aim to harmonise the implementation of the Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. During this project, guidelines were elaborated for the conservation status assessment on the locality level. In order to make the conservation status assessment relevant indicators were chosen on appropriate spatial scale. Further to make the judgements the grading system was introduced with distinct thresholds. Selecting the grading system, positions were defined as follows: average or reduced (meaning unfavourable), good and excellent (meaning favourable).

Presenting the indicators, Mr. Ellmauer illustrated the example indicators for the Beech forest habitat types. He highlighted that selecting indicator sets several features needs to be considered: it should be a rather small set, feasible to record and measure, feasible to finance. For the beech forest habitat types the following indicators were selected: size of the stand, species composition of the tree-layer, stock structure, utilisation, amount of dead wood (very important indicator for forest habitat type), indicative species, game damage.

The thresholds should indicate the limit values within the variability of habitats since habitat types are not clearly defined. In order to set the thresholds the ecological knowledge, correspondence with the guiding documents (e.g. legal acts) and expert judgement is required. Mr. Ellmauer explained more in details on how certain thresholds were setup.

Further the assessment matrix was presented. Mr. Ellmauer concluded that implementation of such approach of the conservation status assessment is time, human and financial source consuming.

During the discussion Mr. Ellmauer informed that the indicators were developed for all habitats and Annex II species occurring in Austria.

Mr. Ellmauer stressed that the presented proposal for conservation status assessment is not meant to fulfil the reporting needs for the Habitats Directive, but first of all for the national purposes – proper implementation of the Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and management of the sites. However it will partly serve also for the reporting for the Habitats Directive. The statement was supported by the highlight that the European Commission with a reporting requires only a fragment of information,

which is crucial for the member state to have it for the date-to-date management of Natura 2000 areas.

WORKING GROUP III

Practical steps for the assessment of the conservation status by Dr. Axel Ssymank and Mr. Christoph Eichen, Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, Germany (*for the handouts, please see the seminar folder*)

Mr. Ssymank gave the presentation based on the German experience.

Germany has a linder structure (16 linders), therefore monitoring is implemented by each linder individually. The conservation status assessment and reporting should be done within each linder as well. Therefore 16 reports are developed, which needs to be harmonized into one national report and submitted to the European Commission.

Mr. Ssymank introduced to the conservation status assessment approach, which is in principal very similar to the Austrian approach. Within the matrix of the assessment Germany used the following categories: A (excellent conservation), B (good conservation) and C (average or reduced conservation) for the standard data forms and the assessment on the locality level. On the biogeographic level the so called “traffic light” approach is used.

For data gathering Germany does not use the software proposed by the EC, but has its own national software. With a help of the national software Germany is checking technical data validation. It is also possible to make a weighted calculation on the conservation status assessment if in different parts of the same protected area the level of conservation status is different.

There is a general agreement made between the federal government and the linders on evaluation of the conservation status. There are working groups established, which are discussing the conservation status for each habitats and species separately. Further the example was presented on the conservation status assessment for one habitat type.

Mr. Eichen continued with the second part of the presentation focusing, on the conservation status assessment of the species. He informed that the methodology for data collection is developed and currently the methodology on the conservation status assessment for species is under preparation. He presented an example on the conservation status assessment of the *Osmoderma eremita*. During the evaluation the following parameters were assessed: size of the population, reproduction, habitats structures of the individual populations and meta-populations and adverse impacts on populations and meta-populations. Regarding the main discussions on the conservation assessment of the species, Mr. Eichen highlighted that there was a lot of discussion on the regional adaptation of thresholds, assessment of future impacts, weight of the parameters during aggregation process, the value of the habitats of the species.

Further, Mr. Eichen concentrated on the future challenges related to conservation status assessment on the locality level as well as on the biogeographical level. The discussion is ongoing on the accuracy needed for the trend analysis and interpretation of trends since the trends might illustrate not only the change of the actual situation, but change of the trend can also be reasoned the new better data available or different interpretation of data by other person who did the assessment and weighted the parameters. Another challenge is reference date which is applied in the trend assessment. The reference dates might differ between the linders and it is related to the availability of data.

The conservation status assessment for marine and some other habitats (e.g. caves, rocks) is not yet agreed.

During the discussion it was pointed out that prepared handbooks of methods is recommended to use for every lender.

The practical implementation of the monitoring is done by scientific authorities of a lender. In some cases external experts are contracted.

Regarding the transboundary assessment of the conservation status between the lenders it was stated that in Germany there are no Natura 2000 areas on the borderline between neighbouring lenders.

SESSION IV FURTHER STEPS AND DISCUSSION NEEDS IN THE BALTIC STATES IN THE FRAME OF PHARE CBC PROJECT

Report from the project kick off meeting and input from seminar participants on the project development by Ms. Liga Eglite, Baltic Environmental Forum (*for the handouts, please see the seminar folder*)

Ms. Eglite introduced to the Phare CBC project on the cooperation on the biodiversity monitoring issues, which is administrated by the Baltic Environmental Forum (BEF). She highlighted the future activities of the project (3 expert meetings, publications and the final event) and gave an overview on the issues, which were discussed in the kick off meeting implemented before the seminar. During the kick off meeting the potential topics were identified , which would be important to be discussed in the frame of the project.

During the discussion the participants identified which topics would be the most crucial to discuss in a frame of the project. It was proposed that the experts meeting should be focused on the monitoring of the habitats (methodology, filling in the reporting format) since it is the most complex issue and needs a lot of discussions and coordination. The idea was highlighted to use the existing reporting format proposed by the EC, which could be filled in for particular habitats and further the experience would be discussed during the expert meetings. If such approach would be taken it would contribute a lot to the guidance document on the reporting for the Habitats Directive which is prepared by the European Nature Topic.

It was pointed out that the dates of the expert meetings should be well coordinated with the experts, since the time schedule of the project corresponds with the fieldworks.

Participants also pointed out that the DG Research has funded a project EUMON, which is working on the biodiversity monitoring issues as well. It was stated that BEF will actively cooperate with this project

CONCLUSIONS

- New and Old Member States are currently thinking and developing the approaches how to report to EC on the Habitats directive and it is a challenge nearly for all the countries
- Some countries has set up the new monitoring systems, other countries are thinking how to fit the existing monitoring programs to fulfil the reporting requirements for the Habitats Directive
- Lithuania has developed a new biodiversity monitoring system, taking into accounts requirements of the Habitats Directive;

- Latvia has initiated the process to review the current monitoring system in order to fulfil the reporting requirements to the EC;
- Estonia does not foresee a change of biodiversity monitoring system;
- There are lot of discussion ongoing on the EU level about terminology, indicators, defining favourable conservation status;
- European Commission is developing a guidance document on how to make the reporting;
- Even biodiversity monitoring requires a lot of financial recourses, it makes only app. 10 % of the costs required for management of Natura 2000;
- The main purpose of biodiversity monitoring should be contribution to the daily management of the habitats and species and reporting to EC should make only a small fraction of the gathered information;
- Usually there is a lot of data gathered, which can be used for the conservation status assessment and a lot of data available from the other sources than biodiversity monitoring programs;
- Some countries (Austria, Germany, UK) has developed a comprehensive system and methods for the data gathering and conservation status assessment. Defining proper indicators and thresholds seems to be the crucial condition to have successful assessment system.

Report by Mr. Žymantas Morkvėnas, Baltic Environmental forum, Lithuania

The workshop was organised within the project “Implementation of the Biodiversity monitoring requirements in accordance with the EU Birds and Habitats Directives through facilitation cooperation and stakeholders networking in the Baltic States” being supported by the European Union, Phare 2002 “Cross Border Co-operation Programme in the Baltic Sea Region for Latvia”

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