Review of EEA and Norway Grants

Biodiversity Support

For the Financial Mechanism Office

Ljubljana, March 2010

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
Donors	The donors of the European Economic Area Grants and Norway Grants, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein
DAR	Detailed Appraisal Report
DG	Directorate General (European Commission)
EEA	European Economic Area
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone (Estonia)
EC	European Commission
ECJ	European Court of Justice
EMAEP	Enterprise for Management of Activities in Environmental Protection (Bulgaria)
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
FMO	Financial Mechanism Office
GBIF	Global Biodiversity Information Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
INTERREG	EU programmes which support cross-border co-operation between adjacent regions to develop cross-border social and economic centres through common development strategies
IR	Inception Report
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
LIFE-TCY	EU Financial Instrument for the Environment Third Countries
LIFE+	EU Financial Instrument for the Environment (2007-2013)
MoEW	Ministry of Environment and Water (Bulgaria)
NCSA	National Capacity Self-Assessment for Global Environmental Management
NEAP	National Environmental Action Programme (Slovenia)
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD-DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
REC	Regional Environment Center (Headquarters: Szentendre, Hungary)
Review	*This* Review of Biodiversity Support
SCI	Site of Community Interest (Habitats Directive)
SPA	Special Protected Areas (Birds Directive)
TEEB	The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity
ToR	Terms of Reference

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Financial Mechanism Office has commissioned this Review of European Economic Area (EEA) Grants and Norway Grants in support of biodiversity. In spite of interest from the EC and the Donors (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) in support of biodiversity projects, the part of the grants portfolio that relates to such measures appears modest. The purpose of the Review was to identify the underlying causes for this situation, and to propose steps that could be taken to increase future support to biodiversity protection. A further objective was to undertake a simple assessment of the implementation of the biodiversity projects supported under the EEA and Norway Grants, in order to learn lessons for the future. Finally, the contribution from Norway and EEA Grants would be put into the wider context of national and EU support to biodiversity.

While biodiversity is everywhere, it is generally under threat from urban development, industrial agriculture, tourism, etc. There is a global agreement to conserve biodiversity, and within the European Union (EU), a start has been made to realise this through the 'Birds Directive' and the 'Habitats Directive', and the designation of special sites, forming the 'NATURA 2000' network. In 2006, the European Commission launched a Biodiversity Action Plan, which established a detailed set of target driven objectives and actions at both national and European level.

The current EEA and Norway Grants, open to 15 member states, have the underlying objective of lowering the social and economic inequalities in the EEA. Donors have highlighted biodiversity as a target for funding for the period 2004-2009, but, within the total grant of €1.3 billion, only €10.6 million of the agreed projects identified biodiversity as a main sub-sector and €24.8 million as a component. Although the present study is focused on large projects, there are also small-scale grants available to develop local capacity and address local issues.

The €35.4 million made available through EEA and Norway Grants for 2004-2009 can be viewed against an estimated minimum of M€ 45 per year (total M€ 225 over five years) for nature and biodiversity projects under the EU LIFE programme. In addition, there is significant funding for environmental projects under the EU Structural Funds.

Selection of biodiversity projects

The evidence from four sample countries, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia, suggests that there is substantial potential for biodiversity type projects, especially in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In these countries, the number of selected projects was limited by pre-allocated budgets for environment and sustainable development, and in Slovakia the number was additionally limited by the necessity to acquire land to implement the project. In Poland, applicants seemed to prefer infrastructure projects rather than 'soft' biodiversity projects. In general, local authorities and the general public prefer investments that have a relatively immediate and concrete output. The public wants to see that its rivers or its waste disposal sites are cleaner, and are not so concerned with conservation of species or habitats of which they are not aware. Politicians want to be able to point to tangible successes during their tenure.

In Slovenia, the size of EEA and Norway Grants for biodiversity support is currently too large and thus unattractive because the country is small and has insufficient organisations (including non-government) of an appropriate size to participate, and a poor understanding

of biodiversity issues (as opposed to 'pollution' issues). Nevertheless, biodiversity topics were well covered in Slovenia by small-scale grants.

Institutional capacity in the beneficiary states

In terms of the adequacy of institutional capacity in the beneficiary states to attract funding, all countries have appropriate ministries and agencies and policy frameworks that allow or encourage the selection of projects from the side of the Donors. On the other hand, interviewed experts identified some shortcomings requiring: improved interaction between key government institutions and organisations; increased effectiveness of controls and the imposition of penalties; strengthened administrative capacity and financial resources of state and local municipal authorities to implement national policy; and clear definition of responsibilities at these levels. The variety of problems encountered confirms the importance of the Donor approach of an assessment of national capacity to manage projects, supported by a Memorandum of Understanding, and a thorough compliance scrutiny and external *ex ante* evaluation of potential projects.

Position of NGOs

The ability of environmental non-government organisations (NGOs) to play a larger part in relation to biodiversity protection varied in the reviewed countries, and often centred on financial strength and sustainability. The rules for the large projects presents some formidable barriers for NGOs, particularly the minimum grant level (€250,000), the minimum co-financing level, a financial track record, and the resources needed to pre-finance proposals and project work. For Poland and the Czech Republic there are strong national NGOs which have formed capable Project Promoters and partners. Many have good lobby structures, influencing the implementation of legislation. In Bulgaria and Slovakia, NGOs frequently do not have adequate financial resources or an administrative track record to enable them to participate as project promoter. In contrast to the large projects, NGOs have successfully participated in small project funds, particularly NGO Funds, dealing local biodiversity issues.

EEA and Norway Grants' performance

Interim evaluation on 15 projects in Bulgaria, Czech, Poland and Slovakia indicates that the majority do, or are likely to, perform well (some have only just started). After a late start (compared with beneficiary expectations), the projects have caught up and are expected to deliver results and achieve their objectives during 2011. In addition, most projects are judged to have the capacity to demonstrate good and transferable practices, which could be used to widen their impact.

Information from self-monitoring reports and desk studies shows that seven projects in Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain are progressing well. All expect to be completed during 2011 and to meet the agreed objectives. In addition, most projects (as described in the monitoring reports) have the capacity to demonstrate good and transferable practices, which could be used to widen their impact.

In terms of significance of the sample projects in the context of overall European biodiversity, an approximate estimate of the level of threat to the particular habitat type or part of nature indicated only two projects with a very high level of threat, and two thirds of the projects with an intermediate threat level. Direct positive impact of the project to biodiversity conservation was difficult to estimate, but most projects were not expected to have a significant impact. Two thirds of the projects were estimated to have an

intermediate indirect (long-term) positive impact on biodiversity conservation, and one third a low indirect impact.

The *niche* role performed by the EEA and Norway Grants 2004-2009 was confirmed by commentators and beneficiaries, especially the willingness of the EEA and Norway Grants to fund innovation and experimentation. Project promoters have valued their connection with Norwegian institutions.

Conclusions

The number of biodiversity projects coming forward has been restricted, either by pre-set allocations or preferences of applicants for pollution abatement infrastructure projects, which have a more obvious and direct impact on the environment and respond to public concern.

NGOs found it difficult to participate in large projects. Although the co-funding requirement (minimum 10%) is very attractive compared with other sources, the number of environmental NGOs capable of acting as project partners was limited by the scale of the project. By contrast, ***participation in small project funds, particularly NGO Funds, has been attractive to NGOs*** facing local biodiversity issues. Approximately 20% of small projects funded have a connection with local environmental protection and biodiversity.

Good performance of the majority of the projects selected for EEA and Norway Grants. The Donor/FMO approach of a rigorous *ex ante* evaluation supported by careful appraisal by Focal Points has resulted in robust and credible projects, relevant to beneficiary country biodiversity commitments. Most of the large projects reviewed are likely to meet their objectives in the timescale planned and within budget. Project ownership is good, with Project Promoters ensuring their projects remained active during the long gestation period, often by securing other resources.

Longer-term partnering is an important Donor principle, expected to extend beyond the project phase. This is now understood and welcomed by Project Promoters. Where Donor specialism was offered but not used, convincing reasons were given for non-use, usually relating to specific aspects of the Mediterranean climate.

Insufficient public awareness of local biodiversity issues means less political pressure to create projects. Of the 52 projects investigated, only ten focused on education or public awareness, which has been identified as a major obstacle for citizens wanting to take action to arrest the decline in biodiversity. All the approved projects have publicity plans, but many plan dissemination through specialist seminars.

The innovative characteristics of EEA and Norway Grants are being matched by the EU LIFE+ programme. For the future, the LIFE+ programme is extending its scope to actions relating to halting the loss of biodiversity and will overlap to an extent a comparable EEA and Norway Grants' scheme.

Recommendations

Prioritisation of biodiversity actions. If the grant focus is to remain on biodiversity actions, the FMO should prepare definitive advice about which type of projects are likely to contribute to halting the decline in biodiversity, utilising the FMO database of successful projects as a guide, and being explicit about the need for innovatory actions, rather than continuing the co-financing of national compliance programmes. Emphasis should be given to projects proposing awareness raising of biodiversity.

Involving NGOs. National Focal Points and Intermediary Bodies should be prepared to facilitate the establishment of appropriately sized and skilled project groups – including government ministries and agencies, NGOs, and local administration – to deliver biodiversity actions which might otherwise not happen because of limited financial resources and legal status of individual partners.

Delivering project results. The year 2010 is a critical point for all projects as the majority of the outputs should be delivered. The FMO should discuss with National Focal Points how best to keep informed on progress. Projects with a large number of outputs should be monitored by National Focal Points on a monthly basis to ensure that timely remedial action is taken, if needed.

Donors should consider creating a Micro-project Fund (€1,000 – €5,000) for small beneficiaries to acquire particular skills or experience, directly relevant to the implementation of the proposed sub-project.

Innovation and impact. Donors should carefully consider how their grants can maintain their distinctiveness and create impact. Examples could be engaging local people in science, and protecting biodiversity in border areas.

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the objectives of the review, and provides background material about biodiversity in the context of human activity, the international agreement to conserve biodiversity, the key policies of the European Union (EU), and the support of EEA and Norway Grants. Finally, the methodology and limitations of the review exercise are given.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

The Financial Mechanism Office (FMO) has commissioned this Review of European Economic Area (EEA) Grants and Norway Grants in support of biodiversity. In spite of interest from the EC and the Donors[1] in support of biodiversity projects, the part of the environmental grants portfolio that relates to such measures appears modest. The purpose of the Review set out in the Term of Reference (ToR) (see Annex 1) was to identify the underlying causes for this situation, and to propose steps that could be taken to increase future support to biodiversity protection. A further objective was to undertake a simplified assessment[2] of the implementation of the biodiversity projects supported under the EEA and Norway Grants, in order to learn lessons for the future. Finally, the contribution from EEA and Norway Grants would be put into the wider context of national and EU support to biodiversity in each country.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 Biodiversity in perspective

Part of the background to funding projects supporting biodiversity is an understanding of the concept of biodiversity within the context of the history of human activity. The United Nations define biodiversity as the variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part. It includes diversity within species (genetic diversity), between species (species diversity), and between ecosystems (ecosystem diversity). According to the UN, human activity has caused between 50 and 1000 times more extinctions in the last 100 years than would have happened due to natural processes.

The negative impacts of human activity are inherent in our everyday life (consumption, development, industry, agriculture, rising energy demands, etc.). It would be unwise to think that such pressure can be stopped with short-term projects, a little willingness and some field work. Projects dealing with biodiversity conservation can be like the work of Sisyphus.[3] Only short-term results are easy to predict and monitor, while this is hard to do with mid-term results and impossible for long-term ones.

The destruction of nature globally is driven by strong forces of super-national industry, urban development, industrial agriculture etc. A well-preserved area of nature as a result of sustainable use by generations of local inhabitants can be erased in a few days with large and immediate profits for investors (e.g. wood from forest plus price of cleared land for development). The pressure of such strong stakeholders is immense, and is often supported by populist interpretations of (short-term) public benefits. Economic growth, development and rise of energy demand are normally taken for granted by the politicians promising more roads, more jobs, and more industry as solutions for everything, so it is not

1 In this Review, Donors refers to the members of the EEA, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

2 In accordance with the criteria developed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (DAC-OECD).

3 In Greek mythology Sisyphus was punished by being cursed to roll a huge boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll back down, and to repeat this throughout eternity.

hard to convince people that they can sacrifice nature, piece by piece. Although there is an important study of the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB),[4] which is working on constructing a strong economic case for the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, there remains a general perception that the benefit from the preservation of nature will not match the profits obtained by its destruction. It is thus much easier to obtain public support for short-term profitable development than to preserve nature with a very distant and difficult-to-measure financial benefit.

Thus, whilst biodiversity is everywhere, it makes sense to define specific protected areas where biodiversity can be conserved without a battle with economic development and agriculture, etc. The EU approach to protected areas is described in the Section 1.2.3.

1.2.2 International treaty

The Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 which entered into force in December 1993. The Convention has three main goals:

- Conservation of biological diversity.
- Sustainable use of its components.
- Fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.

Parties to the Convention, which include EU member states and EEA countries, have committed themselves to effective and coherent implementation of the three objectives of the Convention. One of the specific goals is to achieve a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level by 2010, as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth.

1.2.3 EU Commitment to biodiversity

The European Council, meeting in Gothenburg in 2001, established a target of halting the loss of biodiversity within the EU by 2010, as well steps to meet the EU's commitment to the global target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

Over the last 25 years a network of around 26,000 protected areas has been established, covering all member states, with a total area of around km² 850,000, representing about 20% of the total land area of the EU territory. This vast array of sites is known as the NATURA 2000 network, and represents the cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy. It is the largest coherent network of nature conservation areas in the world.

The legal basis for the NATURA 2000 network comes from *Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds*, commonly referred to as the Birds Directive, and the Habitats Directive, *Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora*. The NATURA 2000 is built around two pillars: Special Protected Areas (SPA) according to the Bird Directive and Sites of Community Interest (SCI) according to the Habitat Directive, plus a strict system of species protection. All in all, the Directives protect over 1,000 animals and plant species and over 200 "habitat types" (e.g. special types of forests, meadows, wetlands, etc.), which are of European importance. While these Directives constitute the backbone of the EU's internal policy on biodiversity protection, nature cannot exist isolated from human activity. The Council and EC acknowledge the need to ensure that tourism, agriculture, regional development, energy and transport policies are sustainable and that Europe's natural capital - its biodiversity - is conserved and protected.

The protection afforded by the two Directives is very demanding on EU member states and there is now, in addition to the transposed directives, a substantial body of binding case law

[4] http://www.teebweb.org/.

relating to the implementation of the Directives as a result of decisions by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) following complaints from citizens.[5]

Although the policy framework is largely in place at Community level, and progress has been made in reducing the rate of loss of biodiversity, the extent of implementation has so far been insufficient to meet the 2010 target. In 2006, the European Commission (EC) launched a new Biodiversity Action Plan, which established a detailed set of target driven objectives and actions at both national and European level, and called for the full integration of biodiversity concerns into all other EU policy areas, from territorial and rural development policies to fisheries and development cooperation. Following the recent mid-term assessment of implementing the EC Biodiversity Action Plan, which stated that the Gothenburg target was unlikely to be met,[6] the Council has strongly emphasised that significant additional efforts are urgently needed to reverse the trend, *inter alia*, through the completion of the terrestrial parts of the NATURA 2000 networks by 2010 and the network at sea by 2012.

The EC (DG Environment) has been concerned for some time that the biodiversity message has not been effectively delivered to citizens. In August 2007, it commissioned a scoping study for a communications campaign on biodiversity and nature.[7] The findings in the final report were:

- Although 65% of respondents were already aware of the word biodiversity, only 35% thought they know what it actually meant.
- Any campaign should emphasise the impacts and consequences, not the threats - pollution, climate change, etc.
- The existing policy framework is sufficient but needs implementing, especially at the local level.
- Mass media (especially television) should be the preferred delivery option for a communications programme.
- Local examples were required to promote active citizen engagement.

In terms of the design of a donor programme, the key messages are supporting implementation within the current national framework (e.g. NATURA 2000), engagement and capacity building within target groups (including local people), focus on 'multipliers' (teachers, volunteers, NGO activists, especially young people), and publicity for projects that people can identify with.

A Flash Eurobarometer opinion poll in December 2007 revealed that only a minority of EU citizens considered that they were well informed on the subject of biodiversity loss. Recommendations from the scoping study for an EU-wide Communication Campaign have fed into the 2008 call for proposals of the Information & Communication component of DG Environment's funding instrument, LIFE+ (see 2.1). Some EU member states have already initiated campaigns to raise awareness about biodiversity.

1.2.4 EEA and Norway Grants

The current EEA and Norway Grants are open to 15 member states (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain) and have the underlying objective of lowering the social and economic inequalities in the EEA. The financial mechanisms were established in 2004, and implementation is based on close cooperation between Donor states, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, and the beneficiary states. The purpose and size of the programme, together with the method of implementation, is set out in Memoranda of

[5] Nature and Biodiversity Cases – Ruling of the European Court of Justice - European Communities (2006).

[6] See Council of the European Union Information Note 11412/09 (25 June 2009).

[7] Scoping study for an EU wide communications campaign on biodiversity and nature - Gellis Communication (2007).

Understanding with each member state. In this framework, levels of financial assistance are agreed against a series of strategic objectives. Each beneficiary country has developed a programming framework through focus areas in a series of priority sectors. Currently, there are ten priority sectors, with 'Environment', 'Sustainable Development' and 'Academic Research' particularly relevant to biodiversity support.

EEA and Norway Grants are an important source of funding for civil society in Central and Southern Europe: €85 million in support is provided through 19 NGO funds and €100 million is given in direct support to projects promoted by NGOs. Beneficiary states can make provision for funding for NGO grants and technical assistance for grant management in the area of biodiversity.

In each beneficiary state, a national Focal Point is established as coordinating authority and is responsible for the collection and prioritisation of submissions from potential Project Promoters. The availability of grants for particular purposes is advertised and implemented through a series of Calls for Proposals. Applicants begin a process in which their projects are assessed for compliance with national criteria (legality, feasibility, competence, co-funding) at the national Focal Point (usually established in the Ministry of Finance) and Donor requirements (a series of *ex ante* assessments) at the Brussels-based FMO. For major environment projects, the FMO obtains the views of the EC DG Environment to avoid overlap with EU funding and to ensure coherence with support from EU instruments.

Implementation management (essentially project monitoring and evaluation) is shared between the Donor countries (through the FMO), and beneficiary states (the Focal Point and the Project Promoter, who has to demonstrate the capacity to manage the project). Presently, control and monitoring by the FMO is done at the project level, and given the existence of approximately 1,200 projects, this represents a very significant obligation in terms of resources. However, Donors maintain a strong commitment to good governance and financial probity, and active monitoring by the FMO is a key part of ensuring this.

Donor states also have significant expertise and capacity in the area of environmental protection, with Norway establishing its Ministry for the Environment in 1972. Donors believe that the development of strong and competent environmental institutions and the integration of environmental concerns in sector policies are essential in meeting present and future environmental challenges. The Government of Norway has therefore made the resources and experience of environmental agencies, institutions, and academic resources available to Project Promoters to complement the funding assistance. This is perceived as a long-term commitment and, ideally, is already in place when a project is conceived, as part of the strategic partnership between Donor and beneficiary.

Biodiversity support 2004-2009

As part of the concern for the environment, Donors have targeted support of biodiversity for funding commitments in the period 2004-2009. However, of the total grants of € 1.3 billion (approximately 1200 projects) at the close of commitment period, only M€ 10.6 (23 projects[8]) was devoted to biodiversity as a main sub-sector under the priority sector '*Environment and sustainable development*'. In addition, a further M€ 24.8 (29 projects) has been identified where biodiversity was a component of a project. The incidence of these grants by beneficiary state is set out in Table 1.[9]

[8] For the purposes of the Grants Schemes, 'projects' are defined as requiring grants in excess of € 250,000.

[9] Individual project details are shown in Annex 2.

Table 1. Biodiversity projects or components by beneficiary state (2004-2009)

Country	Projects main sub-sector	Allocated sum (M€)	Projects with one component	Allocated sum (M€)	Total (M€)
Bulgaria	3	1.07	1	0.46	1.53
Cyprus	1	0.45			0.45
Czech Republic	4	1.46	1	0.26	1.72
Estonia	2	0.94	2	0.98	1.92
Greece			5	5.59	5.59
Hungary			1	3.00	3.00
Latvia	1	0.42	2	0.63	1.05
Lithuania	1	0.32			0.32
Malta					0
Poland	5	2.65	10	4.69	7.34
Portugal	2	1.12	2	1.23	2.36
Romania			2	2.76	2.76
Slovakia	3	1.18	2	0.68	1.86
Slovenia					0
Spain	1	1.00	1	4.52	5.52
Total	**23**	**10.62**	**29**	**24.80**	**35.42**

Source: FMO – figures rounded – end of disbursement 2011.

Locally administered funds

Small-scale EEA and Norway Grants are also available to develop local capacity and address local issues through a range of national funds that are locally administered. Larger grants are available to support academic research. As at 27 August 2009, 2,198 'sub'-projects had been awarded with a total value of M€ 129, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Locally administered funds (all)

FUND	Sub-projects (No)	Total grant (M€)	Average €/grant
Academic research fund	166	21.28	128,185
Cultural heritage fund	18	2.77	153,674
Environmental and sustainable development fund	89	5.95	66,911
Health and childcare fund	43	3.03	70,420
Human resource fund	130	4.05	31,139
NGO funds	1,406	69.06	49,116
Regional policy and cross-border activities fund	118	9.68	82,003
Scholarship fund	228	13.15	57,676
Total	**2,198**	**128.96**	**58,672**

Source: FMO – figures rounded

Within these totals, FMO coding had identified grants for the biodiversity sub-sector totalling €817,693 (15 sub-projects) mainly in the 'Environmental and sustainable development fund'. A desk review of the 2,198 sub-projects from the '*List of sub-projects by Beneficiary State and type of Fund'* provided by the FMO revealed a substantial number of projects with the probability of supporting biodiversity in a wide range of NATURA 2000 and related contexts (education, management of stakeholder involvement, impact of climate change, protection of ecosystems, support to local environmental NGOs, as well as substantial scientific analyses). Numbers and approximate values of the grants for each beneficiary country are given in Annex 2, which demonstrates that around 430 sub-projects (almost 20% of the overall total) with EEA and Norway Grants of approximately € 29 million are

supporting environmental protection, including biodiversity, actions in the ten Central and Eastern European Countries and Portugal. Some of the projects, such as those dealing with climate change, are not necessarily specifically directed at biodiversity, but approximately 165 projects (with a contribution of approximately M€ 14.9) do have a specific reference to biodiversity.

1.3 METHODOLOGY AND REVIEW PLAN

1.3.1 The Approach

This Review was conducted from July to September 2009. It examined projects in the current round of EEA and Norway Grants (2004-2009), looking at all large projects that could be identified as having an explicit link with biodiversity. The approach combined desk studies with fieldwork (for interviews and physical verification) to provide information about the process and the potential outcomes. Four study areas were identified as important to responding to the objectives for the Review set out in Section 1.1:

A. EEA and Norway Grants in the context of national and EU support to biodiversity.
B. The effect of the selection process on biodiversity proposals, the policy and institutional framework, and the role of NGOs.
C. Monitoring and interim evaluation of grant-assisted biodiversity projects.
D. Opportunities for future support for biodiversity from EEA and Norway grants.

A discussion of Area A is given in Chapter 2. The results from Area B have been used to provide a response to the evaluation questions in Chapter 3. Area C provides an assessment of the performance of the grant scheme projects (see Chapter 4). These results have been used in conjunction with the outcomes from Area D to develop proposals for future biodiversity activities (see Chapter 5). General conclusions and recommendations are included in Chapter 6.

A. Context of EEA and Norway Grants' funding

A questionnaire was designed to support the fieldwork in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia by providing baseline information about funding:

- National Budget funding (including complementary EU funding): How is funding allocated in support of the policy objectives?
- The role of an external donor: (i) What sort of projects at what level(s) - local, regional, national? (ii) With what type of financial mechanism (grants, etc)? (iii) What scale of financial commitment per project?

B1. The selection process

To assess the impact of the selection process in framing and securing biodiversity projects, interviews were planned with the national Focal Point and the environment intermediary (if used). The output was key dates in the selection process, numbers of projects, financial value of projects, numbers of rejections at national level and the reasons for any limitations on the numbers of projects.

B2. The policy and institutional framework

The questionnaire to support the fieldwork in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia included questions providing baseline information about how biodiversity policy is implemented:

- Policy: Which part of government is responsible for biodiversity policy, particularly the EU member state commitment to EC Directives - Habitats 92/43/EEC, Birds 79/409/EEC and NATURA 2000?
- Horizontal policy connections: How does the government integrate the conflicting goals of (say) agriculture, regional development with its commitment to halting biodiversity loss?
- Policy implementation: How is the policy implemented?

B3. The role of NGOs

The questionnaire supporting the fieldwork in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia included the question - How can NGOs best be supported in their role: (i) as pressure groups, (ii) as financial partners?

C. Monitoring and interim evaluation of selected projects

The progress of selected biodiversity projects was assessed through a combination of independent interim evaluations performed by PITIJA consultants, and self-monitoring reports carried out by national Focal Points and Project Promoters. The monitoring and evaluation fieldwork focused on projects with biodiversity as the main sub-sector (Column 2 in Table 1 above). In agreement with the client, all 23 projects were reviewed, with an interim evaluation for 15 projects in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. These countries were selected because of their commitment to the grant process, the size of their grants and their wide range of biodiversity. Self-monitoring by beneficiaries was carried out for eight projects in Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain (the projects selected for fieldwork are shown in Table 3).[10]

[10] The Review builds on the *Mid-term Evaluation of the EEA Grants* (Norad Evaluation Report 2/2008) dated August 2008 to which reference should be made for background information about the EEA and Norway Grants.

Table 3. Projects with biodiversity as main sub sector

(shaded projects selected for fieldwork)

Project	Project title	Grants (€)
BG0031	Belasitsa mountain - Castanea sativa preservation	257,584
BG0034	National - Protection of glacial relict plants	493,436
BG0052	National - Biodiversity Monitoring System	317,851
CY0012	National Pafos forest integrated management plan	447,226
CZ0048	Bohemian Switzerland National Park Environmental Monitoring	359,720
CZ0071	Zlin - Revitalisation and preservation of meadows	297,029
CZ0072	National - Recovery Programmes for Endangered Species	500,000
CZ0138	Moravian-Silesian region - Environmental monitoring of endangered species and habitats	304,689
EE0011	National - Implementation of NATURA 2000 in Estonian Marine Areas (ESTMAR)	549,438
EE0045	National - Mires Inventory completion for maintaining biodiversity	390,637
ES0010	National - Promotion Campaign for NATURA 2000 Network	999,939
LT0071	Strengthening institutional capacities for implementation of international conventions in agricultural landscape in Lithuania	324,864
LV0052	National - Sustainable use and management of nature resources	417,555
PL0108	Carpathians - NATURA 2000 Protection and Education Initiative	807,500
PL0349	Poland - protection of lynx, wolf and bear	602,554
PL0452	Tczew - Establishing a didactic footpath in a bird mainstay	282,218
PL0468	Waminsko-Mazurkie - study of autochthonous whitefish in Łebsko Lake	675,963
PL0494	Czarna Orawa - River basin protection (NATURA 2000)	287,162
PT0039	SAFESEA - Sustainable local fisheries and cetaceans protection	408,970
PT0040	CONDOR - Azorean Seamount Ecosystem Observatory	716,198
SK0025	Dubnik - Protection of bats in winter roost	516,310
SK0115	National - management models for grassland habitats	385,455
SK0121	Besa and Cicarovce - conservation of water birds diversity	279,344
TOTAL		**10,621,642**

A self-monitoring questionnaire was designed (see Annex 8) based on a simplified version of the standard FMO monitoring report. Follow-up work was carried out by email where necessary. The interim evaluation questionnaire was designed to identify progress and results (outputs and impact), and assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the EEA and Norway Grants in the field of biodiversity. The evaluation criteria used were:[11]

- Effectiveness: The extent to which the objectives of the projects were achieved or are expected to be achieved?
- Sustainability: Will the benefits produced by the intervention be maintained after the cessation of external support?
- Efficiency: Can the cost of the intervention be justified by the results?
- Impact: Positive and negative short and long term impact of the intervention, direct and indirect, intended and unintended.
- Relevance: Are the projects relevant in relation to the Donors' goals, strategies and policies? Is the intervention relevant to the beneficiary state's needs and priorities?

[11] Combining OECD-DAC and FMO requirements.

The evaluators were asked to complete a checkbox for each project, answering the following questions yes or no:

(i) The completed project will include all the activities and results stated above and achieve the project purpose
(ii) The completed project will be an exemplar for the project purpose
(iii) The completed project will not include all the activities and results but will achieve the project purpose
(iv) Publicity for the projects achievements has been organised
(iv) The completed project will not achieve the project purpose
(v) The project has been cancelled
(vi) The project needs more time than planned to achieve the project purpose

The 29 projects with biodiversity as a component (see Annex 3) were the subject of a desk review to supplement the monitoring and evaluation findings.

D. Opportunities for the future

The purpose of the study area 4 was to draw inferences about the context of future grants schemes in support of biodiversity based on the current experience, by interviews with external commentators (defined as 5-7 experts/ country – academics, NGOs (operational and lobbyists), influential ministries/ agencies, Donors' local representatives) and by desk research. Fieldwork was carried out in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. This was augmented with further research in Slovenia by the Biodiversity Expert and in the UK by the Team Leader.

1.4 LIMITATIONS AFFECTING THE APPROACH AND REVIEW

1.4.1 Timing

This Review was undertaken during the period July – September 2009, during which the majority of national grants schemes administrators and beneficiaries were on leave. On return, both groups provided views about the process and individual projects. For reasons stated later, most projects were in their early stages and the identification of progress against project output milestones was not feasible. However, projects need to be completed by 2011 and an assessment was made of the probability of meeting this target. The availability of staff particularly affected the data relating to project selection, where details on selection outcomes were kept in differing statistical formats and, in some cases, had been archived making access impractical within the time constraints. However, the data available to the consultants, with the exception of Bulgaria, was sufficiently robust to be indicative of the general impact.

1.4.2 Other issues

The Review has relied on (but not duplicated) the findings of the two recent reports on the operation of the grants scheme: The Mid-term Evaluation of the EEA Grants, Evaluation Report 3/2008 (Norad) (August 2008) and A Review of the Selection Process and Dialogue in the Implementation of the EEA Grants (Nordic Consulting Group) (April 2008). The aim of this Review has been to focus on how the grants schemes have supported biodiversity and with what consequences, and what can be done to improve the targeting of current and future support.

The Review has not addressed adherence to fiduciary regulations and processes whether in Donor countries or beneficiary states unless it has impacted on the project progress or the viability of grants schemes.

2. EEA AND NORWAY GRANTS IN CONTEXT OF OTHER SUPPORT

In this Chapter, the contribution from EEA and Norway Grants is put into the wider context EU and national support to biodiversity in each country.

2.1 EU LIFE FUNDS

The LIFE mechanism is the EU's financial instrument supporting environmental and nature conservation projects in EU member states as well as in some candidate, acceding and neighbouring countries. Since 1992, LIFE has co-financed some 2,750 projects, contributing approximately €1.35 billion to the protection of the environment. The take-up of LIFE – Third Countries[12] funding, applicable to prospective member states, has been variable. In the period 1992-2006, projects have been awarded in Cyprus (17); Estonia (3+ 1 International); Latvia (1); Lithuania (1); Malta (8); Poland (1+ 1 International); and Slovenia (2). The level of financial assistance is significantly lower than that available through other mechanisms, usually a maximum of 50%.

The general objective of the new LIFE+ programme is to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of Community environmental policy and legislation, including the integration of the environment into other policies, thereby contributing to sustainable development. This now extends to support for demonstration and/or innovation projects contributing to the implementation of the objectives of the Commission Communication COM (2006) 216 final: "*Halting the loss of Biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond*". The overall budget for the period 2007-2013 is €2.143 billion.

The most recent annual allocation, for 2008, is €207.5 million, with a minimum allocation of 50% to Nature and Biodiversity projects. Indicative allocations, per member state, are as follows:

Table 4. LIFE+ (2007-2013) Indicative allocations per country for 2008

Member State	Allocation 2008 (€)	Member State	Allocation 2008 (€)
Austria	3,895,038	Latvia	2,750,000
Belgium	4,282,100	Lithuania	2,856,683
Bulgaria	4,467,666	Luxembourg	2,268,234
Cyprus	2,200,000	Malta	2,384,000
Czech Republic	4,117,414	Netherlands	6,654,410
Denmark	5,095,709	Poland	9,830,858
Estonia	3,438,168	Portugal	5,810,890
Finland	7,431,275	Romania	9,033,381
France	18,154,414	Slovakia	3,170,514
Germany	24,152,660	Slovenia	4,471,481
Greece	7,053,895	Spain	22,228,050
Hungary	5,186,640	Sweden	8,528,922
Ireland	3,267,012	United Kingdom	16,505,268
Italy	18,265,318	**TOTAL**	**207,500,000**

[12] See LIFE-Third Countries 1992-2006 - European Communities (2007).

The sum of allocations for the 15 countries eligible for EEA and Norway Grants is almost M€ 90 for 2008. Thus there is estimated to be at least M€ 45 per year (total M€ 225 over five years) allocated for nature and biodiversity projects, which can be compared with the M€ 34 made available through EEA and Norway Grants for 2004-2009.

The budget for all member states assumes a gradual, increasing annual commitment to LIFE+ projects, with allocations of €225 million in 2009 and €240 million in 2010. Overall, this is a substantial re-focusing of support for biodiversity, moving away from the previous policy of linking support closely to NATURA designation.

2.2 EU STRUCTURAL FUNDS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Economic development in the EU has been guided by the 'Lisbon Strategy' (March 2000), aimed at making the EU the most competitive economy in the world and achieving full employment by 2010. This strategy, developed at subsequent meetings of the European Council, rests on three pillars:

- An economic pillar preparing the ground for the transition to a competitive, dynamic, knowledge-based economy. Emphasis is placed on the need to adapt constantly to changes in the information society and to boost research and development.
- A social pillar designed to modernise the European social model by investing in human resources and combating social exclusion. The EU member states are expected to invest in education and training, and to conduct an active policy for employment, making it easier to move to a knowledge economy.
- An environmental pillar, which was added at the Göteborg European Council meeting in June 2001, draws attention to the fact that economic growth must be decoupled from the use of natural resources.

In this period, the EU has also addressed the disparity in regional economic development and prosperity through the targeted use of Structural Funds. The Funds available in the period 2007-2013 are:

- The Cohesion Fund – to reduce the economic and social shortfall in areas where the Gross National Income is less than 90% of the Community average. The Cohesion Fund finances Trans-European Transport Networks and activities related to the environment where the Fund gives priority to drinking-water supply, treatment of wastewater and disposal of solid waste. The combined assistance from EU funds can reach 90% of the project cost.[13]
- The European Regional Development Fund – correcting imbalances between regions through sustainable employment, infrastructure, financial instruments to support regional and local development and technical assistance measures.
- European Social Fund - improving employment and job opportunities and strengthening human capital.
- INTERREG IVC - funding for all regions of Europe plus Switzerland and Norway (regional and local public authorities) to exchange and transfer knowledge and good practice. Two main priorities are targeted: '*Innovation and Knowledge economy*' and '*Environment and Risk prevention*'.[14]

An important characteristic of the Structural Funds is that in order to apply for funds, member states must have a *National Strategic Reference Framework*,[15] and the strategic objectives and priorities must be set out in national *Operational Programmes*.

[13] http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funds/procf/cf_en.htm.

[14] http://www.interreg4c.eu/. Launched in 2007, the programme will run until 2013.

[15] Prepared under Community Strategic Guidelines.

In the period 2007-2013, allocations to environmental protection and risk prevention from the Structural Funds budget amounted to € 34 billion (from a total € 308 billion at 2004 prices) for the ten new member states from Central and Eastern Europe, or, overall, 20% of their collective allocation ranging from 19% in Slovakia to 30% in Romania.

2.3 COMPLEMENTARY NATIONAL FUNDING

All external funding requires a varying contribution from national budgets, broadly ranging from 25-50% for LIFE+ projects (25% for projects related to priority species or priority habitats under the Birds and Habitats Directives), 30-50% for Structural Funds to 10-40% for the EEA and Norway Grants. Together, the co-financing contributions can represent a significant allocation from the national budget, with the result that both overall government priorities and public expenditure policy are likely to shape the way projects emerge. The competition for complementary funding also could mean that the government selects cheaper routes to achieve its policy objectives, for example, preferentially using the EEA and Norway Grants to meet its NATURA objectives, against using these flexible grants for innovative projects. Within the time available, it was not possible to quantify the total national funding for biodiversity projects in the 15 beneficiary states. However, the Polish National Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for 2007-2013 estimates the national costs of the planned activities for biodiversity protection for 2008-2013 at approximately M€ 41 (from a total of approximately M€ 69).

2.4 FUTURE FUNDING

In the last two years, EU funding, especially through LIFE+ and Structural Funds, has started to catch up with the biodiversity policy initiatives set out in 2001. Even so, only some 10% of the overall budget of €2.143 billion had been committed by mid-2009, and many of these projects are at an early stage. The EC LIFE-Nature unit accepts that much more needs to be done in defining the issues to be addressed (beyond biodiversity monitoring indicators, conservation and the implementation of conservation plans) and the definition of the types of actions which will deliver the policy objective of halting the loss of biodiversity.

Further issues under review for possible incorporation in LIFE+ projects include:[16]

- Integration of biodiversity concerns into agriculture, urban management, forestry, river basin management, etc.
- Adequate commitments to ensure the further utilisation and/or implementation of the findings generated.
- Projects to be in line with national or regional biodiversity strategies.
- Appropriate amount of networking, partnership building, information, communication and awareness raising activities.
- Projects to aim at strengthening the knowledge base – monitoring, assessment and dissemination of the project results.

The welcome extension of the scope of LIFE+ (from the perspective of biodiversity support) gives potential Project Promoters new funding opportunities. This would permit the development of more innovative opportunities for EEA and Norway Grants.

[16] Source: LIFE+ Seminar (Sarajevo 15/10/2009) Joaquim Capitão, European Commission, DG Environment, LIFE-Nature Unit.

3. SELECTION OF BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS

This Chapter looks at why biodiversity projects are not prioritised sufficiently by the beneficiary states and provides the basis for recommendations to increase the number of successful grant awards supporting biodiversity. It provides responses to the seven evaluation questions in the ToR (see Box 1).

Box 1. Evaluation questions

EQ1. Why are biodiversity projects not prioritised sufficiently by the beneficiary states and what should be done about it?

EQ2. Have the calls for proposals been sufficiently focused and clear?

EQ3. Does the project ranking system fully reflect the importance of these types of projects?

EQ4. Is the pressure to promote biodiversity projects lower compared to pollution-oriented projects, and if so, what is the explanation for this situation?

EQ5. Are there unexplained national differences in the selection, take-up, type of project, etc?

EQ6. Is the institutional capacity in the beneficiary states sufficient in order to attract funding?

EQ7. Can national environmental NGOs play a larger part in relation to biodiversity protection in the countries that received support?

As described in Chapter 1, research was carried out in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia to assess whether the selection process itself had in some way put projects with a biodiversity theme at a disadvantage. The Focal Point in Bulgaria was unable to provide any statistics on the impact of the selection process at the time of the review. Research was also carried out in Slovenia to find out why no projects had emerged with biodiversity as a main sub-sector or as a component.

3.1 THE SELECTION PROCESS

3.1.1 Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland

Evidence from the Focal Points suggests that there is substantial potential for biodiversity type projects, especially in the Czech Republic and Slovakia which is frustrated by limitations on budgets. That is to say, specific budgets for environment and sustainable development were pre-allocated, and the ranking system did not give any priority to biodiversity projects. In Slovakia it is also evident that the government, through the relevant ministries, could do more to assist potential Project Promoters if funds became available.

In the Czech Republic, three calls for proposals were made,[17] and overall, some 90 projects were considered, of which 19 projects had biodiversity as a main sub-sector (total value M€ 9). Four projects were rejected during the administrative compliance check. Four of the highest ranking projects went forward and were accepted for grant assistance (total value M€ 1.7), and the remaining 11 were rejected because the (Czech) budget for environment and sustainable development activities could not accommodate them (total value M€ 5.2). The overall success rate was 21%.[18] Further details had been archived and could not be retrieved in the time available.

Slovakia had a similar experience with 37 projects overall being approved by the Focal Point out of a total of 443 proposals within Call 1.[19] Of these, 47 proposals related to environment and 5 were approved (10% success), of which one was biodiversity. In Call 2, 21 environment proposals were received and 6 were approved by the Focal Point (29% success). Only one submitted project was biodiversity, and this was rejected by the FMO because of the necessity to acquire land to implement it, for which there was inadequate time, and possible legal problems. The reasons for the rejection of the environmental projects under both calls involved failure to pass through administrative compliance or

[17] Call 1, 18 May 2005, closed 15 August 2005; Call 2, 24 July 2006, closed 26 October 2006, and Call 3, 26 November 2007, closed 29 February 2008.

[18] Call 1: 1 out of 7; Call 2: 2 out of nine; Call 3: 1 out of three.

[19] Call 1, 23 December 2005, closed on 23 March 2006.

technical evaluation, including the necessity to acquire land to implement the project, or else the allocation for the priority was not sufficient to cover all successful projects.[20] The projects were ranked and those with highest score selected for funding.

In Poland, in contrast to the Czech Republic and Slovakia, severe curtailment of projects was not necessary. Interviewees confirmed that no special priority was given to biodiversity projects in the selection process, in accordance with the agreed procedures. The Polish Focal Point provided data on the overall and biodiversity grant applications.[21] From the twelve biodiversity proposals (value € 7.7 million) arising from three calls for proposals, drawn from biodiversity projects as main subsector and one component,[22] eight biodiversity projects were approved (value € 4.3 million). The reasons for rejection were incomplete administrative documentation (2 projects), problems maintaining the partnership arrangements before submission to the FMO (1 project), and low scoring on the pre-submission assessment (1 project). The Focal Point received more applications overall than it had expected, but the number of biodiversity projects was at an average level.

Applicants appeared to have a much higher interest in infrastructure projects than in the 'soft' projects funded by EEA and Norway Grants. One reason is that municipalities did not see protection of biodiversity as a pressing issue. The main advantage of the grants was stated to be that they promote innovation and a creative approach to biodiversity work.

3.1.2 Slovenia

Slovenia did not participate in the large grants for biodiversity projects. In the call for proposals for the EEA and Norway Grants, only the six main fields were mentioned, and the only reference to biodiversity was in the Memorandum of Understanding (included in the documentation with the call for proposals).[23] As a result, only one project was submitted with an explicit mention of biodiversity, but as this duplicated an application from the same promoter for an NGO grant, the large grant was rejected.

The reasons for the lack of proposals suggested from this research are that Slovenia is a small country and there is not a sufficiently strong leadership from the government in terms of a well developed and precisely structured country-wide biodiversity conservation strategy which would attract this scale of funding. The Slovenian Biodiversity Conservation Strategy is very general and has become out-dated, although NATURA 2000 requirements are understood and represent a form of strategy applicable to NATURA 2000 sites, which cover about one third of Slovene territory. Citizens have a poor understanding of 'biodiversity' as an issue, with its perceived high-quality natural environment in contrast with the perceived menace of 'pollution' – which is well understood. NGOs are mostly small, have small budgets and cannot lead in large projects.

Slovenia did apply successfully for funding for smaller projects. Here the perceived profile of biodiversity was low, masked by environment/ecology, and in other funding areas it was not flagged. If the biodiversity objectives were more explicit, the criteria for funding could have been clearer, and more projects would have emerged. Given the state of NGO development, micro-grant funds (say €1,000 - €10,000) would have been useful for study visits abroad, and training in project management skills.

[20] One proposal was withdrawn voluntarily because of an adverse local assessment report.

[21] Call 1 was made on 5 September 2005 and closed on 30 November 2005. A total of 212 submissions were received (value € 298 million), of which 185 projects were approved (value € 254 million). Under Call 2, on 2 January 2007, a further 189 projects (value € 209 million) were approved. Call 3, on 1 February 2008, produced 51 projects in total.

[22] See Table 1: Biodiversity projects or components by beneficiary state (2004-2009).

[23] A Slovene translation of the Memorandum of Understanding was included in the documentation with the call for proposals, where biodiversity is mentioned specifically, and applicants were instructed to refer to Annex B of the Memorandum when filling in point 4.3 in the application form.

3.1.3 Four country overview

***EQ2**. Have the calls for proposals been sufficiently focused and clear?*

In answer to EQ2, very few project proposals were rejected on technical grounds, and this demonstrates that calls for proposals were sufficiently focused and clear. In the Czech Republic, for example, all of the projects were selected based on the strict criteria and focused on the protection of endangered animal and plant species. In the examination of the sample projects in Chapter 4, the reviewers also conclude that the proposals were sufficiently focused and clear.

***EQ3.** Does the project ranking system fully reflect the importance of these types of projects?*

In answer to EQ 3, the ranking system was perceived to be crude, and in none of the sample countries was the ranking system used to give priority to biodiversity projects.

***EQ4**. Is the pressure to promote biodiversity projects lower compared to pollution-oriented projects, and if so, what is the explanation for this situation?*

In answer to EQ4, the pressure to promote biodiversity projects is lower compared to pollution-oriented projects. Poland is an example of a country that seems to demonstrate a preference for infrastructure projects above biodiversity projects. Such a preference is easy to understand, as both the general public and politicians commonly prefer investments that have a relatively immediate and concrete output. The public wants to see that its rivers or its waste disposal sites, for example, are cleaner, and are not so concerned with conservation of species or habitats of which they are not aware. Politicians want to be able to point to tangible successes during their tenure in areas such as mitigation of pollution which are of local concern to their constituents, and for which there is transparent and effective monitoring and enforcement at local, national and EU levels.[24] Even where threats to local biodiversity have been identified, remediation is often seen as the application of pollution control techniques. In terms of local government powers and responsibilities, national and regional biodiversity issues are a matter for national authorities. The local connection with biodiversity conservation is evident from the positive response to small grants schemes, but it is not seen as an issue big enough to drive the local political agenda.

***EQ5**. Are there unexplained national differences in the selection, take-up, type of project, etc?*

In answer to EQ5, there are clear differences in beneficiary countries, and these have been discussed above. No unexplained differences were encountered during the review.

3.1.4 Prioritisation of biodiversity projects

***EQ1**. Why are biodiversity projects not prioritised sufficiently by the beneficiary states?*

In the Czech Republic there are plenty of biodiversity projects, but the number proceeding is restricted by a pre-agreed internal budget limit for environment and sustainable development activities financed under EEA and Norway Grants. As stated above, Poland showed a preference for infrastructure projects. In Slovakia, the problem does not seem to be with the government, except that it could perhaps help with making land acquisition easier. Many potential projects require the acquisition of sites or lease of land for monitoring stations, information sites, etc. Challenges to the legal capacity of NGO partners to acquire land as well as the utilisation of public funds to do so, has meant a number of projects have been withdrawn.

24 For example, compliance with Directive 91/271/EEC concerning urban wastewater treatment was adopted on 21 May 1991.

In Slovenia, biodiversity projects are not prioritised because the size of EEA and Norway grant for biodiversity support is currently too large for a small country having few appropriate Project Promoters and partners willing to promote this size of project, a poor understanding of biodiversity issues (as opposed to 'pollution' issues), and the very small size of NGOs with low budgets operating in this area.

One of the problems of prioritisation and selection of biodiversity projects is the lack of clear understanding of what constitutes a biodiversity project. As explained in Section 1.2.1, it is logical to concentrate biodiversity projects on NATURA 2000 sites. On the other hand, it can also be argued that investment in pollution protection infrastructure, for example, can have a positive effect in unprotected areas, where cleaner air, cleaner water, and remediated land can encourage an increasing diversity of species.

3.2 OVERVIEW OF APPROVED BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS

Following the selection process, 52 projects with a significant biodiversity impact were approved and implemented in 13 countries (see Table 1); 23 projects with biodiversity as a main sub-sector within the priority sector *Protection of the Environment* and a further 29 projects have biodiversity as a component within: *Academic Research*, *Promotion of Sustainable Development* or *Protection of the Environment*. The biodiversity issues dealt with by the 52 projects are given in Table 5,[25] and it can be seen that they are similar, whether as main sector, or a component. In Annex 4, the project purpose and key activities and outputs are given for each project.

Table 5. 52 projects involving biodiversity

Project	Project title
BG0031	Belasitsa mountain - Castanea sativa preservation
BG0034	Conservation of biodiversity in hot-spots of glacial relict plants in Bulgaria
BG0052	Biodiversity Monitoring System
BG0061	Strandja Mountain - biodiversity conservation model
CY0012	National Pafos forest integrated management plan
CZ0048	Improving the state of the natural environment in the Bohemian Switzerland National Park
CZ0071	Revitalising and preserving selected areas of endangered meadow localities, with the overall objective of preserving biodiversity in the Zlín Region
CZ0072	New recovery programmes and implement already existing ones for endangered species
CZ0121	Increasing the area of environmentally responsibly managed forest in compliance with the Czech Forest Stewardship Council to improve the protection of forest ecosystem biodiversity in the Czech Republic.
CZ0138	Improved knowledge on endangered species and habitats not monitored under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives.
EE0011	Implementation of NATURA 2000 in Estonian Marine Areas (ESTMAR)
EE0018	Estonian biodiversity database
EE0044	Ida-Virumaa - Management plans for riverine habitats
EE0045	Mires Inventory completion for maintaining biodiversity
EL0022	Rodopi - Introducing land, water and environmental management
EL0024	Ileia - Reforestation and restoration of ecosystems
EL0040	Thermaikos gulf - protection of the marine environment
EL0041	Arkadia - Restoring destroyed forests and promoting environmental education
EL0047	Lakonia - Restoration of forests afflicted by fires
ES0010	Promotion Campaign for NATURA 2000 Network
ES0035	Andalusia - Forest fire rehabilitation
HU0127	Vacratot - renewable energy
LV0052	Sustainable use and management of nature resources

[25] The 15 projects that were the subject of this detailed review are shaded green.

LV0070	Daugavpils - Improved nature park management
LV0072	Zedmgale - improved nature park management
LT0071	Strengthening institutional capacities for implementation of international conventions in agricultural landscape in Lithuania
PL0073	Modelling biomass energy production
PL0078	Marine ecosystem mapping
PL0082	Biebrza National Park - Red Bog ecological research
PL0103	Improved marine environment information management
PL0108	Carpathians - NATURA 2000 Protection and Education Initiative
PL0265	Krakow - Vegetation on calamine soils
PL0268	Kampinos national park - development of method for reconstruction of primary hydrological conditions
PL0349	Protection of lynx, wolf and bear
PL0372	Szczecin - Environment education network
PL0419	Factors of Population Extinction Risk
PL0452	Tczew - Establishing a didactic footpath in a bird mainstay
PL0451	Poznanski - education network and conservation of hermit beetle
PL0468	Waminsko-Mazurkie - study of autochthonous whitefish in Łebsko Lake
PL0476	Masovia - Geographic Information System on wetlands and dry grasslands
PL0494	Czarna Orawa - River basin protection (NATURA 2000)
PT0038	Mourela Plateau - sustainable use of heathlands
PT0039	SAFESEA - Sustainable local fisheries and cetaceans protection
PT0040	CONDOR - Azorean Seamount Ecosystem Observatory
PT0041	Castro Verde SPA - agricultural practices and eco-tourism
RO0019	Mures River Basin - water resource management
RO0023	Hateg County - conservation of bio and geodiversity
SK0025	Sensitive redevelopment of the mine premises in Dubnik which provide winter bat roosts, linked with monitoring and a bat census
SK0061	Tatranska Javorina - alpine biology research institute
SK0088	Protection & Preservation of Biodiversity in Historical Structures of Agricultural Landscape
SK0115	Development of management models for grassland habitats
SK0121	Restoration of the breeding and food habitats of the water bird species in the Eastern Slovakia lowlands

The subject matter of the projects can be categorised into research, education, public awareness and measures focused on conservation of flora and fauna. It can be seen from Table 6 that two thirds of projects fall into the latter category (35 of 52).

Table 6. Types of biodiversity project

Country	Conservation of flora/fauna	Research	Education	Public awareness
Bulgaria	4			
Cyprus	1			
Czech Republic	5			
Estonia	4			
Greece	5			
Hungary	0		1	
Latvia	1			2
Lithuania	0			1
Poland	5	5	4	1
Portugal	4			
Romania	1	1		
Slovakia	4	1		
Spain	1			1
Total	**35**	**7**	**5**	**5**

The analysis in Table 6 supports the perceived need relating to scientific underpinning of biodiversity actions and the management of protected sites. Although all projects have a promotion and publicity plan, most do not extend far beyond the academic/professional community, or in the case of draft management plans, short site-related public presentations. Limited emphasis is placed on public education, and the raising of public awareness, by major co-funders (LIFE+ and EEA) in support of a general understanding of the issues and how the public can make a difference. Interviews with biodiversity experts in the UK have indicated that the typical EEA and Norway Grants' project funding (< €500,000) would be insufficient for a public communication project. Furthermore, it would be difficult to find a non-commercial project promoter for what would normally be a public information programme. Within the biodiversity sector, there is a strong preference for more scientific studies.

3.3 POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Interviewees in all four countries, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia, were clear about the policy, the policy obligations for biodiversity and where they were located in the government structures. The need of horizontal connections was acknowledged, mainly through compliance with requirements of EU Structural Funds and Common Agricultural Policy in the form of national plans.

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, the body primarily responsible for the development and implementation of the environmental policy is the Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW). Its Executive Environmental Agency is responsible for monitoring activities. The MoEW has awarded through Enterprise for Management of Activities in Environmental Protection (EMAEP) the collection and systematisation of scientific information on the national list of protected areas.

Although there is a generally well-developed regulatory framework for biodiversity conservation, there are certain restrictions and threats to its implementation. According to interviewed experts, the main characteristics and shortcomings that need to be resolved include:

- improving interaction between key governmental institutions and organisations;
- increasing the effectiveness of controls and the imposition of fines and penalties;
- strengthening the administrative capacity and financial resources of state and local municipal authorities to implement national policy;
- overcoming fragmentation due to unclear obligations and responsibilities at this level.

In addition, rapid progress is limited by ineffective preventive instruments to protect biodiversity, inadequate enforcement, inadequate of financing for conservation of biodiversity, gaps in scientific knowledge and an outdated base for research.

Progress in implementation of the agricultural development plan shows that agri-environmental activities are still not properly underway. The Biological Farming Plan is being implemented very slowly with funding from the national budget. NATURA 2000 activities are underway, but there is lack of clarity on how management planning of NATURA 2000 sites will be done, and how it relates to the planning process for protected areas.

The Czech Republic

According to interviewed experts, there is currently an upsurge of political interest in biodiversity (similar to Poland). The Ministry of Environment assumes the overall responsibility, but all other ministries are officially obliged to contribute to the biodiversity

objectives in their activities. Relative horizontal influence depends on the strength of the negotiating parties and is influenced by political priorities. Officially all ministries follow the national legislation but no universal rule, reflecting the commitment to biodiversity is applied. At the time that NATURA started, a comprehensive mapping exercise was carried out. In many cases monitoring is running quite well, and annual monitoring covers 4,000 areas, including 60 habitats and 174 species (more than 400 monitoring agents provide tens of thousands of data every year).

Poland

In Poland, the Ministry of Environment is responsible for the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives, and in 2007 issued a '*National Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for 2007-2013*'. Against the background of the delay in policy implementation in most countries beyond the targets set, Poland has recently intensified efforts to demonstrate commitment to meet the EU targets. But even in Poland, according to interviewed experts, the 2010 commitment is made unrealistic by excessively slow implementation of the NATURA 2000 network, lack of confidence in the beneficial outcome by legal entities and local communities, insufficient research capacity, little pressure from the public to move politicians, insufficient financial resources compared with the responsibilities, and limited nature conservancy administration and enforcement. The linkages between environmental and agriculture or infrastructure policy are still weak, and interviewees identified a need for improvement in the dialogue between the ministries involved, although discussions are taking place between the Ministry of Environment and the ministries of Infrastructure, and Agriculture), and the Ministry of Environment has been actively promoting open consultations with the various stakeholders on the NATURA 2000 network.

Slovakia

Although responsibility rests with Ministry of Environment and its sub-ordinated body, the State Nature Protection/Conservation, according to interviewed experts there are real issues when dealing with horizontal issues. There is no clear policy, and biodiversity priorities are influenced by political decisions, economic interests, etc. Implementation progress is reported annually but no measurable indicators are provided. Financial sources from the state budget are used to ensure the operation of the established administration and sub-ordinated bodies, but there are limited resources available for the real measures, maintenance and establishment of the monitoring system. The resources are mostly used to ensure that the reporting obligations resulting from the EU environmental directives are implemented.

Slovenia

Slovenia is a small country with only 2 million inhabitants, but with well preserved biodiversity (the highest ratio in the EU of NATURA 2000 area to total land area - more than one third). The competent authority for biodiversity is mostly the Ministry of Environment, but forests (including game animals) and waters (inland and marine) are covered by the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Food. Biodiversity has not been very high on the internal priority lists in either ministry, and there is little inter-sectoral coordination with other ministries.

Formal instruments for the protection of biodiversity have been mostly developed, but often have not been implemented adequately. The Biodiversity Conservation Strategy does not have an action plan and a huge area of NATURA 2000 network is still without active management plans more than 5 years after registration. Apart from NATURA 2000, there is no clear-cut nature conservation policy/strategy and so the importance of biodiversity topics is prone to rapid changes in line with changes in the Government.

The state nature conservation services lack sufficient strength and effectiveness to maintain the huge NATURA 2000 network and in addition to handle pressure from other sectors and private industry. The Institute for Nature Conservation has been very reluctant to share projects with other competent institutes and/or NGOs.

3.3.1 Five country overview

> ***EQ6**. Is the institutional capacity in the beneficiary states sufficient in order to attract funding?*

In terms of the adequacy of institutional capacity in the beneficiary states to attract funding, all countries have appropriate ministries and agencies and policy frameworks that allow or encourage the selection of projects from the side of the Donors. However, the variety of problems set out above for the ten countries participating in projects with biodiversity as a main sub-sector confirms the importance of the Donor approach of an assessment of national capacity to manage projects, supported by a Memorandum of Understanding, and a thorough compliance scrutiny and external *ex ante* evaluation of potential projects.

The *niche* role performed by the EEA and Norway Grants has been confirmed by commentators and beneficiaries, although there were some criticisms about timing. In practice, the Donors decide the conditions and implementation plan and the FMO has done its best: (i) to protect their interests[26] and (ii) meet the timetables set.

Future schemes need to take account of the range of requirements identified, both target points (national, regional and local) and the overall size of the grants available. The issues raised also bear on other grant priorities, such as development of human resources, support for NGOs, and access to expertise at a local level. The inter-ministry handling of biodiversity issues is difficult, with evidence of continuing pressure on the environment in general, and biodiversity in particular, from agriculture and economic development.

Being prepared to enforce the legislation is one key to success. Although national legislation relating to biodiversity is clear, enforcement on the ground is different, as has been noted in other EU member states. Citizens can apply to local courts to stop, for example, inappropriate economic development in protected sites, but such actions may be unpopular and opposed when the proposed development is linked with jobs and local prosperity. Court action is generally slow, especially if local rulings are appealed to higher courts. Higher court considerations of issues relating to the implementation of European legislation are generally referred to the ECJ, which has taken a very firm stance on compliance. The EC, to assist citizens' understanding of the application of legislation relating to biodiversity, published information about the rulings of the ECJ on the Habitats and Birds Directives in 2006.[27]

3.4 THE ROLE OF NGOS

Bulgaria

In the field of biodiversity protection, there are a number of NGOs in Bulgaria which have the capacity and commitment to contribute to policy making and implementation. However, the lack of financial strength (for most) leads to limited strategic thinking and the inability to pursue their ideas on a long-term basis.

[26] Including lengthy project clearance times with DG Environment.

[27] Nature and Biodiversity Cases: Ruling of the European Court of Justice, EC, 2006.

External donors are needed at this stage in Bulgaria, especially in the field of biodiversity protection where, although there is public support for the principle, there are insufficient examples of the practice. Projects should engage NGOs in dialogue with local communities and stakeholders for the development of specific activities which would contribute both to biodiversity protection and local economic development. A variety of larger-scale projects are needed, some to demonstrate that results from pilot schemes can be scaled up.

In the view of potential beneficiaries, the most important role of the grants scheme is to stimulate innovation, experimentation and the introduction of new techniques to Bulgaria, particularly at the municipal level. There is a substantial need for real demonstrations of new approaches and technologies that would balance the pressure for economic development with the need for nature protection and, in particular, biodiversity protection in a country with one of the most important biodiversity heritages in Europe. Demonstrating feasibility in the local context is seen as being an important factor for the take up of new technologies.

The Czech Republic

The third sector in this area is very active, with a wide range of activities. Most NGOs provide awareness raising and promotion activities in the area of environment and work, particularly with pupils and students. A few are very strong, recognised institutions with numerous regional branch offices; some are dealing with the administration of the grant schemes.

Although EU sources are by far the most important external funds supporting biodiversity activities, the EEA and Norway Grants represent a source for the Czech Republic which enables more complex/ larger projects to progress, which could not otherwise be supported.

Poland

Despite the historic inertia on the side of government, interviewees confirmed that environmental NGOs currently play an invaluable role in lobbying for support to biodiversity projects and in participating in projects. Accordingly, there is a significant interest in EEA and Norway Grants.

Interviewees agreed that large projects should support the strategic dimension of the grants policy, especially when allied to national plans; projects should be evidence based, but the scope should allow innovation, experimentation and risk, which is considered to be a major benefit of the grants. Projects should avoid fragmentation, and for this some measure of co-ordination/ awareness is needed at the top level. However, this did not extend to support for the concept of a sliding scale support mechanism in which the benefits of shared learning from the results of current project are reflected in lower levels of funding for similar projects. Interviewees did not want to see the similarities of projects, but rather focused on the differences between sites and the need for more than one approach to nature conservation projects. NGOs considered that there were catalytic impacts which would come from publicity and promotion of project outcomes.

Interviewees agreed that a low take-up of grants by NGOs and academic bodies for individual projects can be attributed to factors such as the minimum level of € 250,000 for a project, the minimum co-financing required, pre-financing, uncertainty about the exchange rate, and the administrative burden of the application process.

The largest fund financed by the EEA and Norway Grants is the Polish NGO fund. For the time being it has ongoing calls for projects concerning environmental protection and

sustainable development, as well as equal opportunities and social integration.[28] However, while biodiversity features amongst the priorities listed in the Memorandum of Understanding between the donors and Poland, it is not given any special emphasis, and this is reflected in the instructions, '*Procedures for the Polish NGO*'.[29]

Slovakia

The NGO sector is small but in most cases highly competent and professional. There are very few NGOs that could operate as pressure groups and hardly any that could operate as financial partners. Assistance provided to the NGO sector through the Global Environmental Fund is not eligible, bi-lateral assistance is very small and occasional, and NGOs do not belong to the group of eligible applicants for EU Structural Funds. Support can be provided through LIFE and INTERREG but administrative rules make access for NGOs complicated. EEA and Norway Grants, and limited EU assistance, provide practically the only external sources for the sector.

Slovenia

Approximately 5 to 10 years ago, environmental NGOs played the role of partner with the Ministry for Environment. Some formal partnership projects were established and several workshops were organised where important strategic policy topics were discussed. However, the results did not reflect the good impression made, as NGOs' suggestions for key legislation and other documents were mostly ignored. Thereafter, some NGOs tried to cooperate further,[30] while others took up the role of watch-dog. Watch dogs that addressed concerns about potentially profitable projects (e.g. a wind power plant on the border of a NATURA 2000 SCI) faced considerable political and bureaucratic pressure. There is consequently little cooperation currently between NGOs and Government, made more difficult by frequent changes at the political level in the Ministry.

In many projects partly co-financed by State or where State institutions are partners, the commitment of the government institutions are close to zero, which gives the impression that project results are ignored.

In the field of biodiversity, there are very few NGOs with professional staff employed. The majority of Slovenian biodiversity NGOs are small organisations with only few hundred members and no employees. Despite the fact that members may be highly skilled, without employees, complex project management is not possible, and small NGOs can only cooperate as a sub-contractor in some bigger projects.

3.4.1 Overview of five countries

EQ7. Can national environmental NGOs play a larger part in relation to biodiversity protection in the countries that received support?

The ability of environmental NGOs to play a larger part in relation to biodiversity protection varied in the five countries reviewed, and often centred on financial strength and sustainability. The rules for the large projects presents some formidable barriers for NGOs, particularly the minimum grant level (€250,000), the minimum co-financing level, a financial track record, and the resources needed to pre-finance proposals and project work.

[28] http://www.eeagrants.org/id/1053.

[29] Memorandum of Understanding on the Implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2004-2009. See also http://www.funduszngo.pl/images/stories/ecorys/handbook_07_07_24.pdf. Lot II – Environmental protection and sustainable development.

[30] For example, the UNDP project National Capacity Self-Assessment for Global Environmental Management (NCSA).

For Poland and the Czech Republic there are strong national NGOs which have formed capable Project Promoters and partners. Often, these NGOs maintain a national brief on environmental protection issues and have good lobby structures, influencing the implementation of legislation. Outside these organisations (and ignoring Government-financed agencies), NGOs are generally impoverished (Bulgaria), they suffer from frequent changes in legislation (Slovakia) and cannot provide the necessary financial and administrative track record to participate as project promoter. Building local NGO capacity is often done by participation in local government sponsored projects (Poland), where NGOs provide expertise as a contractor.

There may be a role for consortia of national NGOs which would provide the necessary financial and administrative strength to promote larger projects, but evidence from interviews suggests that many NGOs are single-issue based and local, and do not see the need to act together. In terms of engaging NGOs, the small grants funds appear to have been successful, but the potential for significant role for NGOs in larger projects as presently constructed is limited, especially in a small country like Slovenia.

4. PERFORMANCE OF GRANT PROJECTS

4.1 OVERALL PROJECT PERFORMANCE

In this section, the overall performance of the 23 projects with biodiversity as a main sub-sector is assessed. For the 15 projects that were evaluated, the relevance, efficiency, results achieved, impact and sustainability are discussed briefly. The criteria of relevance is discussed for all the biodiversity projects (23 projects with biodiversity as a main sub-sector, 29 projects with biodiversity as a component, and the estimated 430 sub-projects supported through Funds). Finally, the significance of the 52 funded projects is discussed.

4.1.1 Projects with biodiversity as a main sub-sector

Interim evaluation of 15 projects in Bulgaria, Czech, Poland and Slovakia

The independent interim evaluation carried out by PITIJA staff of 15 projects in Bulgaria (3), Czech (4), Poland (5) and Slovakia (3) indicates that 14 projects are performing well (see Annex 5 for details). Notwithstanding a late start (compared with beneficiary expectations), momentum has been maintained and the projects are expected to deliver their results and achieve their objectives during 2011. One practical limitation is that many projects include data collection that is seasonal, and missing a season for whatever reason could lead to insufficient data or the need to extend the project into 2012. Project promoters are well aware of this risk and so far have managed this aspect of the work well.

The only potential exception to the good performance is one project in Slovakia,[31] where activity is blocked by a legal challenge. However, there is an expectation that the legal matters will be concluded in shortly.

In addition, all the projects (and especially the five Polish projects) have the capacity to demonstrate good and transferable practice, which could lead to a wider impact as individual project results are converted into national processes.

Monitoring of eight projects in Cyprus, Estonia, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania and Portugal

According to self-monitoring carried out by Project Promoters and National Focal Points, supported by desk studies, all but one of the projects (Cyprus (1), Estonia (2), Spain (1), Latvia (1), Lithuania (1) and Portugal (1) are progressing well, and are compliant with EEA and Norway Grants requirements for active management and publicity (see Annex 6 for details). Most have experienced delays in starting, but have adjusted their early inputs to keep the projects active and the objectives attainable. All expect their projects to be completed during 2011 and to meet the agreed objectives.

The only potential exception to the good performance is one project in Portugal,[32] where there was a significant delay due to deferred legislation. The project was intended to follow the closure of the local fishery, for which the new legislation was required. This caused a major re-think about the viability of the project, but it is now proceeding, albeit with further delays due to an equipment failure.

[31] Project 0025, Dubnic – *Protection of bats in winter roost* (grant €516,310) for redevelopment and renovation of redundant mine premises, census and monitoring of bat populations. The site is legally protected by the Habitats Directive which requires the Slovak Government to take the steps outlined in the project, but the project cannot start yet.

[32] Project PT0040 - *CONDOR Azorean Seamount Ecosystem Observatory* (grant €408,970). Information as of 20 November 2009.

In addition, as with the evaluated projects, all the self-monitored projects have the capacity to demonstrate good and transferable practice,[33] which again could lead to a wider impact through a wider use of results at national level.

4.2 RELEVANCE AND GRANT DESIGN

In this section, relevance and project design is discussed as part of the consideration of DAC criteria.[34]

4.2.1 Projects with biodiversity as a main sub-sector

All 23 projects (see Table 3) are very relevant to the achievement of national and international biodiversity obligations, both for the management of NATURA 2000 sites and/or research to establish key data to assist with species protection and management. In ten cases, the project includes education and public awareness programmes to help those particularly affected by the existence of the protected site by demonstrating the potential benefits of managed compliance with biodiversity requirements. This latter point is important because citizens need a better understanding of the issues involved in order to make their views known to balance new development and threats to biodiversity (economic development in previously neglected border areas, and extension of agriculture or biomass production and urban infrastructure).

While the sample projects can be classed as relevant, inasmuch as they fit within the national biodiversity objectives, they do not all make a significant contribution to these objectives. In Annex 7, a tentative estimate of level of threat to species has been made, and this indicates that only a few projects can be judged to deal with a very high level of threat, the majority of projects deals with a medium level of threat, and a few projects are judged to deal with a very low or zero threat.

In terms of grant design, the supported projects are in accordance with the *ex ante* requirements of the scheme in terms of type of project, partnership, and co-financing.

Most of projects of this size and scope require the agreement of beneficiaries' government. There is always a risk that government departments do not feel close enough to the project activities and outcomes and do not provide the required commitment, notwithstanding their legal obligations for NATURA 2000 sites. This risk is not always explicitly assessed in the analysis of risk performed in the preparation of the Detailed Appraisal Report (DAR), for example in the cases of PT0039 and SK0025 (see 4.1.1).

4.2.2 Projects with biodiversity as a component

The project purposes of most of the 29 projects with biodiversity as a component (see Annex 3) are in practice not dissimilar from projects with biodiversity as a main sub-sector, and often the difference lies only in emphasis. Based on desk research covering the *ex ante* project evaluation work, all projects are very relevant to the achievement of national and international biodiversity obligations and/or research to establish key data to assist with species protection and management. Some projects extend biodiversity issues into the man-made environment, with projects in water management, agricultural practices and eco-tourism. It is noteworthy that this group extends the spread of biodiversity projects to Greece, Hungary and Romania, leaving only Malta and Slovenia without major projects.

[33] As described in the monitoring reports.

[34] Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

4.2.3 Biodiversity projects supported through Funds

Funds for small projects provide an opportunity to support the 'bottom-up' approach and the expectation should be a variety of sub-projects reflecting local issues, but in the same context as major projects. A total of around 430 sub-projects (EEA and Norway Grants of approximately M€ 29) (see Annex 2) have been identified as supporting biodiversity and environmental protection actions, of which 165 sub-projects (with a contribution of approximately M€ 14.9) have a 'biodiversity' issue in the title. Academic support has ranged from just over € 2,000 for the preparation of a proposal for academic research into the protection and management of unique river bank forest eco-systems in the Czech Republic to € 1,600,000 for research into the response of marine and terrestrial eco-systems to climate change, linking physical environment, biodiversity of zooplankton and seabird populations. Community support includes many small schemes which improve environmental understanding, improve negotiating skills and investigate the local flora and fauna. This variety is maintained in all participating counties: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia.

4.3 EFFICIENCY OF IMPLEMENTATION

4.3.1 Projects with biodiversity as a main subsector

Of the 15 projects, 14 have now started. There was an expectation by the beneficiaries that projects could plan to start during 2008, and most planning documents assumed this. The public procurement process has been longer than expected. In the event, projects with a critical data collection phase in (say) Autumn 2008 have commenced, using non-recoverable local funding, whilst others have been able to postpone the start and/or reschedule operations. All Project Promoters have reviewed their present budgets and deem them adequate and appropriate for the purpose of completing the project.

In most cases, Project Promoters have a track record of successful implementation of externally funded projects; all have project managers in place who are charged with ensuring the cost-effective delivery of the project activities.

4.4 RESULTS ACHIEVED AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSISTANCE

In general it is too early to assess whether the activities being contracted will deliver the project objectives. For the 15 projects subject to interim evaluation, the possibility of failure was discussed with Project Promoters/managers and assurances were given that risks were being managed in a constructive way, with special attention to statutory and regulatory permits. It is likely that the objectives will be achieved for all except one or two projects. Project promoters/managers have been realistic about delays in starting. They have proactively used local funding to start the data collection that is critical for results in order to ensure that the projects can deliver the objectives within the planned timetables. The likely results, assuming that projects progress as planned, are summarised in Table 7.

Table 7. Expected results from sample projects

Project	Project title	Project judged to achieve project purpose	Expected result
BG0031	Belasitsa mountain - *Castanea sativa* preservation	√	Good management practices of the conservation of flora
BG0034	Protection of glacial relict plants	√	Scientific knowledge collected and long-term monitoring for flora established
BG0052	Biodiversity Monitoring System	√	Increased effectiveness of the management of biodiversity surveillance
CZ0048	Bohemian Switzerland National Park Environmental Monitoring	√	Monitoring system established, data collected in protected area, and National Park employees trained
CZ0071	Zlin - Revitalisation and preservation of meadows	√	Revitalised and preserved selected areas of endangered meadow localities.
CZ0072	Recovery Programmes for Endangered Species	√	recovery programmes developed and implemented
CZ0138	Moravian-Silesian region - environmental monitoring of endangered species and habitats	√	Endangered species and habitats not monitored under the EU birds and habitats directives monitored and data collected.
PL0108	Carpathians - NATURA 2000 Protection and Education Initiative	√	Local communities included in the management of NATURA 2000 sites, management strategies developed, and information collected.
PL0349	Protection of lynx, wolf and bear	√	Increased populations of lynx, wolf and brown bear. Reduced numbers of farm animals killed by wolves.
PL0452	Tczew - Establishing a didactic footpath in a bird mainstay	√	Inventory of biodiversity evaluated, and wider knowledge amongst population of biodiversity issues. Didactic path available.
PL0468	Waminsko-Mazurkie - study of autochthonous whitefish in Łebsko Lake	√	Programme to protect white fish developed.
PL0494	Czarna Orawa - River basin protection (NATURA 2000)	√	Protection plans for two NATURA 2000 sites
SK0025	Dubnik - Protection of bats in winter roost	Still in doubt	[Should be a completed census of bats in summer and winter, and mine entrances renovated to allow access to bats.]
SK0115	Management models for grassland habitats	√	Database and methodological tool for management of grassland habitats.
SK0121	Besa and Cicarovce - conservation of water bird diversity	√	Management Plan for restoration of meadow habitats. Visitors' information centre and educational trail.

4.5 IMPACT AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE WIDER OBJECTIVES

For the 15 projects subject to interim evaluation, it is too early to state whether the activities carried out will have the planned impact. However, viable plans are in place to ensure that this should happen and active monitoring of activities will allow fine-tuning of project activities and outcomes to achieve maximum impact. Some projects have detailed indicators to monitor progress and steps have been taken to measure progress against them. Most projects are designed to have planned ambitious wider impacts, for example, to use the project experience and results as a demonstration project in a national and international context. In these cases, the mechanism for this has been verified – for example, Project Promoters are committed to presentations in international conferences and networks.

All projects have publicity plans in place to ensure Donor visibility, and many projects go further. Recognising the shortfall in public and institutional understanding of biodiversity issues, some projects have components which actively engage citizens and municipalities during the project and develop the project results (for example, Project PL0452 - *Promotion*

of the sustainable development by usage of the urban natural resources in Tczew, has a commitment from the municipality to take over responsibility for the security of the facilities created by the project).

No unintended impacts were identified, although the risk of disturbing natural habitats while improving others during work in NATURA 2000 sites is a continuing hazard.

The likely impact, assuming that projects progress as scheduled, and achieve the planned results, are summarised in Table 8. In terms of significance, it is estimated that this would be moderate for the majority of impacts and indirect impacts, with a few projects having significant impact, and a few with low or very low indirect impact.

Table 8. Likely impacts from sample projects

Project	Project title	Publicity organised	Project judged to be good example	Likely Impact
BG0031	Belasitsa mountain - *Castanea sativa* preservation	√		Long-term survival of flora
BG0034	Protection of glacial relict plants	√		Stability of mountain ecosystem
BG0052	Biodiversity Monitoring System	√		Decision making supported by reliable information
CZ0048	Bohemian Switzerland National Park Environmental Monitoring	√		Improved management of National Park, improved protection of flora and fauna.
CZ0071	Zlin - Revitalisation and preservation of meadows	√		Additional special species re-established in revitalised localities
CZ0072	Recovery Programmes for Endangered Species	√		Three animal and five plant species protected
CZ0138	Moravian-Silesian region - Environmental monitoring of endangered species and habitats	√		Decision making supported by reliable information
PL0108	Carpathians - NATURA 2000 Protection and Education Initiative	(√)	√	Improved co-operation in environmental protection and economic development. Improved spatial planning, public awareness, and promotion of the Carpathians through improved information management.
PL0349	Protection of lynx, wolf and bear	(√)	√	Migration corridors maintained. Reduced conflict in the environment between large carnivores and human activity
PL0452	Tczew - Establishing a didactic footpath in a bird mainstay	(√)	√	Involvement of local population replicated in other communities. Greater awareness of biodiversity.
PL0468	Waminsko-Mazurkie - study of autochthonous whitefish in Łebsko Lake	(√)	√	White fish in Łebsko Lake restored. Widespread implementation of protection of fish species.
PL0494	Czarna Orawa - River basin protection (NATURA 2000)	(√)	√	Integration of future water management plans with the requirements of nature protection.
SK0025	Dubnik - Protection of bats in winter roost	Still in doubt		[Should be stabilised winter and summer bat populations]
SK0115	Management models for grassland habitats	√		Better management of key grassland habitats.
SK0121	Besa and Cicarovce - conservation of water birds diversity	√		Sustainable habitat for water birds. Local capacity developed to maintain water levels.

4.6 SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a key theme in the *ex ante* project check and is strongly developed in the presentation of successful projects. The sustainability of project outputs has many features:

- The collection of scientific data to be used in future management plans and species protection/ recovery.
- The implementation of long-term management plans.
- Improved public access (and protection for habitats).
- Public education programmes, including publications of permanent value and internet web pages.
- Enhanced skills and experience of researchers, project managers and lobbyists.

All 15 projects subject to interim evaluation demonstrate one or more of these features, so the critical action is to ensure there is a process in place to deliver sustainability. All the projects have activities designed to ensure that the project impact is sustainable. Some projects affect landowners and tenants' rights and negotiations are in place to secure their long-term cooperation. Other programmes provide the basis for ministerial decisions about biodiversity and the basis for cooperation with government/ environment agencies is in place.

Most projects relate to binding legal obligations in respect of species and habitats. This gives well-informed citizens a legal basis for a challenge to any attempt to block or ignore the progress made.

4.7 COMPLETING THE CURRENT PROJECT CYCLE

After a substantial investment in planning and *ex ante* assessment, most EEA and Norway Grants' projects have been started and according to the current evaluation findings are likely to deliver their objectives.

Active monitoring is crucial to maintaining progress and accountability. The large number of projects, and the risk of a project failures, or the need to renegotiate grant conditions in order to complete projects successfully, require systematic risk assessment, based on national and project factors (size, political risk and other uncertainly indicators) to focus on potential problems. This should help determine the priorities for external monitoring. On the basis of the information provided for this Review, systematic self-monitoring by Project Promoters and National Focal Points can be a viable method of collecting information for the majority of projects. FMO staff would need to check for timeliness and completeness of self-monitoring plans.

Inevitably, and in particular because of the willingness of donors to innovate, projects will have a range of outcomes. Bearing in mind the increasing attention to halting biodiversity decline, Project Promoters can contribute to the learning and the quality of advice in any future support to biodiversity, especially in the context of the implementation of plans to safeguard and update the NATURA network.

The appropriateness and impact of the publicity arrangements set out by Project Promoters to publicise the successful outcomes and messages to the various audiences cannot be overstated. Publicity can also distribute good practice. The EC has already tried this in their Good Practice in Action.[35] Just as Project Promoters are committing themselves to international conference with formal deadlines, Donors need to consider with beneficiaries how best to present the successful delivery of their projects to a wider audience in support of public education about biodiversity.

[35] Good Practice in Action: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/nat2000/sust_tourism_gpract.pdf.

5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER BIODIVERSITY ACTIVITIES

This Chapter reviews the outcome of the present EEA and Norway Grants' scheme insofar as it supports biodiversity activities and reflects on the responses from all interviewees – Project Promoters, government officials, academic and independent commentators - about opportunities for further interventions to ameliorate biodiversity decline.

5.1 THE GRANTS SCHEME

Targeting of grants, directed by national Focal Points, appears to have been appropriate in the views of most beneficiaries and commentators (although take-up for biodiversity projects was less than expected by the FMO). For more accurate targeting and easier monitoring of larger projects, more explicit definitions of biodiversity scope and activities could have been specified to help Project Promoters understand what was required. This also applies to invitations issued for the small grants schemes. A database of projects (large and small) has now been established and could be used for this purpose in the future.

From a beneficiary perspective, assistance with NATURA 2000 commitments is welcome. In the near future (2010-2013), potential beneficiary countries are likely to continue to request assistance with compliance with the NATURA 2000 commitments, involving species' research and the preparation and implementation of management plans. This is likely to focus on projects of similar size (€500,000) to the present round.

Projects at all levels need to be co-financed. For larger projects, even the 10% required by the FMO can be substantial, and project partners tend to be a mixture of government financed agencies and national NGOs. The implementation policy of national governments is likely to determine what will be supported and to what extent.

At the local level, co-financing is more varied and can involve local government, NGOs and small citizens' groups. However, even at the local level, national government policies towards NGOs can materially affect their ability to participate through changes to legal and administrative rules which make compliance with the Donor requirements with respect to NGO track records difficult to deliver. The practical effect of this (as evidenced in Slovakia) is later implementation than planned and a reduction in the scope of projects supported.

Invitations to NGOs from government for them to participate in projects as promoters and partners can make a substantial contribution to capacity building for NGOs. Thus, a decision by a potential beneficiary group (for example, at the *voivod* level in Poland) not to participate in the current grants round, has an adverse impact on NGO capacity building.

Two gaps have been identified in relation to building and using NGO biodiversity capacity and expertise: (i) provision for micro-projects for experience (including overseas missions) and skills' training, and (ii) a scheme to engage mid-size municipalities and NGO participation in projects. Both would increase the number of projects (in the case of (i) above substantially) and would require to be managed at the beneficiary country level.

5.1.1 Partnering

Of the major non-academic projects, 12 have EEA partners and 33 do not. Partnering is an important Donor principle for the grant schemes, and the willingness of institutions from the donor states to collaborate with Project Promoters provides a large measure of expertise and assurance. Project Promoters have valued the contribution from EEA partners.

At the commencement of the commitment period, there was a difference of perspective about the role of partners. Beneficiaries initially viewed Donor partners as a necessary project-related input, whereas Donors were contemplating a medium-term relationship, which would endure after the end of the project. This latter objective is now accepted by Project Promoters, but in cases where intermediary environment agencies were used for policy implementation, those agencies themselves appear to be the basis for a longer-term partnership. Individual Norwegian experts have also been used in some projects as a result of the Donor/beneficiary dialogue. EEA institutions welcome project feedback and expect to continue collaboration after project completion.

By contrast, most major academic projects (excluding one project in Slovakia and one in Romania) have EEA partners, often building on previous linkages through EU programmes such as ERASMUS.

Project promoters without an EEA partner have generally justified this choice on the basis of in-house expertise, exemplified by Mediterranean countries – Spain, Greece and Cyprus. Discussion during the pre-contract vetting stage, the Detailed Appraisal Report, carried out by external consultants, indicated that more Project Promoters were considering linkages with EEA institutions but they did not go ahead. They also reported problems with finding appropriate partners in Donor countries that would fit in the project with their expertise and would be able to cooperate as a partner under the non-profit-based financial rules.

It takes time to build a team of biodiversity experts. Moving experts from one part of EU to the other is not always a solution because the needed knowledge is different due to differences in biodiversity (e.g. Slovenia, which is several fold smaller than UK, has twice as many plant species). In addition, skills needed in the field show even greater differences from country to country due to historical, political, religious and economical factors which have all resulted in a specific degree of preservation of nature and a specific public attitude towards nature. So, for example, a nature-conservationist from the Netherlands well experienced in maintenance of small-scale strictly protected natural reserves with strong support of local community, and a lot of volunteers and funds available, cannot use that experience in a Balkan country with >50% coverage of pristine natural forest which has better preserved biodiversity than any forest in the Netherlands, but where the attitude of the local community to the forest is completely different, it merely being a source of game animals for meat and fur, with almost no volunteers, very few funds available, and inadequate protection from the legal system and the relevant institutions.

5.2 INNOVATIVE PROJECTS

The willingness of the EEA and Norway Grants to fund innovative and experimental projects where other financing is not available is widely acknowledged and valued. In practice, although some elements of the larger projects may be innovative, much of what is being achieved is similar to activities funded under EU LIFE, where, is terms of NATURA management plans, there is funding available, but at a higher cost to the beneficiary.

However, innovation is also required in the other aspects of biodiversity support:

- Making the decline in biodiversity a major issue for ordinary citizens. The EC have already concluded that an EU-wide communications campaign of biodiversity and nature is required to meet its objectives to halt the decline in biodiversity and the results from biodiversity projects could form an important part of the campaign.
- Preparing a scheme for biodiversity support in cross-border areas (see 5.2.3). In many parts of Central and Eastern Europe, economic development adjacent to national borders was held back because of the lack of access to markets caused by national frontiers, customs and security. The lack of economic development had the effect in

many cases of preserving habitats and the natural biodiversity of the region. However, within the ten priorities for action identified under INTERREG III, economic and social development take priority over '*Measures for environmental protection*', and '*improving energy efficiency and renewable energy sources*' under which biodiversity might benefit.

5.2.1 Dissemination of results and building a framework for local action

There is an urgent need to maximise the impact of the assistance to ensure that information about biodiversity issues and the project outcomes reaches a citizen-wide audience, with descriptions of the achievements in straightforward terms, including any beneficial impacts for local/national socio-economic development, and why and how individual citizens and groups of citizens should get involved. The latter action would incorporate the results from many of the small grant schemes, and include the learning from projects covering legislation and advocacy, with a model for harnessing local concern for and action about biodiversity loss. The present grant schemes contain projects addressing all of these issues in various countries.

Beneficiary countries' administrations could be asked for proposals to achieve this, and in particular, could set out the framework/context within which this could be done in the form of a '*Bio plan*', which sets out the contribution beneficiaries can make to safeguarding biodiversity. This could include a locally targeted statement:

- Why biodiversity matters locally;
- The legal commitments already given and the timetable for implementation;
- The reasons for gaps in knowledge (scientific and operational);
- How urgent changes can be achieved, especially through local involvement;
- How to get organised to do this.

A number of current projects funded by EEA and Norway Grants capture these elements in NATURA management plans and the best could provide a guide for a national biodiversity protection plan. The present publicity and information requirements could be reviewed and extended to ensure that all projects, including academic research projects, are seen to contribute in some way to this activity. Implementation could be enhanced and localised through the incorporation of effective measures identified in the small grants schemes. Selection from the wide range of projects supported gives choices in approach and avoids the criticism of a *blueprint* approach. The proposed method would anticipate centralised action from the EC and ensure an appropriate vehicle and messages that were customised, thereby increasing the effectiveness of an awareness programme. This would also provide an efficiency gain, maximising the use of the results from all projects.

5.2.2 Engaging local people in science

Certain projects can improve local citizen engagement and understanding about the impact of loss of biodiversity, if they are accessible, inexpensive and supported by user-friendly science. An example would be a community project to recognise and record local flora, a subject which is significantly under-represented in both the small grant schemes, and in popular concern about biodiversity loss, which tend to focus on birds and some other attractive groups, such as butterflies, dragonflies, bats, and mammals. A national programme for a flora census, influenced by the outcomes from projects funded by EEA and Norway Grants, could be devised for village, school, or small group level. This would make a major contribution to local knowledge, especially if it was tied in with an academic-resourced national/ international database (for example the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, GBIF). It would also serve to educate and unite citizens (especially young people) at a local level in a nationally significant programme, similar to bird censuses carried out in other countries, which have wide media coverage.

To optimise this project, participants need access to sufficient scientific information to enable them to categorise flora unambiguously, for which it is crucial to have updated user-friendly determination keys and available topographic standards, preferably an interactive databases using geographic information system (GIS) for geo-referencing of field records. This cannot be done reliably without academic assistance and permanent supervision of data quality and reliability. At the moment, a lot of flora/fauna information is gathered only qualitatively on a rough (national, regional) scale and the databases are often not publicly accessible via internet. In addition, knowledge about the distribution of species is often just accumulated for decades and there is no fresh and reliable information available, which is important in a rapidly changing environment for assessing the real level of threat to species. As the gathering of knowledge in the last decades has often been focused on the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species[36] and NATURA 2000 taxa.[37] In more "ordinary" taxa, the level of knowledge is significantly lower, while these common organisms are important for biodiversity outside the protected areas and for raising awareness about their importance. Some investment may be needed in database development and access to expertise. The European Environment Agency has already invested in updating *Flora Europaea* data and its accessibility, and there are several national and/or regional databases which can serve as a taxonomic standard for data collection. However, checklists without useful determination guides are not very useful. Further updates, which are required, could run in parallel with the fieldwork.

Monitoring/census of more widespread taxa will also produce updated knowledge about the distribution of rapidly spreading non-native (allochtonous) taxa. Particularly those brought from other continents, and which have become naturalized, are potentially threatening for native biodiversity, as several of them have already turned to invasiveness. Invasive alien species (IAS) are among the most important threats to biodiversity on a global scale. In addition to that, several IAS have also huge negative impact on agriculture, such as weeds and pests. Some of them are a direct threat to human health (e. g. *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*, tiger mosquito) or have other negative impact on buildings (*Ailanthus altissima, Buddleja davidii*), or waterways (zebra mussel).

Another set of biodiversity topics connected to interests of local people would be gathering of knowledge of traditional (and also sustainable) use of wild medical plants/fruits/mushrooms and reintroducing that knowledge to the younger generations and urban people to re-establish their connection with nature.

Several such projects could focus on nature outside protected areas, where although availability of information gathered by competent authorities is comparably lower, nature itself is sometimes (e.g. in the peri-urban areas) as important as in protected areas, especially for raising awareness. In these non-protected areas, the positive effects of investment in infrastructure such as wastewater treatment works will be seen in maintaining biodiversity. This illustrates the difficulty of defining biodiversity projects in a non-ambiguous way.

5.2.3 Protecting biodiversity in border areas

Many border areas act as nature reserves as a consequence of their locations. Although, a number of EU funds target economic, social and environmental issues, holistic solutions actively involving local communities and NGOs across borders are often limited by the applied rules. Future EEA and Norway Grants need not be tied in such a way and could focus on the positive socio-economic aspects of diversity, rather than simple economic development.

[36] http://www.iucnredlist.org/about/red-list-overview.

[37] Taxon, or taxa (plural) is a classification or group of organisms (ie, kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, species).

There are choices for implementation. In the past, implementation may have been carried out by agents appointed by various central and local government, but to get the benefit of economics of scale and depth of expertise, an NGO, such as the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, has wide experience in managing publically funded projects in the region, with excellent linkages in all countries. A key task would be to build local NGO capacity to ensure the sustainability of results.

Regional Environmental Center

The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) makes a substantial contribution to the development of environmental thinking in Eastern Europe. The REC has studied the region's environment and guided its stakeholders for more than 15 years. REC experience and knowledge, gained in collaboration with donors and beneficiaries represents an asset for future work. It covers the target area well, with country offices in 17 Central and Eastern European countries (and a head office in Szentendre, Hungary).[38] Its current list of topic areas specifically includes biodiversity (see Box 4). There is scope to use REC offices as implementing partners in the 17 countries, but also to use the central office in Hungary to coordinate cross-border projects involving two or more countries.

Box 2. Topics covered by REC

1. Strengthening institutions for sustainable development.
   - Local initiatives
   - Law, enforcement and compliance
   - Environmental financing
   - International secretariats
2. Capacity building of stakeholders and assisting partnerships.
   - Courses for sustainable development
   - Education
   - Civil society support
   - Implementation of Aarhus Convention, Prtr Protocol and related EU Directives
   - Environmental information
3. Sustainable management and use of natural resources.
   - Biodiversity and rural development
   - Water management
   - Sustainable consumption and production
4. Integration of environmental concerns into the relevant sectors (such as energy, transport, etc).
   - Environmental assessment
   - Climate change
   - Health and environment

5.3 ADDITIONALITY AND CATALYTIC EFFECT

Although most beneficiaries interviewed were sceptical about additionality and catalytic effect, neither the EEA and Norway Grants, nor EU funding, can finance every project to secure and manage NATURA sites. The legal obligation to do this is fixed and remains with national governments. Beneficiaries could prepare plans to 'mass-produce' solutions to common problems, if necessary accepting that such plans only cover, say, 95% of issues on a particular site.

This approach would be more powerful if beneficiary governments were also committed to produce and implement management plans in a reasonable period. Agreement on this approach could be achieved within the context of current projects (howsoever funded) and it would be a useful step towards a national programme approach to biodiversity improvement (if chosen for a further round of EEA and Norway Grants) for major projects. In any case, it would provide a strategic context for a significant part of the grants scheme and a partnership for implementation. The FMO database of projects provides a valuable resource for those planning biodiversity support. Within it there are similar projects in beneficiary and other countries. It would be a requirement that future Project Promoters review what has worked elsewhere in their project preparation plans.

[38] http://www.rec.org/REC/Introduction/whatis.html.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this Review was to establish the underlying causes for the relatively modest take-up of EEA and Norway Grants in support of biodiversity and to propose steps that could be taken to increase support to biodiversity protection. A simplified assessment of the implementation of the biodiversity projects supported under the EEA and Norway Grants has been carried out in order to learn lessons that might influence the design of new ones. The contribution from EEA and Norway Grants has been put in the wider context of national and EU support to biodiversity in each country.

The main conclusions are:

- There was insufficient prioritisation of biodiversity by beneficiary countries, due to preference given to tangible results.
- NGOs found it difficult to participate in large projects.
- Good performance of the majority of the projects selected for EEA and Norway Grants.
- Insufficient public awareness of local biodiversity issues means less political pressure to create projects.
- The innovative characteristics of EEA and Norway Grants are being matched by the EU LIFE+ programme.

Insufficient prioritisation

The number of biodiversity projects coming forward has been restricted, either by pre-set allocations for environment and sustainable development or a decision taken to prioritise pollution abatement infrastructure projects, which have a more obvious and direct impact on the environment and respond to public concern. The calls for proposals were sufficiently focused and clear. The selection process has resulted in broadly comparable projects across beneficiary states, implying a uniform application of the grant conditions.

However, the prominence given to the term 'biodiversity' was low and potential Project Promoters would have been assisted in the formulation of innovative projects by illustration of the kind of activities envisaged. Biodiversity projects have often focused on meeting national commitments to NATURA 2000 site investigations or management plans.

NGOs found it difficult to participate

Although the co-funding requirement (minimum 10%) is very attractive compared with other sources, the ***number of environmental NGOs capable of acting as project partners was limited*** by the scale of the project to a few national NGOs, unless the NGO partners are supported by finance and other guarantees from government agencies. Approved projects have included a wide range of national NGOs, agencies and partner organisations from Donor countries whose specialist knowledge makes a significant contribution to the project.

At the level of project envisaged (greater than €250,000), participation by NGOs as project partners will continue to be limited. NGO consortia with critical mass for project participation, are still rare in Central and Eastern Europe, and tend to focus on lobbying on environmental issues rather than financial participation in project management. National governments could have beneficially given a stronger lead and guidance, especially in small countries with fragmented NGOs. The changing legal requirements affecting NGOs make sustained involvement in grant projects difficult in some countries.

By contrast, ***participation in small project funds has been attractive to NGOs*** facing local biodiversity issues. Approximately 20% of small projects funded have a connection with the local environment and biodiversity. The success and range of the small grants confirms that biodiversity has become a horizontal issue, and enables small, local groups to challenge new developments (especially infrastructure, agriculture and tourism) for its impact on biodiversity.[39] As a result of the projects financed by EEA and Norway Grants, a set of good practice tools for sustainable local development could be assembled.

Good performance of the majority of the projects

The Donor/FMO approach of ***a rigorous* ex ante *evaluation, supported by careful appraisal by Focal Points, has resulted in robust and credible projects***, and particularly relevant to beneficiary country biodiversity commitments. Most of the projects assessed in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia have started; many were supported with non-reimbursable national funding during the approval stage, which underlies the local commitment to succeed. Project managers have been realistic in their assessment of risks of failure to deliver the objectives.

The outputs of many projects are inputs to further substantial and sustainable government activities, particularly the implementation of management plans for NATURA 2000 sites. Officials who are responsible for implementation have high expectations of the quality and appropriateness of these projects. Project promoters are well aware of the need for integrity of the data collected from species studies, which underpins decisions on location and conservation. Many projects include multiple results, for example, six site-specific NATURA management plans, to be completed during 2010. The Focal Points and FMO need to consider that this places a significant but planned burden on the Project Promoter, and reporting procedures for the achievement of individual results should be in place and respected.

Longer-term partnering is an important Donor principle, expected to extend beyond the project phase. This is now understood and welcomed by Project Promoters. Where Donor specialism is not used, convincing reasons have been given for non-use, usually relating to specific aspects of the Mediterranean climate.

[39] This is covered for major projects which require an Environmental Impact Assessment, but smaller developments and agriculture generally are not covered.

The Review has considered biodiversity in the national context and the appropriateness of the grants schemes to potential projects. As set out above, the research indicates that ***biodiversity actions are either derived from commitments at a national level*** (compliance with directives, NATURA 2000 site management, scientific research on biodiversity or development of biodiversity conservation methodology, etc.) or at the local level. In looking at project design, outcomes and impact, for a similar exercise in the future we have identified the continuing need for:

- Large projects (greater than € 500,000) which generally rely of public authorities and legislation to achieve their objectives (top down);
- Small projects (less than € 100,000) which arise at the community level (bottom up).

Interviewees identified a need for particular experience and skills to enable them to participate better in projects and avoid the slower 'learning-by-doing' alternative.

Insufficient public awareness

Of the 52 projects investigated, 42 related to conservation and management plans, and academic research. ***Only ten projects focused on education or public awareness*** which has been identified as a major obstacle for citizens wanting to take action to arrest the decline in biodiversity. All approved projects have publicity plans but many plan dissemination through specialist seminars. A major challenge to all involved in the grant process is to ensure that the results reach a wider audience than hitherto, in terms that they can understand, and calculated to enlist their support.

The consequence of biodiversity loss is not adequately understood and there is insufficient expression of local support to influence local political decisions away from developments that could adversely affect biodiversity, especially local economic development and agriculture projects.

Two activities have been identified where the flexibility of EEA and Norway Grants, both financial and the preparedness to build capacity in local communities and NGOs, could make a difference to biodiversity decline. These are:

- Dissemination of results in order to build a framework for local action and engaging local people in science.
- Biodiversity protection in cross-border areas.

The innovative characteristics are being matched

Many of the projects approved in this grant round, whilst necessary, could have been financed from other programmes available to beneficiaries, in particular the EU LIFE series. For the future, ***the current LIFE+ programme is extending its scope to actions relating to halting the loss of biodiversity*** and will overlap to an extent a comparable EEA and Norway Grants' scheme.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Prioritisation of biodiversity actions

If the grant focus is to remain on biodiversity actions, the FMO should prepare definitive advice about which type of projects are likely to contribute to halting the decline in biodiversity, utilising the FMO database of successful projects as a guide, and being explicit about the need for innovatory actions, rather than continuing the co-financing of national compliance programmes. Emphasis should be given to projects proposing awareness raising of biodiversity.

Involving NGOs

National Focal Points and Intermediary Bodies should be prepared to facilitate the establishment of appropriately sized and skilled project groups – including government ministries and agencies, NGOs (small and large), local administration, etc. – to deliver biodiversity actions which might otherwise not happen because of limited financial resources and legal status of individual partners.

Delivering project results

The year 2010 is a critical point for all projects as the majority of the outputs should be delivered. The FMO should discuss with National Focal Points how best to keep informed on progress; projects with a large number of outputs (greater than five) should be monitored against a monthly plan by National Focal Points to ensure that, where necessary, remedial action is taken to ensure project timetables are respected.

Donors should consider creating a Micro-project Fund (€1,000 – €5,000) for small beneficiaries to acquire particular skills or experience, directly relevant to the implementation of the proposed sub-project, for example through a study tour.

Public awareness

Project Promoters should ensure that all publicity activities are enhanced to include key messages to the general public, and should take steps to ensure the messages are delivered by the media. Focal Points should prepare overviews of project outcomes for national distribution, relating the project results to issues of national and local concern, especially public awareness of the consequences of biodiversity loss.

Innovation and impact

Donors should carefully consider how their grants can maintain their distinctiveness and create impact. Two examples are given below.

Engaging local people in science. The first example provides a basis through science for citizens to understand and to connect with biodiversity issues in their neighbourhood, in order to improve skills, collective action and, if necessary, support political action to protect local diversity. Rolled out across the beneficiary country it would provide a solid, well-informed national resource for biodiversity protection.

Certain projects can improve local citizen engagement and understanding about the impact of loss of biodiversity, if they are accessible, inexpensive and supported by user-friendly science. An example would be a community project feeding into a national programme for a flora or fauna census, influenced by the outcomes from EEA and Norway Grants' projects, for village, school, or small group level. Another example would be projects involving invasive alien species. A further set of biodiversity topics of interest to local people is the gathering of knowledge of traditional (and sustainable) use of wild medical plants/ fruits/ mushrooms, and reintroducing that knowledge to the younger generations and urban people to re-establish their connection with nature. These projects would focus on nature outside protected areas, where availability of information gathered by competent authorities is comparably lower, but nature itself is sometimes as important as in protected areas, especially for raising awareness. This engagement could be supplemented by training to ensure that local people affected by NATURA issues are given explanations of the broader benefits surrounding the imposition of planning on areas which impact on protected sites.

Protecting biodiversity in border areas. The second example addresses concerns about biodiversity in border areas. Historically, border areas have been economically backward

as natural markets are intercepted by national boundaries. Many areas have become a haven for wildlife, which can range across the border. A number of EU funding sources are available for economic development and personal skills, but none are likely to provide sustainable solutions involving all local actors in a joint effort to maintain and enhance biodiversity.

Many border areas act as nature reserves as a consequence of their locations. Although, a number of EU funds target economic, social and environmental issues, holistic solutions actively involving local communities and NGOs across borders are often limited by the applied rules. Future EEA and Norway Grants need not be tied in such a way and could focus on the positive socio-economic aspects of diversity, rather than simple economic development.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

[These terms of reference were approved on 27 July 2009, and circumstances may have altered since that time]

1. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Background

The Financial Mechanism Office (FMO) has commissioned a Review of European Economic Area (EEA) Grants and Norway Grants in support of biodiversity. In 2001, European Union (EU) Member States committed themselves to halting biodiversity loss in Europe by 2010, and significantly reducing the rate of loss worldwide. Although this objective still remains in 2009, the target is unlikely to be met[40]. Given its importance, the take-up of grants, directly and indirectly, for biodiversity projects has been low.

To maximise the impact of this Review's findings, it has been agreed that the results (at least in draft form) need to be available in time for an international conference in Poland in Mid-October 2009. Given that many national administrations take vacations in August, with limited policy coverage, the project timetable and project implementation have been drafted to accommodate this period, but it remains a constraint on the project.

1.2 Overview of Biodiversity Projects

The present range of biodiversity projects is wide, covering species and habitat studies linked with good management practices, protection, biodiversity conservation and monitoring, sustainable development and education. Most beneficiaries have also identified a similar biodiversity component in other environmental projects.

According to the FMO, there are 23 grant-assisted projects by priority sector, where biodiversity is listed as main sub-sector. This involves a total allocation of €10,621,642, spread over ten beneficiary countries. There are a further 29 projects, where biodiversity represents one component, with a total allocation of €24,796,173 spread over 11 countries. Within the new Member States, neither Slovenia nor Malta has direct or indirect grants in the area of biodiversity.

[40] See IP/09/649 *Environment: Commission calls for a shakeup in EU biodiversity p*olicy, 28 April 2009, Brussels...

Table 1. Overview on the number of biodiversity projects by beneficiary state

Country	Projects main sub-sector	Allocated sum (€)	Projects – one component	Allocated sum (€)	Total (€)
Bulgaria	3	1,068,871	1	461,045	1,529,916
Cyprus	1	447,226			447,226
Czech	4	1,461,438	1	262,230	1,723,668
Estonia	2	940,075	2	975,720	1,915,795
Greece			5	5,591,998	5,591,998
Hungary			1	3,000,147	3,000,147
Latvia	1	417,555	2	628,778	1,046,333
Lithuania	1	324,864			324,864
Malta					0
Poland	5	2,655,397	10	4,686,067	7,341,464
Portugal	2	1,125,168	2	1,235,326	2,360,494
Romania			2	2,758,303	2,758,303
Slovakia	3	1,181,109	2	676,131	1,857,240
Slovenia					0
Spain	1	999,939	1	4,520,428	5,520,367
Total	**23**	**10,621,642**	**29**	**24,796,173**	**35,417,815**

2. FOCUS AND PURPOSE

2.1 Main Purpose

In spite of interest from the Donors in support of biodiversity projects, the part of the environmental grants portfolio that relates to such measures is modest. The purpose of the Review will be to identify the underlying causes for this situation, and also to propose steps to be taken in order to increase future support to biodiversity protection. Moreover, the biodiversity projects supported under the EEA and Norway Grants will be subject to a simplified assessment in accordance with the OECD-DAC criteria. The contribution from EEA and Norway Grants will be put into the wider context of national- and EU support to biodiversity in each country.

2.2 Broader Objectives

The Terms of Reference (Annex 1) to the main contract are explicit about the way the Review should be carried out: The main objective for reviews…*is increased learning and reporting on results and outcomes of the support to the beneficiary states within the priority sectors*. We firmly agree with this approach, and the approach and design of the Review encompasses, as far as possible within the time constraints, this objective. Thus, drawing on Annex 1 section 6, we will look and identify opportunities (subject to client approval) for:

- Participation — Membership of an *ad hoc* Steering Committee, probably as *virtual* members. PITIJA propose placing stakeholders in one of three categories using the Internet: (i) the core team responsible for the project, (ii) key stakeholders identified during the Review, and (iii) others who need to be kept informed of developments.
- Sharing information about progress and results — A clear plan with distribution of interim progress and results/ outcomes. Also comparators/ benchmarks if time permits.
- Facilitating active review in partner countries — Provision of materials (subject to client agreement). Having a national expert undertaking the interviews. Identification of good practice.

The approach outlined in Chapters 3-5 should give guidance to future support to biodiversity initiatives, in particular, that:

- The support is relevant.
- The support is sound and fair.
- The figures add up (insofar as the sampling permits).
- The results and outcomes have been properly identified.
- Attribution of results and outcomes (to the grants) is fair.
- There are no adverse unintended impacts.
- Project sustainability is likely.
- There are measures in place for sustainability of the approach.

These ambitious aims are contingent upon active contributions from stakeholders.

3. SCOPE OF WORK

3.1 Coverage

All actual (and potential beneficiary) countries are to be covered, but we plan field work in four countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria) where there is potential for learning. The above four countries are the major users of the Grant facilities.

3.2 Devising the Key Questions

The Review is designed to respond to the FMO's principal concern about the take-up of grant opportunities:

- ***Why are biodiversity projects not prioritised sufficiently by the beneficiary states and what should be done about it?***

This question will be broken down into a number of Key Questions during the Inception Phase, for example:

Operations of Grant system

- Have the calls for proposals been sufficiently focused and clear?
- Does the project ranking system fully reflect the importance of these types of projects?
- Is the pressure to promote biodiversity projects lower compared to pollution-oriented projects, and if so, what is the explanation for this situation?
- Are there unexplained national differences in the selection, take-up, type of project, etc?

Institutional capacity

- Is the institutional capacity in the beneficiary states sufficient in order to attract funding?
- Can national environmental NGOs play a larger part in relation to biodiversity protection in the countries that received support?

The views and actions of many stakeholders (and potential stakeholders) will contribute to the answers to these questions and a **strong methodological foundation** is required to ensure that the fact base is secure, and that conclusions and recommendations flow directly and transparently from the facts.

A number of actions are planned before August 2009 which will feature in the Inception Report:

- Agreement about the stakeholders and their engagement in the Review process. We expect that this will be done (relatively *ad hoc*) outside the main players. We should consider how effective the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) sector is in this field, with advice from pan-European agencies and the European Commission;
- Agreement about stakeholder communication (email), what should be communicated, and how responses should be made, especially comments on recommendations which may arrive after the closure of the Review;
- Agreement on the relative field resources (indications of good practice, where lessons could be learned, or the opposite, where remedial action is required);
- Agreement about the overall design of the Review – confirmation that it will produce the conclusions.
- Arrange Key Questions in a hierarchy which allows the preparation of an interview schedule, interview text and semi-structured questionnaire which can be validated in advance;
- Design an electronic fiche to capture comparable information in one place for analysis.

The Review approach we propose will be similar to an evaluation – breaking down individual Key Questions into subsidiary questions (Judgement Criteria), which together answer the Key Question and setting out Indicators or measures which provide a factual response to the Judgement Criteria. This method is particularly suitable (in conjunction with observation tools – desk research, interviews, structured questionnaire) for the provision of comparable data from many sources (beneficiary countries and elsewhere).

This approach also allows for an assessment of relevance and efficiency derived from standard OECD-DAC by extending the Judgement Criteria related to the use of funds. A horizontal synthesis using DAC criteria (as reviewed at the Key Question and Judgement Criteria level) would allow an overall assessment of these criteria, in particular regarding the relevance and efficiency. Aspects of sustainability (and relevance) should emerge from the questions put to government and NGOs.

The areas which are of particular interest include:

• Administrative and process constraints	Lack of national strategic interlocutors. Poor dissemination. Proposal design (specialist requirements). Timing related to beneficiary budget setting. Poor project management.
• Lack of suitable partners	Local conditions do not permit voluntary partnerships between actors. Technical/ scientific skills shortfall.
• Potential sustainability	Project sustainability. Ability to kick-start another project without donor intervention using skills/ knowledge acquired. System sustainability – can the scheme continue unchanged or, for example, should there be more focus on education/ skills.

Tables 2 & 3 below will be developed in conjunction with stakeholders. Table 3 illustrates the emphasis of observation tools (research, interviews and questionnaires).

Table 2. Key Questions, Criteria and Indicators (Illustration only)

Key Questions and Criteria	Indicators	Assessment		
		Discrete	Relative	Qualitative
Why are biodiversity projects not prioritised sufficiently by the beneficiary states and what should be done about it? Hierarchy of key questions, Judgement criteria to be established	Quantitative indicators wherever possible			

Table 3. Primary Sources of Evidence (illustrative)

Key Questions and Criteria	Desk Review	Questionnaire	Analysis	FMO and donors	Beneficiaries
Why are biodiversity projects not prioritised sufficiently by the beneficiary states and what should be done about it?					
Operations of Grant system					
Have the calls for proposals been sufficiently focused and clear?					
Sub Question 1	●●		●●		●●
Sub Question 2	●●		●●		
Does the project ranking system fully reflect the importance of these types of projects?					
Sub Question 1	●●		●●		
Sub Question 2		●●	●●	●●	●●
Is the pressure to promote biodiversity projects lower compared to pollution oriented projects, and if so, what is the explanation for this situation?					
Sub Question 1	●●		●●	●●	●●
Sub Question 2			●●		●●
Are there unexplained national differences in the selection, take-up, type of project, etc?					
Sub Question 1	●●	●●			●●
Sub Question 2		●●			●●
Institutional capacity					
Is the institutional capacity in the beneficiary states sufficient in order to attract funding?					
Sub Question 1	●●	●●	●●		●●
Sub Question 2		●●	●●		●●
Can national environmental NGOs play a larger part in relation to biodiversity protection in the countries that received support?					●●
Sub Question 1	●●		●●		●●
Sub Question 2	●●		●●		●●

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Data collection and analysis

The limited time available means that the maximum use will be made of **existing documentary sources**; this will be supplemented by **interviews** with **semi-structured questionnaires** (Donor, FMO, Brussels-based pan-European bodies (such as the European Commission DG Environment), and **field work** in the beneficiary countries – conducted mainly by national experts. The availability of **case studies** will also be examined.

The Key Questions, judgement criteria and indicators will be subject to a hierarchical approach for the purpose of completing an electronic 'fiche'. This will be the **fact base** for the Review and will be designed **to ensure that *meta* level conclusions can be drawn** (as well as project detail). One fiche will be prepared for each beneficiary country with appropriate subsections for Donor issues and for other key stakeholder contribution.

The fiche will be prepared by the Team Leader with assistance from the key biodiversity expert. It will be circulated to national experts to ensure their understanding of its purpose and intended content.

The schedule of interviews will be prepared from the results of the **Stakeholder Analysis** which will be carried out as soon as the Review starts and stakeholder 'rules' have been agreed. The interview questions will be previously supplied to ensure interviewees (and interviewers) are fully familiar with the topics. There will also be an unstructured part of the interview which invites a free exchange of views.

We expect all beneficiary countries to be included for some or all of the analysis. Special emphasis will be placed on biodiversity projects proposed and selected in the internal ranking process for Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia, these being the four countries which are major users of the EEA and Norway Grants in support of biodiversity objectives and where there is the potential for learning from good practices.

Steering arrangements, timetables set and the monitoring regime for the Review need to be agreed. Our proposal is to use Microsoft Project as the time management tool, supplemented with regular progress reports covering exceptional circumstances. Formal reporting will be done as set out in the Contract, starting with agreement on the ToR and moving to the Inception Report. The issue of timing arises here; we hope to establish good professional relations with the FMO which enable work to proceed during consideration of the formal reporting drafts.

4.2 Review Report Structure

The proposed structures for the Review Inception Report and Review Final Report are given below. This will be kept under review to ensure it remains appropriate to the tasks and to the results.

4.2.1 The Inception Report

1 **Introduction**
2 **Actions taken in the inception period**
2.1 Kick-off arrangements
2.2 Mobilisation of staff
2.3 Preliminary data collection
2.4 Interviews with FMO and other stakeholders
3 **Discussion of risks, constraints, methodologies**
4 **Review Plan**
4.1 Key questions, criteria and indicators
4.2 Sources of evidence and data collection
4.4 Fieldwork plan
5 **Proposed Structure of Final Report**
6 **Conclusions**

4.2.2 The Final Report (Indicative)

The format (see below) is the standard set out in the Framework Agreement. This format will be revised during the inception period. The new format will be part of the Inception Report (section 5).

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (2 pages)

B. MAIN REPORT (approximately 30 pages)

1 **Introduction**
1.1. Objectives
1.2. Background and Context
1.3. Methodology and Review Plan
1.4. Limitations affecting the Review
1.5 Biodiversity issues
2. **Performance of EEA and Norway Grant Assistance**
2.1 Overall performance
2.2 Relevance and the grant programme design
2.3 Efficiency of implementation
2.4 Results achieved and effectiveness of assistance
2.5 Impact and the likelihood of achievement of wider objectives
2.6 Sustainability
3. **Conclusions and Lessons Learned**
3.1 Conclusions
3.2 Recommendations and lessons learned

C. ANNEXES (As required)
Annex 1. Terms of Reference
Annex 2. Report Planning Summary Sheet
Annex 3. Summary of project data

4.2.3 Seminar Presentation

A draft Seminar Presentation, with supporting notes will be prepared, suitable for MS PowerPoint, concurrently with the Final Report.

4.3 Target Audience

The Target Audience approach is set out in Annex 1 to the main contract. We expect to involve most if not all of the target audience during the Review period with the aim of involvement and engagement, and with testing recommendations for viability. We expect a prompt response, but acknowledge the need to accommodate (possibly by Annex,) dissenting or alternative views if they are put forward.

4.4 Quality

The **quality standard**s set out in Annex 1 Part 4 has been adapted to this Review, especially Quality Assurance (DAC 8), which is identified in our proposal as a separate activity, and the steps taken to ensure that conditions for Relevance (DAC 9) and completeness (DAC 10) are obtained.

Independent (of the Team) **quality checks** have been introduced at the following stages of the Review:

- Confirmation of the project team – competence, no conflict of interest, etc.
- Inception Report – meets the standards and coverage required.
- Draft Report - meets the standards and coverage required, views are drafted honestly from the evidence, and are rational.
- Final report – all comments are correctly presented, mistakes have been corrected; the Review reaches the required standard.
- Dissemination Seminar – accurately and succinctly reflects the findings of the Review and the comments of respondents.

5. ACTIVITIES, RESOURCES AND TIMETABLE

5.1 Introduction

The Review will be carried out be a team of senior experts. The core team will be the Team Leader and a senior biodiversity expert. They will be supported by national experts and a strong administration team at PITIJA. The total resources envelope estimated for this exercise amounts to 99 man-days (792 hours). (See Table 5 below)

Although firmly supervised, a degree of reliance will be place on national experts to perform effectively. This task is made more feasible by the exceptionally long period during which most of the experts have worked together (and under the Team Leader) in the past. The Review Plan at the stage anticipates supervisory meetings in each of four countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria) attended by the Team Leader or the senior biodiversity expert.

5.2 Project Milestones

PITIJA will use MS Project for project management. The planned milestones to achieve the end date have been extracted and are set out in Table 4, below, which anticipates the 'Kick-off' meeting formalities being completed during the week ending 17 July 2009.

Table 4. Project Milestones

Project milestones	Indicative target dates
1. Submission of Draft 1 ToR (Start)	7 July 2009
2. Submission of Inception Report to FMO	31 July 2009
3. Submission of draft report	18 September 2009
4. Submission of final report	28 September 2009
5 Submission of seminar presentation	30 September 2009
6. Dissemination seminar attendance	October 2009

5.3 List of Tasks for the Review

The activities have been described in previous Chapters, but are set out in the attached draft List of Tasks for the Review (see Table 5 below).

Table 5. List of tasks for the Review

Tasks	Project Director	Team Leader	Bio-diversity expert	Data collection team	Admin	QC	Total
	Tanja Božinac	**Peter Hall**	**Nejc Jogan**	**National experts**	**Janja Kuzma**	**Martin White**	**Total**
Selection and confirmation of Review team	1	1	0	0	2	0.5	**4.5**
Kick-off issues with FMO	0	1	0	0	0	0	**1**
Milestone 1							
Collection and review of first documentation		2	0	2	2	0	**6**
Prepare Review plan	0	4	0	0	0	0	**4**
Prepare Inception Report	0	4	0	4	1	0	**9**
QC of Inception Report	1	0	0	0	0	1.5	**2.5**
Milestone 2							
Discussion and update of Inception Report	0	4	1	1	0	0	**6**
Collection of further data	0	2	0	5	3	0	**10**
Interviews with beneficiaries	0	5	4	5	2	0	**16**
Analysis of data	0	5	3	7	0	0	**15**
Preparation of draft report	0	5	3	2	0	0	**10**
QC of draft report		0	0	0	0	2	**2**
Milestone 3							
Discussion of conclusions with stakeholders	1	1	0	0	0	0	**2**
Preparation of Final Report	1	3	0	0	2	0	**6**
QA of Final Report	0	0	0	0	0	1.5	**1.5**
Milestone 4							
Preparation of dissemination seminar	0	0	0	0	2	0	**2**
QA of seminar presentation	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	**0.5**
Milestone 5							
Dissemination seminar	0	1	0	0	0	0	**1**
Milestone 6							
Total	**4**	**38**	**11**	**26**	**14**	**6**	**99**

5.4 **Reporting to the FMO**

In addition to the formal reports and the usual informal networking, PITIJA propose a fortnightly exception report from the Team Leader.

6. CONTACT PERSONS AT THE FMO

Table 8. Contact persons at the FMO

Project Manager	**Rune Vistad**
Head of Reporting and Evaluation	Kristin Sverdrup
Other staff	Emily Harwit-Whewell
	Malene Christiansen (secretariat)
	Daniela Parisi (especially statistics)

ANNEX 2. NUMBERS AND VALUES OF BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS BY FUND

Number of biodiversity projects	**COUNTRY**											
Fund	**BG**	**CZ**	**EE**	**HU**	**LT**	**LV**	**PL**	**PT**	**RO**	**SI**	**SK**	**All countries**
Environmental & Sustainable Development Fund		6		1								7
Human Resources Fund		2				1						3
NGO Fund	6	16	4	5	3	3			10	4		51
NGO Fund - Democracy and Civil Society							1					1
Environmental NGO Fund				14			41	11				66
NGO Fund - Environmental Protection & Sustainable Development											16	16
Regional Policy and Cross Border Activities Fund			2			1	1					4
Academic Research Fund		2	1	3			7				3	16
Scholarship Fund		1					1					2
Total Biodiversity	***6***	***27***	***7***	***23***	***3***	***5***	***51***	***11***	***10***	***4***	***19***	***166***
Number of environmental protection projects												
Environmental & Sustainable Development Fund				30		6						36
Human Resources Fund		1				4						5
NGO Fund		44	24	27	2	5			2	3		107
NGO Fund - Democracy and Civil Society							2					2
Environmental NGO Fund				34			25	5				64
NGO Fund - Environmental Protection & Sustainable Development											5	5
Regional Policy and Cross Border Activities Fund			5	9		3	2				3	22
Academic Research Fund			5	1		2	4				2	14
Scholarship Fund		4					2				1	7
Total environmental protection projects		***49***	***34***	***101***	***2***	***20***	***35***	***5***	***2***	***3***	***11***	***262***
Total biodiversity and environmental protection projects	**6**	**76**	**41**	**124**	**5**	**25**	**86**	**16**	**12**	**7**	**30**	**428**

EEA and Norway Grants to biodiversity projects	COUNTRY											
Fund	**BG**	**CZ**	**EE**	**HU**	**LT**	**LV**	**PL**	**PT**	**RO**	**SI**	**SK**	**All countries**
Environmental & Sustainable Development Fund		0.21		0.01								0.23
Human Resources Fund		0.17				0.05						0.22
NGO Fund	0.35	0.78	0.07	0.14	0.15	0.15			0.26	0.15		2.04
NGO Fund - Democracy and Civil Society							0.01					0.01
Environmental NGO Fund				0.28			5.16	0.73				6.17
NGO Fund - Environmental Protection & Sustainable Development											1.17	1.17
Regional Policy and Cross Border Activities Fund			0.24			0.04	0.02					0.30
Academic Research Fund		0.19	0.05	0.23			3.81				0.39	4.68
Scholarship Fund		0.04					0.05					0.09
Total Biodiversity	***0.35***	***1.39***	***0.36***	***0.67***	***0.15***	***0.23***	***9.06***	***0.73***	***0.26***	***0.15***	***1.56***	***14.91***
EEA and Norway Grants to environmental protection projects												
Environmental & Sustainable Development Fund				1.70		1.06						2.76
Human Resources Fund		0.07				0.16						0.23
NGO Fund		2.25	0.35	0.65	0.05	0.20			0.03	0.14		3.67
NGO Fund - Democracy and Civil Society							0.13					0.13
Environmental NGO Fund				0.67			2.82	0.37				3.86
NGO Fund - Environmental Protection & Sustainable Development											0.36	0.36
Regional Policy and Cross Border Activities Fund			0.22	0.58		0.92	0.06				0.33	2.11
Academic Research Fund			0.23	0.05		0.06	0.08				0.14	0.56
Scholarship Fund		0.08					0.12				0.04	0.24
Total environmental protection projects		***2.41***	***0.81***	***3.63***	***0.05***	***2.40***	***3.20***	***0.37***	***0.03***	***0.14***	***0.88***	***13.92***
Total biodiversity and environmental protection projects	**0.35**	**3.80**	**1.17**	**4.30**	**0.20**	**2.63**	**12.26**	**1.10**	**0.29**	**0.29**	**2.44**	**28.83**

ANNEX 3. PROJECTS WHERE BIODIVERSITY WAS A COMPONENT

Project	Main	Project title	Grants (€)
BG0061	Protection of the Environment	Strandja Mountain - biodiversity conservation model	461,045
CZ0121	Protection of the Environment	Krkonose National Park - Forest certification using FSC standard	262,230
EE0018	Protection of the Environment	National - Estonian biodiversity database	449,995
EE0044	Protection of the Environment	Ida-Virumaa - Management plans for riverine habitats	525,725
EL0022	Protection of the Environment	Rodopi - Introducing land, water and environmental management	1,893,356
EL0024	Protection of the Environment	Ileia - Reforestation and restoration of ecosystems	950,000
EL0040	Protection of the Environment	Thermaikos gulf - protection of the marine environment	750,000
EL0041	Protection of the Environment	Arkadia - Restoring destroyed forests and promoting environmental education	719,200
EL0047	Protection of the Environment	Lakonia - Restoration of forests afflicted by fires	1,279,442
ES0035	Protection of the Environment	Andalusia - Forest fire rehabilitation	4,520,428
HU0127	Protection of the Environment	Vacratot - renewable energy	3,000,147
LV0070	Promotion of sustainable development	Daugavpils - Improved nature park management	302,550
LV0072	Promotion of sustainable development	Zedmgale - improved nature park management	326,228
PL0073	Academic research	National - modelling biomass energy production	631,248
PL0078	Academic research	National - Marine ecosystem mapping	576,547
PL0082	Academic research	Biebrza National Park - Red Bog ecological research	546,805
PL0103	Protection of the Environment	Poland - Improved marine environment information management	306,000
PL0265	Academic research	Krakow - Vegetation on calamine soils	399,769
PL0268	Academic research	Kampinos national park - Development of method for reconstruction of primary hydrological conditions	716,771
PL0372	Promotion of sustainable development	Szczecin - Environment education network	259,131
PL0419	Academic research	National - Factors of Population Extinction Risk	435,952
PL0451	Protection of the Environment	Poznanski - education network and conservation of hermit beetle	281,077
PL0476	Protection of the Environment	Masovia - Geographic Information System on wetlands and dry grasslands	531,767
PT0038	Promotion of sustainable development	Mourela Plateau - sustainable use of heathlands	500,546
PT0041	Protection of the Environment	Castro Verde SPA - agricultural practices and eco-tourism	734,780
RO0019	Protection of the Environment	Mures River Basin - water resource management	1,178,438
RO0023	Academic research	Hateg County - conservation of bio and geodiversity	1,579,865
SK0061	Academic research	Tatranska Javorina - alpine biology research institute	318,229
SK0088	Protection of the Environment	Protection & Preservation of Biodiversity in Historical Structures of Agricultural Landscape	357,902
TOTAL			**24,795,173**

ANNEX 4. PROJECT PURPOSE, ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

Green shading indicates projects evaluated in this Review. Yellow shading indicates academic projects

Project	Project Purpose	Key activities and outputs
Bulgaria		
BG0031 Belasitsa mountain - Castanea sativa preservation	To conduct a thorough study of the species Castanea sativa (European Chestnut-tree) and elaborate and implement good management practices of the conservation of the Castanea sativa population, with the overall objective of maintaining the biodiversity of Castanea sativa forests in the Bulgarian part of Belasitsa Mountain. EEA partner: *Icelandic Forest Research.*	• Establishment of the knowledge base on Castanea sativa population. • Development of conservation tools in the Castanea sativa forests. • Implementation of good managerial practices. • Publicity activities.
BG0034 Conservation of biodiversity in hot-spots of glacial relict plants in Bulgaria	To provide scientific knowledge and establish a long-term monitoring on the glacial relict plants in Bulgaria, with the overall objective of protection of mountain biological diversity through sustainable management. EEA partner: *Dept. Biology, Bergen University.*	• Research on glacial relict plants (genetic variation, population structure and reproductive systems. • Laboratory investigations (parasitic and saprotrophic fungi). • GIS mapping and long-term monitoring and conservation. • Publicity activities.
BG0052 National – Biodiversity Monitoring System	To develop the National Biodiversity Monitoring System, with the overall objective of increasing the effectiveness of the management within the area of biodiversity surveillance. EEA partner: *None.*	• Upgrading and updating regional databases for biodiversity monitoring. • Development of a national database for biodiversity monitoring. • Development of a system for displaying results to the public. • Publicity activities.
BG0061 Strandja Mountain – biodiversity conservation model	To develop and implement a management model for biodiversity conservation in the Strandja Mountains, with the overall objective of contributing to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the Strandja Mountains. EEA partner: *DNM.*	• Creation of a GIS database and monitoring system for biodiversity and socio-economic characteristics. • Conducting of a sociological study and development of communication methods and strategy. • Development of an educational programme and conducting of training. • Development, implementation and promotion of the "Strandja" label. • Implementation of model projects for enhancement of priority species and habitats. • Publicity activities.

Cyprus		
CY0012 National - Pafos forest integrated management plan	The sustainable utilization of forest resources and benefits in the Pafos forest, with the overall objective of improved forestry management and protection of biodiversity. EEA partner: *None*.	• Start-up, procurement of services and equipment. • Elaboration of a draft management plan corresponding to the ecological requirements of the natural habitats and species present on the NATURA 2000 site Pafos forest in order to ensure their favourable conservation status. • Elaboration of monitoring plans for endangered species. • Elaboration of final draft management plan. • Consultation of draft plan and final draft plan with all stakeholders. • Publicity, training and approval of the final plan.
The Czech Republic		
CZ0048 Bohemian Switzerland National Park Environmental Monitoring	To monitor individual areas in the Bohemian Switzerland National Park in order to obtain valuable data and train the park employees, with the overall objective of improving the state of the natural environment in the Bohemian Switzerland National Park (České Švýcarsko) in the Czech Republic. EEA partner: *None.*	• Geo-chemical monitoring of precipitation water, seepage water, surface water and groundwater and assessment of the water pollution rate. • Monitoring and evaluation of the geo-dynamic phenomena in the park. • Hydro-meteorological monitoring, including the establishment of a hydro-meteorological station. • Monitoring and evaluation of the endangered flora and species. • Monitoring and evaluation of the forest ecosystem. • Monitoring biological diversity of the inverse grills and proposal for their management. • Monitoring and evaluation of the migration of cloven-hoofed game. • Monitoring and assessing the tourism pressure on the national park ecosystem. • Purchase of the specialist equipment for environmental monitoring. • Project publicity.
CZ0071 Zlin - Revitalisation and preservation of meadows	To revitalise and preserve selected areas of endangered meadow localities, with the overall objective of preserving biodiversity in the Zlín Region of the Czech Republic. EEA partner: *None.*	• Seminars, primarily with land owners and land tenants. • Reconstruction of selected meadow areas. • Project publicity.
CZ0072 National - Recovery Programmes for Endangered Species	To develop new recovery programmes and implement already existing ones for endangered species. EEA partner: *None*.	• Regranting of funds to sub-projects selected by open call. • Fund (Programme) management, evaluation and publicity.
CZ0138 Moravian-Silesian region - Environmental monitoring of endangered species and habitats	To achieve improved knowledge on endangered species and habitats not monitored under the EU birds and habitats directives. EEA partner: *None*.	• Establishing monitoring methodology. • Monitoring of endangered species and habitats. • Establishing proposals for management measures. • Project publicity activities.

CZ0121 Krkonose National Park-Forest certification using Forest Stewardship Council standard	To increase the area of environmentally responsibly managed forest in compliance with the Czech FSC standard with the overall objective to improve the protection of forest ecosystem biodiversity in the Czech Republic. EEA partner: *WWF Norway*	• Implementation and monitoring of the FSC requirements in KRNAP forest.[41] • Purchase of Field-Map set. • Promotion and communication of FSC certification including awareness and consumer campaign and education of KRNAP visitors. • Publicity.
Estonia		
EE0011 National - Implementation of NATURA 2000 in Estonian Marine Areas ("ESTMAR")	To develop management plans and management proposals for implementation of NATURA 2000 in marine areas of Estonia, with the overall objective of completed implementation of NATURA 2000 in territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Estonia. EEA partner: *None*.	• Identify potential offshore sites in the Estonian territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). • Collect scientific data for new sites in offshore areas. • Define a set of management plans for already designated NATURA 2000 areas in coastal areas, as well as management proposals and protection rules for newly selected offshore areas. • International experience exchange. • Contribute to public awareness & Project visibility.
EE0045 National - Mires Inventory completion for maintaining biodiversity	To establish a Mires inventory, obtain data and make recommendations concerning the protection and use of the inventorised mires, with the overall objective of a favourable conservation status of all habitat types within the Estonian mires achieved. EEA partner: *None*.	• Preparation for field work and seminars, management and publicity. • Field work. • Data computerization. • Analysis of results, working out recommendations, preparation and publication of inventory book. • International conference.
EE0018 National - Estonian biodiversity database	To develop a national integrated biodiversity database accessible to the public, with the overall objective of aiming at reduction of biodiversity loss in Estonia. EEA partner: *None*.	• Database structure developed and operational. • Biodiversity data input enabled and quality assessment assured. • Biodiversity data publicly available through web site development, public access to database and promotion of the database in the printed media.

[41] FSC = Forest Stewardship Council. KRNAP = Krkonose National Park

EE0044 Ida-Virumaa - Management plans for riverine habitats	To finalise preparations for the management and restoration of natural waterflow for selected rivers in Ida-Virumaa county; with the overall objective of improved conservation status of riverine habitat types and species in a long-term perspective in the areas of the NATURA 2000 network in Ida-Virumaa county. EEA partner: *NINA*.	• Project management (including publicity). • Habitats and species inventory, monitoring and preparation of 6 draft management plans (upstream and downstream of the Narva River, Avijõgi, Pada River, Tagajõgi and Pühajõgi). • Design to restore the water flow in the Narva River canyon, including topogeodesy, hydraulic modelling and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). • Design of fish passages on the Pada River, including survey of riverbed, geotechnical study of sediments and their possible removal, and EIA. • Restore hydrological regime of Poruni River, including survey of bifurification of the Gordenka Stream and the Poruni River, design and construction of a dam regulator on the Gordenka stream, EIA. • Publish books on riverine habitats of Ida-Virumaa County. • Reduce the population of Amur sleeper in source pond, based on control fishing and monitoring.
Greece		
EL0022 Rodopi - Introducing land, water and environmental management measures.	To install a hydro-meteorological network and introduce forest and lake restoration for quantifying water resources and reversing environmental degradation, with the overall objective of monitoring, as well as implementing and demonstrating conservation measures for future management in the Rodopi region. EEA partner: *None*.	• Development of spatial data infrastructure at a regional level including installing a network of meteorological and hydrological monitoring stations. • Analysis of pressures that current management of agro-ecosystems exert on Lake Ismarida including evaluation of the functions and values of Lake Ismarida. • Independent EIA completed to guide the scope of the physical restoration works of Lake Ismarida. • Proposals and implementation of measures for the protection and rehabilitation of the ecosystem of Lake Ismarida. • Reforestation and rehabilitation of forests for the protection of soil resources and erosion control in the Prefecture of Rodopi. • Management and publicity activities.
EL0024 Ileia - Reforestation and restoration of ecosystems	To safeguard the rural road system of the Ilia Prefecture through the restoration of forest ecosystems degraded by forest fires, with the overall objective of improving the quality of life in the affected areas of the region. EEA partner: *None*.	• Realisation of study for reforestation actions. • Preparation of public tenders. • Implementation of the reforestation studies. • Environmental and social evaluation of the Project. • Publicity and management.

EL0040 Thermaikos gulf - Protection of the marine environment.	To establish an enhanced knowledge and response capacity in order to prevent deterioration of the marine environment and manage the coastal habitat status, with the overall objective of developing scientific and coordinating integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) tools for future management of Thermaikos Gulf. EEA partner: *None*.	• Reparatory studies of the status. • Creation of an observatory for integrated coastal zone management of Thermaikos Gulf. • Planning and implementation of environmental monitoring. • Supply and installation of telemetric monitoring stations of physiochemical parameters of the marine environment. • Database construction - development of an application for decision-making and early warning in Thermaikos gulf. • Integrated coastal zone management of Thermaikos gulf. • Management and publicity activities.
EL0041 Arkadia - Restoring destroyed forests and promoting environmental education	To restore forest ecosystems degraded by forest fires and raise environmental awareness among citizens, with the overall objective of protecting the environment in the region of the Prefecture of Arkadia in Greece. EEA partner: *None*.	• Preparation of technical studies and public tenders for the selection of contractors. • Reforestation works. • Establishment of an informational centre on environmental awareness, including building renovation works. • Project publicity and management.
EL0047 Lakonia - Restoration of forests afflicted by fires.	To restore burnt forests and perform ecological studies of biodiversity conservation guidelines, with the overall objective of promoting sustainable management of affected mountain areas of Lakonia. EEA partner: *None*.	• Purchase of a 'gravity separator' and 'seed conditioning equipment' through public procurement. • Re-establishment of forest vegetation in the mountains of Parnonas. • Establishment of a restoration monitoring programme. • Implementation of an ecological study of Mount Taygetos and biodiversity conservation guidelines. • Publicity and management.
Hungary		
HU0127 Vacratot - renewable energy	To establish a system for providing the buildings of the Institute of Ecology and Botany and four municipal institutions with renewable energy, with the overall objective of reduced emissions of greenhouse gases from Vácrátót Municipality. EEA partner: *Norwegian Institute for Water Research*.	• Public procurement procedure, including procuring equipment needed for test run and start-up; • Infrastructural works, including building a passive house, rehabilitating two greenhouses, undertaking thermo-insulation measures and establishment of a renewable energy system at the premises of the Institute of Ecology and Botany in Vácrátót; • Providing renewable energy and undertaking thermo insulation measures for four municipal institutions: the Nursery school in Vácrátót (2 Petofi tér), the Health Centre (5 Petofi tér), the Petofi Sándor Elementary school (6 Petofi tér) and the Mayor's Office (3 Petofi tér); • Project publicity.

Latvia		
LV0052 National - Sustainable use and management of nature resources.	To introduce environmentally sound and sustainable management practices in NATURA 2000 sites, largely based on continued awareness raising amongst tourists and stakeholders, with the overall objective of increasing number of tourists in Latvian NATURA 2000 sites, based on the principles of balanced and sustainable management of biodiversity and nature resources. EEA partner: *Not yet appointed*.	• Preparation of Tourism Development Plans for four NATURA 2000 areas. • Preparation of Tourism Management Guidelines for nature sites. • Preparation of "Traveller's Green Advice" for tourists. • Preparation of various publications for active tourists. • Maintaining regular Project information on the web. • Information to the public (including dissemination of results).
LV0070 Daugavpils - Improved nature park management.	To improve the nature park management capacity and existing infrastructure with the overall objective of securing a sustainable usage and development of the "Daugavas loki" nature park (NATURA 2000 area). EEA partner: *None*.	• Establish an association of local and regional stakeholders in managing the national park. • Develop an overall activity plan for the association. • Develop an integrated plan regulating tourism development in the nature park; • Purchase of utility vehicle with trailer for the nature park administration. • Create a GIS based national park environmental information management system (EIMS). • Improve the existing and establish new infrastructure in the nature park (existing road and new rest/parking areas). • Development and production presentation material of the nature park (book). • Management, publicity and seminars.
LV0072 Zemgale - Improved nature park management.	To improve the nature park management capacity, public knowledge about the nature park and existing infrastructure with the overall objective of securing a sustainable usage, biodiversity and development of 6 protected nature parks (NATURA 2000 area) in the Zemgale region. EEA partner: *None*.	• Development of nature protection plans for the nature parks located in Bauska, Rundale, Vilce, Aizkraukle, Sauka and Kuku. • Improvement of nature park administration and management. • Improvement of infrastructure in 5 nature parks (roads and rest areas). • Development of human resources involved in the management and administration of protected areas. • Management and publicity activities.

Lithuania		
LT0071 National - maintaining bird habitats through agri-environmental measures	To strengthen institutional capacity of regional authorities responsible for application of agri-environmental measures in Lithuania, with the overall objective of increased use of agri-environmental measures amongst farmers to contribute to conservation of threatened bird species. EEA partner: *None*.	• Preparation and implementation of a capacity building program targeted towards regional authorities. • Gathering information and proposing protection measures for the bird species Great Snipe, Aquatic Warbler and Corncrake. • Establishing "good practice" demonstration farms, including dissemination of information regarding the results achieved at these farms. • Project publicity.
Poland		
PL0108	Carpathians - NATURA 2000 Protection and Education Initiative. EEA partner: *NINA*.	• Preparation of management strategies for 23 NATURA 2000 sites. • Active conservation and protection programmes including monitoring and promotion of the results. • Educational programmes. • Integrated information system about NATURA 2000 network in the Carpathians. • Coherence analysis of the NATURA 2000 network in the Carpathians. • Promotional activities.
PL0349	Poland - Protection of lynx, wolf and bear. EEA partner: *None*.	• Implementation of protection program for bear. • Implementation of protection program for wolf. • Implementation of protection program for lynx. • Implementation of measures protecting migration corridors for large carnivores. • Project publicity.

PL0452	Tczew - Establishing a didactic footpath in a bird mainstay. EEA partner: *None*.	• Establishing an inventory of the biodiversity of the area and its evaluation. • Making the natural didactic path together with cleaning the green area. • Awareness raising. • Project management and publicity.
PL0468	Warminsko-Mazurskie - study of autochthonous whitefish in Łebsko Lake. EEA partner: *None*.	• Preparation of the theoretical basis for the project. • Field work. • Laboratory work. • Processing and analyses of the results of the field and laboratory work. • Preparation of papers and reports summarising the field and laboratory work. • Training programme. • Purchase of equipment. • Dissemination of project results. • Project publicity.
PL0494	Czarna Orawa - River basin protection (NATURA 2000). EEA partner: *None*.	• Field inventory of biotic elements; • Elaboration of basin area management conditions and biodiversity conservation (including elaboration of nature and social-economic description of the area. elaboration of programme of measures together with water management plan. • Protection plan for NATURA 2000 PLB120007 Orawsko-Nowotarskie peat bogs and protection plan for NATURA 2000 PLH120016 Orawsko-Nowotarskie Peat bogs - conducting the process of education and public consultation; elaboration of the assumptions for connection between water management planning processes. • Preparing for two future conservation projects concerning i) opening an ecological passage in the Czarna Orawa river, ii) restoration of the Czarna Orawa tributaries, which involves preparations, planning of spatial concept and feasibility study. • Project promotion.

PL0103 Poland - Improved marine environment information management	The development of an integrated information system suitable for assessment of marine environmental conditions and training of public officials in use of the system, with the overall objective of improving environment conditions as a result of increased environmental law enforcement capacity through easier access to environmental data. EEA partner: *None*.	• Development and implementation of regional information infrastructure. Implementation of mathematical models. • Set up of an information website, giving public access to the compiled data. • Training of relevant personnel. • Development of a pilot Project for increasing the number of environmental parameters measured in the coastal zone.
PL0265 Krakow – Vegetation on Calamine soils	To acquire scientific knowledge and improve the land use management in the Olkusz Ore-bearing Region (OOR) area, with the overall objective to improve the quality of the environment. EEA partner: *University of Oslo - Department of Chemistry, Norway*.	• Studies on species diversity in the Olkusz Ore-bearing Region (OOR). • Identification of the types of vegetation and mapping their distribution in the OOR. • Studies on the soil (including chemical and physical properties, microbial activity and fauna). • Studies of the forest patches in the OOR. • Guidelines for local natural environment management prepared. • Publications and publicity.
PL0372 Szczecin - Environmental Education Network	To implement educational activities on topics related to animal rights and protection of the environment, with the overall objective of raising awareness on environmental issues and strengthening the network between the stakeholders for stronger and more frequent future cooperation. EEA partner: *None*.	• Campaign on Local Ecological Style of Living. • Training and promotion campaign for youth. • Photography, drawing and painting competition for youth. • Environmental lectures, nature trips and environmental projects. • Campaign on animal rights and welfare. • Training of volunteers on animal rights and animal care. • Project promotion and publicity, information, management and audit.
PL0451 Poznanski - education network and conservation of hermit beetle	To improve the level of environmental education to support maintenance of favourable environmental conditions in the Biedrusko area (PLH300001) forest habitats of the NATURA 2000 network; with the overall objective of promoting and implementing principles of sustainable development through a more efficient use and management of resources. EEA partner: *None*.	• Development of an e-learning platform (Interactive E-learning Virtual Lab (WLIN)), including preparation of educational materials and training for teachers). • Establishment of the "Hermit Beetle Conservation Centre" in Lysy Mlyn. • Development of an exhibition devoted to the role of dead wood in forests. • Construction of an education path "The role of water in the environment", including preparation and publishing of teaching materials. • Purchase of equipment and furnishings. • Project publicity.

PL0476 Masovia - Geographic Information System on wetlands and dry grasslands	To identify and register high nature value elements in the agricultural landscape (wetlands and dry grasslands) of the Masovia region, with the overall objective of optimising management actions and spatial planning at various levels of public administration in the region. EEA partner: *None*.	• Gathering existing spatial data for natural environment analysis. • Development of the methodology and cartographic materials, preparation and planning the schedule for fieldwork and training. • Development and testing of the algorithm of automatic satellite image interpretation by eCognition software. • Mapping of the wetlands and dry grasslands habitats in the field supported by results of the remote sensing materials and analysis. • Entering mapping results into the Geographic Information System. • Defining components of a tool enabling the identification of high nature value areas in agricultural landscape. • Project management and publicity activities, including coordination of workshops, reporting activities, financial duties, project administration. • Procurement and purchase of office materials, software, hardware devices, cartographic materials, and field equipment.
PL0073 Modelling Biomass energy production	To increase the knowledge of using crop production for energy purposes, with the overall objective of improving the environment through increasing the production of locally optimised biomass for energy use in Poland. EEA partner: *Planteforsk - the Norwegian Crop Research Institute*	• Determination of the material and energy input, energy efficiency and the worthwhileness of planting particular species of energy crops and plants. • Growth trials on several plantations in different locations in Poland; • Increased knowledge of water management of energy crops and plants. • Increased knowledge of energy plantations' environmental impact. • Assessment of the economic profitability of energy crops cultivation. • Publication and distribution of a compact bilingual publication presenting the overall project findings. • Purchase of equipment.
PL0078 National Marine eco-system mapping	The development of a methodology guide for identifying habitats in Polish marine areas (PMA) and their valorisation based on scientific and technical achievements according to methodology consistent with European norms, with the overall objective of sustainable development of PMA preserving their biological diversity realised through the preparation of spatial planning proposals, in full consideration of their ecosystem values. EEA Partner: *Norwegian Institute for Water Research*.	• Definition of the ecosystem approach to the spatial planning of marine areas. • Inventory of archival environmental data pertaining to PMA that are indispensable for creating EUNIS classification level 3 habitat maps. • Environmental pilot studies at level 5 of the EUNIS habitat classification. • Development of a collection of maps (atlas) of marine habitats and ecosystem valorisation for the most sensitive areas in the NATURA 2000 network. • Spreading of information for scientifically based spatial planning of PMA (production of publications and scientific papers). • Construction of an Environmental Database (EDB) to assist in the protection and spatial planning of PMA.

PL0082 Biebrza National Park Red Bog ecological research	To study the ecological relations in the Red Bog peatland area which determine raised and transitional bogs' biodiversity, with the overall objective of supporting the Environmental protection policy in NATURA 2000 areas. EEA partner: *Norwegian Centre for Soil and Environmental Research*.	• Documentation of existing state of the system. • Protection strategy formulation. • Ecological relations studies. • GIS database system. • Information to the general public about values of Red Bog. • Training of employees of the National Park in the use of all software created for the Project.
PL0268 Kampinos national park-development of method for reconstruction of primary hydrological conditions	To elaborate the decision support system for optimal management of wetland areas (meta-model), with the overall objective to increase biodiversity. EEA Partner: *Oslo University*.	• Present status assessment. • Target state determination. • The identification of limitations for assumed environmental values for target state. • Methods of achieving the aim and the estimation of results. • Environmental and technical assumptions of restoration works. • Project management and publicity.
PL0419 National – Factors of Population extinction risk	To provide scientifically-based tools or methods for analysing environmental effects on the extinction of species, with the overall objective of contributing to the preservation and improvement of biodiversity. EEA partners: *Norwegian Institute for Water Research and Norwegian School of Veterinary Science*.	• Purchase of field and laboratory equipment, • Examining factors of extinction risk for soil micro-organisms. • Predicting effects of linkage between population size and copper exposure for the flour beetle. • Predicting effects of exposure to persistent organic pollutants in zebra fish. • Examining metabolic performance and genetic variation in the small rodent *Myodes glareolus*. • Organising training courses. • Compilation of project results. • Project management, dissemination and publicity activities.
Portugal		
PT0039 SAFESEA - Sustainable local fisheries and cetaceans protection	To reduce the incidental capture of cetaceans and raise public awareness on sustainable development issues in the local fisheries, with the overall objective to contribute to the sustainable management of sea resources and conservation of threatened species in Portugal. EEA partner: *None*.	• Evaluation of the status of small cetacean populations on the Portuguese coast. • Evaluation of fisheries and cetacean interactions. • Implementation and testing of mitigations measures proposed. • Awareness raising campaigns (conferences, workshops, web pages, provision of training for fishermen and publication of a good practice manual). • Management and promotion.

PT0040 CONDOR - Azorean Seamount Ecosystem Observatory	To enhance the knowledge on the Condor seamount ecosystem functioning in view to strengthen the quality of the scientific approach in its management, with the overall objective to contribute to the sustainable management of sea resources in Portugal. EEA partner: *Norwegian Institute of Marine Research*.	• Create a permanent underwater observation station at the Condor seamount. • Synthesis report and data analysis on the seamount physical oceanography; • Mapping the habitat and the seamount biology. • Produce a management tool box on impact of human activities on the seamount ecosystems aimed to promote their sustainable use and management. • Dissemination of results and education activities, including a TV documentary on the seamounts ecosystems. • Purchase of equipment. • Management and promotion.
PT0038 Mourela Plateau - sustainable use of heathlands	To recover traditional cattle and heathland management in the Peneda Geres National Park in Northern Portugal, with the overall objective of promoting sustainable use of the heathlands and contribute to the conservation of their biodiversity and the improvement of the economic conditions of the agricultural populations. EEA partner: *None*.	• Organisation of communitarian cattle and heathland management (including training, technical and advisory support for the Management Commons), • Rehabilitation of a house for dissemination of natural and cultural heritage, • Rehabilitation of a house for lodging, • Signalling footpaths, erection of interpretative panels and production of tour guides and maps, • Project management and publicity activities.
PT0041 Castro Verde SPA - agricultural practices and eco-tourism	To develop sustainable farming systems in the Castro Verde Special Protection Area, with the overall objective to strengthen sustainable economic development in the Castro Verde Special Protection Area. EEA partner: *None*.	• Mitigation of drought and desertification i.a. through sewage sludge injections. • Sustainability management certification of farms. • A feasibility study to assess the potential of sheep product transformation and meat export to the Muslim markets. • Capacity building and training for local framers. • Raising awareness and environmental education. • Promotion of ecotourism. • Project publicity.
Romania		
RO0019 Mures River Basin - water resource management	To apply a modern modelling and management tool for water resources management in the Tarnava Mica river basin, with the overall objective of sustainable use of water resources in the Mures River Basin. EEA partner: *Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE) and DHI Norway.*	• Improving the existing monitoring system, including data collection and processing. • Installing a water basin model, including training in its application. • Elaborating recommendations and disseminating results. • Project publicity.

RO0023 Hateg Countu-conservation of bio and geo-diversity	To develop means and methods for monitoring, conservation and sustainable use of bio- and geodiversity in the Hateg County-Retezat area; with the overall objective of increasing the level of conservation and sustainable capitalisation of biological and geo-mineralogical diversity in Romania, especially in the area of Hateg County-Retezat. EEA partner: *None.*	• Establishment of the Center for Research and Studies on Bio- and Geodiversity in Hateg County - Retezat (including renovation and furnishing of buildings (Corpus A, B and C; Commune General Berthelot, village General Berthelot, code 337 237, Number 34, Hunedoara county, Romania)). • Elaboration of studies and research on bio- and geodiversity in Hateg county and Gemenele - Retezat Scientific Reserve. • Supporting activities for economic and social sustainable development in the context of preserving and valorising bio- and geodiversity. • Project management (including publicity).
Slovakia		
SK0025 Dubnik - protection of bats in winter roost	Redevelopment and renovation of the mine premises, construction of a footpath, securing/ protection of mine entrances, census and monitoring of the bats, winter/ summer research and bat census, publicity, and purchase of equipment. EEA partner: *None.*	• Construction works in the mines. • Construction of a foot path. • Research, census and monitoring of the bats. • Purchase of equipment. • Publicity measures (including seminars, conference).
SK0115 National - management models for grassland habitats	To develop management models for the valuable grassland habitats. EEA partner: *None.*	• Analysis and development of information in the Central Phytocoenology Database and Grasslands and Peat lands Information System - specification of vegetation types for identification and evaluation of mapped habitats, • Research on the co-influence between the species composition, diversity of selected vegetation types and management methods aimed at diversity conservation, • Analysis of management data for 20 grassland habitats and preparation of management models, • Project publicity activities.
SK0121 Besa and Cicarovce - conservation of waterbirds' diversity	To restore the breeding and food habitats of the water bird species, including migrating species in the Eastern Slovakia lowlands. EEA partner: *Directorate for Nature Management based in Trondheim* proposed.	• Preparation of a Management Plan of Restoration of Habitats and development of Manipulation Regulations of surface water management, • Improvement of the water regime in the protected area (including the building of three water gates), • Restoration of the meadow habitats and monitoring the status of habitats and species in the area, • Construction of infrastructure for visitors (including two observation towers, information centre, educational trail with resting places and information panels), • Project publicity activities.

SK0061 Tatranska Javorina - alpine biology research institute	To complete the development of the facilities at the Institute for High Mountain Biology (IHMB), as well as to conduct research activities on the effects of air pollution and climate change on alpine ecology with the overall objective of contributing to increased knowledge about alpine ecosystems and their protection through strengthening the Institute for High Mountain Biology's capacity to undertake high quality research and education in alpine biology.	• Purchase and installation of equipment for laboratories for molecular ecology, zoology, microbiology and botany. • Purchase and installation of air pollution monitoring station. • Adaptation of attic to educational purposes and purchase and installation of solar system. • Completing the institute's lecture hall with multimedia equipment. • Research projects on genetic variation of alpine fauna vertebrates and on effects of air pollution on alpine fauna. • Purchase of a 4WD truck for field work. • Purchase and installation of GPS receivers and GIS software. • Project management and coordination. • Publicity.
SK0088 Protection & Preservation of Biodiversity in Historical Structures of Agricultural Landscape	Protection and preservation of biodiversity in historical structures of agricultural landscape (HSAL). EEA partner: *Norwegian Forest and Landscape Institute.*	• Field mapping of HSAL across Slovakia. • Research of HSAL in 3 representative pilot areas; • Evaluation of research results in the 3 chosen pilot areas; • Elaboration of management strategy; • Implementation of management strategy; • Project publicity.
Spain		
ES0010 National - Promotion Campaign for NATURA 2000 Network	To achieve increased understanding and acceptance of the benefits of the NATURA 2000 Network among the general public and institutions in the campaign's pilot area, with the overall objective of increasing acceptance of the NATURA 2000 Network throughout Spain. EEA partner: *None*.	• Planning of the campaign and production of printed campaign materials on the NATURA 2000 Network. • Conducting workshops and seminars on the NATURA 2000 network in each of the four regions - Castilla y Leon, Castilla - La Mancha, Extremadura and Andalucia. • Identifying and designing standard content and methodology of the IBA (Important Bird Area) Management Plans. • Defining the tourism potential, as well as preparing and implementing practical pilot IBA Management Plans for selected sites in the four regions.
ES0035 Andalusia - Forest Fire Rehabilitation	To restore areas affected by forest fires in Minas de Riotinto Y Charco Frío, prevent new wildfires and increase the use of the land, with the overall objective of create a model for environmental and socioeconomic restoration for areas badly affected by wildfires. EEA partner: *None*.	• Project management, including public procurement and publicity, • Vegetation restoration. • Restoration of river beds. • Construction of shelters for livestock. • Safety and health at work. • Publicity, including environmental awareness education.

ANNEX 5. INTERIM EVALUATION SUMMARIES

A5.1 BULGARIA

BG0031	Belasitsa mountain – *Castanea sativa* preservation				€ 303,040 (Grant € 257,584)
Project Purpose	**Effectiveness**	**Sustainability**	**Efficiency**	**Impact**	**Relevance**
The purpose of the Project is to conduct a thorough study of the species *Castanea sativa* (European Chestnut-tree) and elaborate and implement good management practices of the conservation of the *Castanea sativa* population, with the overall objective of maintaining the biodiversity of *Castanea sativa* forests in the Bulgarian part of Belasitsa Mountain.	The objectives are likely to be met. The project team has sufficient capacity to efficiently implement the project.	Project sustainability is likely. The results of the project are applicable to the other larger Bulgarian forest of this type located in the region of Berkovitsa. It has a clear sustainable development aspect dealing with ensuring sustainable forest management practices. It will contribute to building local capacities, which is a guarantee for the future sustainability of results. One of the project outputs will be a proposal for a forest-ecological measure to be integrated in the Bulgarian agro-ecological scheme, which will ensure additional incentives to the local communities for complying with the proposed forest management practice. The other project output- the measures concerning the long-term management of the *Castanea sativa* forest - will become part of the management planning for the Belasitsa Nature Park, which is a part of the NATURA 2000 zone.	Attribution of expected results and outcomes (to the grant) is fair. The results and outcomes from the project have been properly identified and will be applicable not only to the project region but to the whole country.	There are no adverse unintended impacts. The three alternative forest management techniques will be used not only to propose best management practice but also to guarantee the long-term survival of the *Castanea sativa* forest. It is vital to approach the Ministry of Agriculture and propose an Forestry Ecological measure specifically targeted at *Castanea sativa* forest management. That will allow further recurrent funding for forest owners and managers applying the best management practice proposed	The project is relevant to the EEA Financial Mechanism especially the ones linked to the environmental protection and the carbon footprint reduction. The Donor assistance is generally relevant to the National Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation and National plan for Biodiversity Conservation 2005-2010 in order to meet the needs of implementing priority measures for the conservation of biological diversity of forests and old forests of natural origin. In addition the project is relevant to the development of a management plan for the newly established Belasitsa Nature Park.

BG0034	**Conservation of biodiversity in hot-spots of glacial relict plants in Bulgaria**				**€ 580,513 (Grant € 493,436)**
The purpose of the Project is to provide scientific knowledge and establish a long-term monitoring on the glacial relict plants in Bulgaria, with the overall objective of protection of mountain biological diversity through sustainable management.	The objectives of the project are likely to be achieved. The team is fully committed to the project and is very ambitious to meet the final objectives.	Project sustainability is likely. The project directly contributes to the sustainable management of the high-mountain glacial relicts in Bulgaria thus to the special biodiversity of the country. The project aims to increase biodiversity awareness about the natural protection and motivate local people and NGOs to initiate their own protection actions.	Attribution of expected results and outcomes (to the grants) is fair	The stability of mountain ecosystem is the main impact of the project. There are no adverse unintended impacts	The project is fully in line with the EEA/NFM priorities. The support has been administered in a sound and fair manner. The intervention is fit very well to the National Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation and National plan for Biodiversity Conservation 2005-2010, where developing the scientific basis for biodiversity conservation and Biodiversity Monitoring are the priority tasks.
BG0052	**National – Biodiversity Monitoring System**				**€ 373,942 (Grant € 317,851)**
The purpose of the Project is to develop the National Biodiversity Monitoring System, with the overall objective of increasing the effectiveness of the management within the area of biodiversity surveillance	Despite of project delay, no implications are foreseen as regard the project results and objective, yet. Some of the activities will be implemented in a shorter time period than previously envisaged, which will lead to a greater work load.	The benefits produced by the intervention will be maintained after the cessation of external support as the final output of the project will be working monitoring system, which will contribute to the sustainable development in Bulgaria through provision of the technical infrastructure to the bodies taking care about the implementation of the principles of nature protection and biodiversity and landscape conservation.	The cost effective of the project is adequate. The cost of intervention can be justified by the results and outcomes from the project. However the public tendering procedure should allow some savings in these costs.	The direct impact of intervention is related to ensure reliable information on the biodiversity state, assist with the effective decision making processes. Thus in the long term will contribute to the biodiversity conservation and provide environmental information to public and all interested parties.	The objectives of the project are fully in line with the EEA/NFM priorities. The intervention is relevant to the beneficiary state's needs and priorities according to the National Strategy for Biodiversity Conservation and National plan for Biodiversity Conservation 2005-2010 for implementing Biodiversity conservation through long-term monitoring and assessment of changed trends to take preventive measures. It is relevant to development issue to address develop and maintain a national system for monitoring biodiversity.

Data collected between mid-August and mid-September 2009.

Evaluator's Summary for Bulgarian projects	**BG0031**	**BG0034**	**BG0052**
(i) The completed project will include all the activities and results stated above and achieve the project purpose	√	√	√
(ii) The completed project will be an example for the project purpose			
(iii) The completed project will not include all the activities and results but will achieve the project purpose			
(iv) Publicity for the projects achievements has been organised	√	√	√
(iv) The completed project will not achieve the project purpose			
(v) The project has been cancelled			
(vi) The project needs more time than planned to achieve the project purpose			
(vii) Other comments:			

A5.2 CZECH REPUBLIC

CZ0048	**Bohemian Switzerland National Park -Environmental Monitoring**			**€ 423,200 (Grant € 359,720)**	
Project Purpose	Effectiveness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Impact	Relevance
To monitor individual areas in the Bohemian Switzerland National Park in order to obtain valuable data and train the park employees, with the overall objective of improving the state of the natural environment in the Bohemian Switzerland National Park (České Švýcarsko) in the Czech Republic	The project activities are running without any substantial difficulties, in accordance with the expectations and the objectives should be achieved as originally planned	The project results themselves will serve as a firm base for planning sustainable use and development in the national park area. The monitoring systems and data will be further utilised for the management purposes	The budget of the programme is realistic. Public procurement took place for the services and equipment supply. Small problems appeared due to the exchange rates, because the project was planned two years before the start of the implementation. Therefore, some items could not be purchased in the original amount as the prices were higher	The expected impact should materialise - the monitoring system has been established and should regularly provide necessary data for the improved management of the national park. The collected data are needed to prepare and implement the most convenient measures for the individual areas of the administration	The project is relevant as it concerns the whole territory of the national park, and its current and future management. The results should meet biodiversity needs in several related areas - management of the landscape/territory and protection of the habitats and animal/plant species.
CZ0071	**Zlin - Revitalisation and preservation of meadows**			**€ 349,446 (Grant € 297,029)**	
To revitalise and preserve selected areas of endangered meadow localities, with the overall objective of preserving biodiversity in the Zlín Region of the Czech Republic	It is likely that the objective will be met. The first works in the field started with the cleaning of the affected areas in the autumn period,2008, and these activities should continue in a few weeks time again in further areas. The grasslands treated/ cleaned last year will be mowed now as the works cannot be carried out during the vegetation period.	The land owners and tenants, mostly municipalities, have committed themselves to maintain the meadows for next ten years. Funding is not yet secured but the Regional Office managing the project has promised to assist with financial support and to find additional potential sources.[42]	The costs are realistic and the results should be delivered efficiently.	The expected impact should materialise. A number of special species should appear back in the treated locations (mostly NATURA 2000 areas).	The project is relevant and fully compliant with the regional and national strategies

[42] An agreement between companies processing wood chips is being considered. The companies would clean the grasslands for the subsidies if the owners and tenants agree.

CZ0072	**National - Recovery Programmes for Endangered Species**			**€ 588,235 (Grant € 500,000)**	
To develop new recovery programmes and implement already existing ones for endangered species	So far there are no indications that the objectives will not be achieved. Some delays occurred due to the necessity to confirm that all the necessary permissions, namely for activities which will take place in the areas belonging to different owners were secured.	One of the approval conditions was that there has to be a methodology approved by the MoE and this methodology has to be applied. This should ensure that the project implementation follows the right methodology and the protection of one type would not endanger existence of some other species	The projects are mostly small-size, and implemented locally. The estimated costs are considered adequate.	The implementation of the first six projects (dealing collectively with 3 animal and 5 plant species) started in Spring 2009 and the probability of achieving the desired benefits is high	The grants are provided for projects dealing with the recovery and maintenance of the species which have a rescue programme approved by the MoE or are listed in the Red Book. As the financial sources supporting this type of activities are rather scarce and protection of these species is one of the priorities of biodiversity policy at the international and national level, the supported projects are considered relevant.
CZ0138	**Moravian-Silesian region - Environmental monitoring of endangered species and habitats**			**€ 358,500 (Grant € 304,689)**	
To achieve improved knowledge on endangered species and habitats not monitored under the EU birds and habitats directives	Although the project activities started in April 2009 and the core activities are in the preparatory stage, it is likely to expect that the objectives will be achieved and the monitoring system will be establish as envisaged to enable qualified decision-making	It is expected that the project will be sustained as the beneficiary will keep and maintain the established monitoring system together with the co-operating partners. As these are the state administration bodies having a responsibility for the environmental protection, there is no risk that the benefits would not be sustained	Based on the assessment of the budget the project activities should be cost effective. The number of public procurement procedures was even reduced to minimize the expenses and to make sure that the most transparent procedures are being applied	The expected impact is likely to materialise and established monitoring system should not only assist the decision-making at the regional level, but sharing of data with the central Agency will make it accessible for all relevant partners and part of the data will be available for the public through the web site.	To make the competent decisions the regional office was missing accurate and adequate data mainly as concerns the species, which are not covered by the EU Directives. Therefore the establishment of such a monitoring system is considered relevant and should be used as valuable source of valid, relevant and reliable information for various public administration purposes.

Data collected between mid-August and mid-September 2009.

Evaluator's Summary for Czech projects	**CZ0048**	**CZ0071**	**CZ0072**	**CZ0138**
(i) The completed project will include all the activities and results stated above and achieve the project purpose	√	√	√	√
(ii) The completed project will be an example for the project purpose				
(iii) the completed project will not include all the activities and results but will achieve the project purpose				
(iv) Publicity for the projects achievements has been organised	√	√	√	√
(iv) The completed project will not achieve the project purpose				
(v) The project has been cancelled				
(vi) The project needs more time than planned to achieve the project purpose				
(vii) Other comments:				Commenced recently but no problems expected.

A5.3 POLAND

PL0108	Optimization of the use of the resources of the NATURA 2000 network for sustainable development in the Carpathians			€ 950,000 (Grant € 807,500)	
Project Purpose	**Effectiveness**	**Sustainability**	**Efficiency**	**Impact**	**Relevance**
The project purpose is to include local communities in the process of management of NATURA 2000 sites in the Polish Carpathian region and establish an information system about the NATURA 2000 network, with the overall objective of optimising the environmental resource management in NATURA 2000 sites	The project is implemented in accordance with the planned schedule and no delays are reported. Development of management strategies for 23 areas covered by the project is underway in parallel with a consultation process on the strategies. Works under the active conservation programmes are well advanced. An integrated information system allowing popularisation of data on NATURA 2000 sites is being developed. Collection of data for coherence analysis of the NATURA 2000 network in the Carpathians continues. Promotional and educational activities are ongoing. Implementation of activities is circa 50%. The project is implemented in a professional manner and should deliver the achievements as planned before April 2011.	The Integrated Information System will be maintained by the Institute of Nature Conservation (PAS) that has secured funds for this purpose. Sustainability of the other project results, such as 23 management strategies, should be secured, as the strategies should be a basis for the NATURA 2000 site conservation plans. Involvement of local communities and governmental decision-makers in development of strategies should ensure ownership. The experience gained in the project might be used for development of other conservation plans of areas in NATURA 2000 not covered by the project's pilot activities.	The cost of the intervention is justified by its results. The project is of crucial importance to the nature conservation in the Carpathians as it contributes to shaping public attitudes of local communities to establishment of NATURA 2000 sites.	An impact of the consultation process already noted in improved co-operation of actors involved in environmental protection and economic development. Published data from the integrated information system will support spatial planning or promotion of environmental, tourist and economic advantages of the Carpathians. Popularisation of knowledge on Carpathian resources will have an impact in increased environmental awareness.	The project is highly relevant; it complies with national strategies of preservation of species and the strategy of implementing the NATURA 2000 network in Poland. The project will have a direct impact on implementation of the EU biodiversity Directives. The management strategies will include identification of threats to biodiversity in the selected area. Detailed stock-listing of the environmental resources of the area will be performed which will contribute to biodiversity protection. The developed integrated database on the resources of NATURA 2000 network in the Polish Carpathians will contribute to the sustainable regional development and provide support for the planning and decision-making processes at various levels of public administration.

PL0349	**Protection of species: lynx, wolf and bear in Poland**			**€ 602,552 (Grant € 670,026)**	
The main objective of the project is to preserve viable populations of lynx, wolf and brown bear in Poland by ensuring proper conditions for maintaining their populations within the currently occupied area, as well as for their expansion	A late start due to long appraisal procedures (December 2009 instead of planned January 2009) reduced the scope. The Project Promoter is making every effort to deliver the results working in close co-operation with the project partners, including the WWF and Norway. Activities under the specific modules have started (apart from module 4). The project is performing well although it has a very tight schedule for implementation and requires very good management skills to deliver all the results as planned. The projects objectives are likely to be met.	Long-term project sustainability is dependent on public acceptance and government support. Public support will be determined by successful protection of animal farms. The outcomes will be promoted to key decision makers in the Ministry of Environment, academic institutions and environmental NGOs, to be taken into account for future policy formulation in the area of protection of endangered species.	The project should bring measurable results such as increased numbers of wolf, lynx and bear populations in Poland until 2015, reduced numbers of farm animals killed by attacks by wolves or the reintroduction of lynx. There is increasing interest from breeders to test the electric fencing protecting animal stock against wolves This should result in change of attitude of local communities to the carnivores. Eventually this will reduce conflict in the environment between large carnivores and human activity, and therefore justifies the project.	Although it is too early to draw definite conclusions on the impact of the project, it should implement the protection strategies for the wolf, lynx and bear, and maintain the continuity of migration corridors on an unprecedented scale, compared with former initiatives undertaken in Poland. The fact that the project is implemented by the WWF should strengthen its impact.	The Project will contribute to the implementation of the EU Habitats Directive. It also supports the implementation of the National Development Strategy 2007-2015 and the regional development strategies in the voivodships.
PL0452	**Promotion of the sustainable development by usage of the urban natural resources in Tczew**			**€ 349,021 (Grant € 282,218)**	
Preservation and protection of a bird mainstay in the NATURA 2000 area by combining infrastructure and natural features and educating the population about NATURA 2000.	Project activities started March 2009 and are in accordance with planned schedule. Natural inventory of the area and evaluation started in May 2009. Promotion and information activities started. An opinion poll among the inhabitants of Tczew has shown that knowledge of natural resources of Tczew is low (although the knowledge of NATURA 2000 and environmental protection is satisfactory). There are no risks currently that could affect the achievement of project objectives, but development of the didactic path is dependent on the timely action of the partner.	The area covered by the project has undergone a degradation processes as a result of negative human actions. There is a risk that the developed didactic path (2.5 km length) will be subject to damage in the future. However, given that the Municipality is the owner of the site, it intends to allocate the necessary funds to protect the area. The authorities will also seek the involvement of the town's security forces to pay special attention to this area to protect it from vandalism.	Assuming the project is implemented as designed it will be an example of the sustainable use of natural reserves. The intervention cost of projects aimed at environmental protection versus their result is difficult to measure in financial terms. The synergy created between environment protection and economic growth should justify the results of the intervention. NATURA 2000 in the Valley of the Lower Vistula is treated by the authorities as of value to the town.	It is too early to assess impacts of the project, although the promotional activities are already gaining interest in the local community by increasing their ecological awareness and The Youth City Council - whose representatives have actively been involved in the promotional project activities and have been attracted by the social aspects of the project activities, which are considered a positive outcome by the project promoter. The project results could be an example of a good practice for other local authorities.	The project is highly relevant to the city strategy of revitalisation of the Old Town and the riverside. The growing interest in recreation by inhabitants results in local efforts to protect the whole ecosystem of the Vistula Valley in the area of Tczew. The project contributes to the development of the priority promotion of sustainable development and is relevant in relation to the Donor's policy, contributing to promotion of protection of natural resources and the rule of sustainable development.

PL0468	Waminsko-Mazurkie - study of autochthonous whitefish in Łebsko Lake			€ 796,000 (Grant € 676,000)	
Project Purpose	**Effectiveness**	**Sustainability**	**Efficiency**	**Impact**	**Relevance**
The objective of the project is to find solutions aiming at preservation of the ichthyologic richness of lakes, with Łebsko Lake and its population of the common whitefish as a case study. A second objective is to work out a model to be presented to institutions and NGOs involved in fish protection.	Project shortened to 2 years, due to lengthy appraisal procedure. No financial agreement was signed yet. Some activities undertaken with alternative funding and existing laboratory; in order to complete the research which is dependent on the spawning period for the white fish. The University is proceeding with the tender for some the laboratory equipment but not for all. The whole equipment is likely to be completed in Feb 2010. The beneficiary is determined to deliver the outputs as planned.	Developing a model for protection can be a tool used widely for biodiversity protection - the model as such does not require post -project financing. Promotion on a wider scale has been foreseen in the project activities at national and international level. This is a pioneering project on fish protection and there is high hope that it will attract the attention of decision makers in the Polish government.	The main outcome from the project should be the restoration of the white fish in Łebsko. The research planned is complex, time-consuming and laborious.. Such activities and related results contribute to the protection of environment and justify the intervention.	It is too early to report on any impact of the intervention. Project results and impact will be largely determined by biological factors (e.g. lack of desired genetic variability) although the risk that restoration, using the method planned, will not succeed is considered low. With the expected results, impact in the area of fish protection will be invaluable. Similar problems of gradually decreasing fish occur in many Polish lakes and the methods to be worked out and tested within the project should be applicable to other work on preservation of natural fish populations.	The Project is highly relevant to The National Strategy for Protection and Moderate Use of Biological Diversity. It contributes to the implementation of the Habitat Directive, Water Framework Directive and Convention on Biological Diversity and is directly supporting the Donor's goal in the area of biodiversity. The population of white fish is declining every year and, without help will face gradual extinction. This problem is widespread and covers a great number of species.
PL0494	**Czarna Orawa - River basin protection (NATURA 2000)**			**€ 337,838 (Grant € 287,162)**	
The preservation of the biodiversity of species within the project area by creating proper approach to the nature and ability to combine consumers' interest in respecting of natural resources as well as defining the conditions allowing for sustainable development	Project start delayed by four months. The Project Promoter has good experience in implementation of such projects, and estimates that it is still possible to achieve the project objectives assuming no further delays occur.	The project envisages the establishment of a Local FORUM aiming at local development based on improvement of natural environment, which will support the tasks implemented within the project, and after completion, will initiate the actions addressed for environmental protection. The FORUM will also contribute to the execution of the tasks resulting from developed plans and programmes.	The intervention's costs justify the results to be achieved. The project will contribute to preserving biological diversity of nature valuable areas. The project should result in improving of the life quality through future implementation of its recommendations in water resources management (resulting in improved water status) and nature valuable areas.	The project's achievements should be of high importance for the future preparation of water management plans in Poland as the guidelines on development of water management plans in river basin and terms and conditions of water use in the water region have not been developed yet.	The project is of relevance to the requirements of the Polish and EU legislation. The National Development Strategy for the years 2007-2013 supports initiatives aiming at improvement of environmental status including European network of NATURA 2000 protection areas. Elaboration of water management plans and programmes of measures is compliant with the Water Framework Directive for the basin areas and the plans of protection for designated NATURA 2000 areas are in accordance with the Habitat and Birds Directives.

Data collected between mid-August and mid-September 2009.

Evaluator's Summary for Poland projects	**PL0108**	**PL0349**	**PL0452**	**PL0468**	**PL0494**
(i) The completed project will include all the activities and results stated above and achieve the project purpose	√	√	√	√	√
(ii) The completed project will be an example for the project purpose	√	√	√	√	√
(iii) the completed project will not include all the activities and results but will achieve the project purpose					
(iv) Publicity for the projects achievements has been organised	**started**	**started**	**started**		
(iv) The completed project will not achieve the project purpose					
(v) The project has been cancelled					
(vi) The project needs more time than planned to achieve the project purpose					
(vii) Other comments:				The Project Promoter considers that academic institutions play a major role in promoting biodiversity (note this opinion is not widely shared by other interviewees); NGOs without the academic support will have limited capacity to support the biodiversity protection thus a close co-operation between these actors is necessary. The public units like university suffer from financial constraints so the grant creates a unique opportunity to implement the scientific research on this scale.	

A5.4 SLOVAKIA

SK0025	Dubnik - protection of bats in winter roost			€ 577,688 (Grant € 516,310)	
Project Purpose	**Effectiveness**	**Sustainability**	**Efficiency**	**Impact**	**Relevance**
Redevelopment and renovation of a mine premises, construction of a footpath, securing protection of mine entrances, census and monitoring of the bats, winter/ summer bat census, publicity	Project blocked at the moment.[43] Provided that the project activities continue, the project objectives could be achieved.	Due to the long -term law-suit there is no guarantee that the successful project completion will secure the sustainability of the project. This could be ensured only under the condition that the final decision of the Court declines all efforts to renew mining activities	For the time being, with the exception of the need to repeat the public procurement process, no problems have been reported. Project progress is well in accordance with the expenses claimed	The planned impact is dependent on the decision on the project. The renewal of the mining activities is very likely to change the conditions in the mine and disturb the hibernating bats.	In terms of the strategies, the project is relevant and covers the species protected in the European Directives as well as in national strategies. The Dubník old-mine system is one of the most important bat hibernacula in central Europe.
SK0115	**National - management models for grassland habitats**			**€ 428,283 (Grant € 385,455)**	
To develop management models for the valuable grassland habitats	Due to the recent start of the project (the contract was signed 22 July 2009) it is not possible to assess the effectiveness.	It is likely that the main expected outputs - in the form of database and developed methodological tool for the preparation of the management plans - will be further utilised for various purposes.	Efficiency is probable because the grant recipient has a long record of successfully implemented projects and despite the research character of the project, the planned benefits should be widely utilised and provide synergy effects with the efforts supported under other EU initiatives e.g. NATURA 2000, Life, SF, etc.	Taking into account that out of an overall 800,000 ha., some 500,000 ha. have lost their biodiversity and only 1/8 of the overall area is properly managed, the knowledge gained should be sufficient to rescue most of the remaining part and also provide valuable knowledge and experience for local and foreign specialists as to how to prepare management plans for specific habitats	The project is relevant. It should deliver a methodological tool to assist with the determination of the habitat, based on the information from the existing databases, and provide basic guidelines for the maintenance of these habitats. The enforcement measures to implement this instrument will require the cooperation of the relevant Slovak ministries - Environment and Agriculture

[43] 20 November 2009.

SK0121	Beša and Čičarovce - conservation of water birds' diversity			€ 328,640 (Grant € 279,344)	
To restore the breeding and food habitats of the water bird species, including migrating species in the Eastern Slovakia lowlands	Due to the recent start of the project (the contract was signed 20 August 2009) it is not possible to assess the effectiveness. At this stage, no reasons were identified that would prevent achievement of objectives. The project beneficiary should guarantee that protecting water bird species, no other (for example) rare plant species will be endangered because of the change of environment	As the project is run by the Slovak State Nature Protection, which has the primary responsibility for maintenance of the area and biodiversity issues and, moreover, the municipality is keen to cooperate, it is expected that the sustainability will be ensured. It is not quite clear what will happen in case of extreme flooding, when the whole area would absorb much more water than usual, although this situation is unlikely to happen too often and, if so, it would have short duration.	The budget was reviewed at the assessment stage and the costs were considered appropriate	So far, the positive environmental impact is planned and likely to materialise	The project objective is fully compliant with the international and national strategies and considered relevant.

Data collected between mid-August and mid-September 2009.

Evaluator's Summary for Slovak projects	SK0025	SK0115	SK0121
(i) The completed project will include all the activities and results stated above and achieve the project purpose	see below	√	√
(ii) The completed project will be an example for the project purpose			
(iii) The completed project will not include all the activities and results but will achieve the project purpose			
(iv) Publicity for the projects achievements has been organised		√	√
(iv) The completed project will not achieve the project purpose			
(v) The project has been cancelled			
(vi) The project needs more time than planned to achieve the project purpose			
(vii) Other comments:	The project is blocked awaiting clarification of the legal status.	It is too early to judge the actual achievements of the projects as activities have hardly started. An assessment of expected status is provided	It is too early to judge the actual achievements of the projects as activities have hardly started. An assessment of expected status is provided

ANNEX 6. MONITORING SUMMARY

Grant (€)	Overall progress	Budget	Expenses	Co-financing	Revenue generation	Commitment to financing	Project management systems	Partner-ship	Permits and legal issues	Publicity Plans	Risk	Bilateral cooperation
CY0012	**Pafos Forest integrated management plan**											
447.226	No deviations	No change	Small rephasing	Taken earlier	N.A.	In place	In place	As planned	No permits but management plans need to be approved under a prescribed procedure	In place	None	None planned
EE0011	**Implementation of Natura in Estonian Marine Areas (ESTMAR)**											
549.438	Good progress	Higher costs for off-shore investigations; no budget revision yet	Small rephasing	No problem	N.A.	N.A.	In place	As planned	N.A.	In place	Delay in contracting	Good cooperation with Norwegian partner
EE0045	**Mires Inventory completion for maintaining biodiversity**											
390.637	Delayed start but caught up	No change	No change	No change	N.A.	N.A.	In place	As planned	Permits acquired	In place	None	None planned
ES0010	**Promotion campaign for NATURA 2000 network**											
999.939	Delayed start but expected to catch up	No change	No change	Minimal effect	N.A.	N.A.	In place	None	N.A.	In place	None	None planned
LT0071	**Maintaining bird habitats through agri-environmental measures**											
324.864	No deviations	No change	No change	No change	N.A.	N.A.	In place	As planned	No permits required	In place	None	Norwegian partner to join project shortly
LV0052	**Sustainable use and management of nature resources**											
417.555	No deviations	No change	Delays, but no change	No change	N.A.	N.A.	In place	As planned	Permits acquired	In place	None	Norwegian partners identified

PT0039	**SAFESEA - Sustainable local fisheries and promotion of a safe sea for cetaceans**											
408.970	No deviations	No change	No change	No change	N.A.	N.A.	In place	As planned	Yes	In place, small delay for worksho p	None	Norwegian and Spanish partners
PT0040	**CONDOR Azorean Seamount Ecosytem Observatory**											
716.198	Delays to all aspects of the work	Budget reallocation needed	Liquidity problems	Earlier incidence of inputs than planned	N.A.	N.A.	In place	As planned	Late legislation to close the Seamount fisheries Sept. 09	In place	Delay in legislation	Good cooperation with Norwegian partner

ANNEX 7. COMMENTARY ON SIGNIFICANCE OF 15 PROJECTS

It is not easy to judge the significance of the sample projects in the context of overall European biodiversity, but an approximate estimate has been made of the level of threat to the particular habitat type or part of nature on which the project is focused, the direct positive impact of the project to biodiversity conservation, and the indirect (long-term) positive impact of the project to biodiversity conservation. The judgements are based on personal knowledge of the biodiversity expert and his experience of similar projects, and although not based on a detailed analysis of the project, the overall picture remains that some projects are really dealing with highly endangered species/habitat types and are really expected to be effective in conservation of biodiversity and the others are not so good. In extreme cases, some projects seem to be only vaguely related to biodiversity conservation and the term biodiversity may have been misused.

Estimated level of threat

Different species and habitat types are threatened to very different levels. They can all be equally rare and natural and only locally preserved, but the level of threat to them depends on several factors, starting from direct pressure (e.g. collection of endangered medical plants, hunting of endangered animals, or extraction of peat from endangered peat-bogs), via indirect pressure through urbanization or pollution, or the more complex pressure caused by abandonment of traditional agricultural practices causing changes in cultural landscape and rapid changes in availability of several important (semi)natural habitat types (e.g. dry grasslands on slopes, wet meadows, or intensification of orchard production).

Some habitat types and species which are synonyms for nature in need of protection are in fact much less threatened than some others, for example rocky habitat types, especially in the high mountains and forests in countries where sustainable forestry practice is a policy. On the other hand, wet meadows and steep slopes with dry grassland communities are highly threatened because of pressure for 'improvement' or simple abandonment. Similarly some marshes and other small lowland wetlands are highly threatened because of their perceived 'usefulness' from an economic point of view, which is a problem also with riverine forests and natural vegetation on river banks.

Direct positive impact of project on biodiversity

A general problem with biodiversity is that it cannot be simply fixed or controlled, so in the short term it is not an easy to achieve any radical positive changes in local biodiversity. However, there are some good practices, or at least good ideas where distinct results are achievable in a short project span. Quite often this means that the project would only help to accelerate the natural processes of succession of vegetation or establish conditions where natural processes would be free to repair what was destroyed earlier. Sometimes there can be a problem of highly biased approaches focusing on only one species, which can be counter-productive for the general local biodiversity. The most extreme examples are some (but not all) reforestation projects, where the term 'biodiversity' is misused with the only purpose to re-establish commercially useful timber plantations.

Indirect positive impact of project to the biodiversity

The problem of indirect impact is that it is not measurable in the time span of the project, and there is no simple indicator of progress. Capacity building projects may have indirect positive impacts but it is not possible to predict if and how all other processes in the community or in nature would combine to achieve really positive results. However, without some capacity building, it would not be possible to protect nature against modern threats.

One of the most temporally remote or delayed indirect impacts can be the impact of education. Education and public awareness campaigns are highly important in every biodiversity protection project, but an educational campaign itself cannot be the only focus of such a project. The only exception could be strategic educational campaigns like revision of primary school curricula, or education of teachers, but also here the indirect positive impacts are not measurable.

Bulgaria

BG0031 Belasitsa mountain - *Castanea sativa* preservation

1) This project deals with a climax forest community (i.e. final phase of the natural succession of vegetation) which is a habitat type exposed to comparably low general threat but possibly a high direct threat, because of logging or the destruction of forest for development, which can be a particularly high risk where levels of corruption are high and legal protection only a formality that is not taken as a serious obstacle by developers. Unfortunately, the soft approaches associated with rising public awareness, etc., are as ineffective as the legal protection and pressure from developers is unlikely to be stopped by such actions. However, in general, several models of sustainable use of forests are available across Europe and if the natural forest of *Castanea sativa* **(**chestnut) is protected *in situ*, all its biodiversity will be saved.
2) The time span of the project is too short to estimate an immediate and positive impact on biodiversity. In such a short period, it will not be possible to see results in the forest community which needs decades to respond to environmental changes. However, if the trees of the forest are protected, the biodiversity is saved. A comparison of the three alternative forest management models would need a much longer time to get comparable and reliable results, so the decision which of the proposed models will be used depends more upon an expert opinion than measurable project results.
3) Several positive indirect impacts of the project on biodiversity are expected. Most important are commitments by the ministry and local authorities (including the National Park) to use the sustainable use scheme developed here in the future, and over a wider area.

BG0034 Conservation of biodiversity in hot-spots of glacial relict plants

1) In general, glacial relicts are rare but their occurrence is linked to inaccessible habitat types, such as narrow gorges, rocks, rocky outcrops, very steep slopes, etc. Such habitat types are often naturally protected by their inaccessibility; in addition, the risk of developer's pressure to such habitat types is low. If the threat is low, it is not hard to protect such communities.
2) It is not clear if there are some direct positive impacts to biodiversity planned. In general, communities where glacial relict species have survived millennia are not species rich, as all the species are adapted to extreme conditions (drought, frost, limited soil) and, without disturbance, such communities would easily survive.
3) Scientific data about the glacial relict communities are scarce and would be useful to understand the relict communities better, but it is difficult to say that our ability to protect them will change much. The only way to preserve them is to protect their habitats from destruction.

BG0052 Biodiversity Monitoring System

1) As a project dealing with a biodiversity monitoring system at national level, it covers all levels of threat. In general, threats to nature in South East Europe are quite different from Western Europe. Because of the continuing traditional use of land in several parts of the country, natural communities are much better preserved and also have very high species richness, but, pressure from developers is much higher and there are also problems of abandonment in rural areas, causing decrease of grassland species where diversity is high. But, quite often, local public support for nature conservation is low and people simply take nature for granted.

2) No direct positive impacts to biodiversity are planned.
3) The operational biodiversity monitoring system is a vital part of decision making processes, for spatial planning, for planning priorities in protection of nature, etc., without which, modern nature conservation cannot work. The questions are how the NATURA 2000 network was designed, where are the baseline inventories of the species in NATURA 2000 sites, and what can be said five or more years after establishing the NATURA 2000 network about the changes in threatened species populations detected already. Some kind of biodiversity monitoring system should already have been operational and the proposed one is probably an upgrade of it. If the project does produce a nation-wide biodiversity monitoring system, covering population data for all the NATURA 2000 species and habitat types, and also the species recognized as threatened on the national level, the indirect impact of such system would be immense.

Czech Republic

CZ0048 Bohemian Switzerland National Park Environmental Monitoring

1) As the project is located in an existing National Park, where diverse conservation measures have already been in place, the level of threat to the biodiversity is comparably low.
2) No direct positive impacts to biodiversity are planned.
3) Several indirect impacts including better trained employees of the National Park service. The monitoring results will be needed to optimise future planning and decision making.

CZ0071 Zlin - Revitalisation and preservation of meadows

1) Extensively used meadows are among the most endangered habitat types in Central Europe, with their high species richness quickly decreasing because of changes of use (abandonment, “improvement”, use of fertilizers, introduction of commercial seeds, and intensification of use), so they are a good and important target for biodiversity conservation projects. Normally, only the re-establishment of the traditional regime of early- and late-summer mowing is sufficient for a speedy recovery of meadows’ biodiversity - if they had been abandoned recently.
2) Direct positive impacts of applied traditional mowing methods can gain measurable results quickly - in a year or two, but the problem is how to convince landowners to maintain the grassland in the same way in the future.
3) Commitments of landowners and municipalities to continue with sustainable use of species-rich grassland is good, but a system of well focused subsidies would work even better.

CZ0072 Recovery Programmes for Endangered Species

1) The level of threat to the endangered species is diverse, but a priority list has probably been prepared, identifying species which are endangered in some way, hence in need of active protection. As all the approaches should follow the Czech Ministry of Environment approved methods, it would appear that there is no room for innovative methods.
2) With *in situ* application of selected methods of protection, some recovery of endangered species populations is expected locally and the good practice later disseminated.
3) Indirect positive impacts are tried and tested methods for the recovery and protection of endangered species, which will obviously be integrated in the Ministry of Environment biodiversity protection programmes.

CZ0138 Moravian-Silesian Region - Monitoring of endangered species and habitats

1) All regionally endangered species and habitat types with diverse levels of threat are dealt with by the project, including those not covered by EU directives. This fact is important as it is rarely the case; usually only NATURA 2000 species threatened at the

EU level are given the highest priority for conservation, thus forgetting the locally or nationally important endangered species.
2) No direct positive impacts are planned.
3) Better knowledge of the studied species, established monitoring system, public availability of relevant data will provide a firm base for later nature/ conservation processes, so the indirect positive impact of the project is expected to be substantial.

Poland

PL0108 Carpathians - NATURA 2000 Protection and Education Initiative

1) As the NATURA 2000 site already has some level of formal protection, the threat to biodiversity is medium.
2) No direct positive impacts are planned except some pilot sub-projects for conservation of threatened habitat types and species.
3) Several aims of the project would indirectly impact biodiversity positively, such as the establishment of information systems, for the purposes of nature conservation planning and for the general public, shaping public awareness, etc. If the project really fulfils all the tasks, the biodiversity protection infrastructure in the area will be good enough to implement all the levels of protection and conservation.

PL0349 Protection of lynx, wolf and bear

1) The direct threat to large carnivores is quite easily detectable (mostly hunting, also illegal) and can be controlled by strict legislation. The project in fact deals with protection of local human population and their activities against potentially dangerous large carnivores.
2) The direct results of increased populations of large carnivores will not be easily detectable in the short period of project, as these animals do not respond quickly to the changes of environmental conditions. Results can be observed only after several years if the activities started in the frame of the project are maintained.
3) The problem is that the project is focused on the technical methods of prevention, which are easy to establish and easy to calculate costs, but of limited effectiveness. For bears especially, which are so big and strong animals, it is simply too expensive to place a completely safe beehive in the bears' home area. Some activities are not compatible with the wild bear population in the area or have to be placed inside villages and actively protected by shepherds. So there is a risk that the technical methods tested in the project will not be as effective as local people would like them to be, and the current public opinion against large carnivores will not be easy to change. And, as stated above, the project deals with protection of local human population and their activities against potentially dangerous large carnivores, just to convince people that coexistence is possible.

PL0452 Tczew - Establishing a didactic footpath in a bird mainstay

1) The project will take place in a destroyed natural area, with seriously degraded biodiversity and only a few remaining threatened species. In such cases there is always a question as to whether to spend the same money for the protection of surviving nature somewhere near (much more cost efficient).
2) The direct impact is focused to NATURA 2000 bird populations, in what seems to be a biased approach, which is not so beneficial to other species' biodiversity.
3) Some indirect positive impacts to biodiversity are planned with very remote, and so not easy to monitor, results such as raising general public awareness, and redirecting public recreation to avoid threatened areas.

PL0468 Waminsko-Mazurkie - study of autochthonous whitefish in Łebsko Lake

1) The threat to the target fish population is not recognizable and it should be analyzed first to set proper approach of the project. If general air pollution (acid rain, etc.) is changing the general ecological conditions, nothing can be done without huge efforts to buffer that negative impacts. If illegal fishing is a problem the approach would be very

much different; if introduction of carnivorous fish causes fish decline, again the approach would be different, and, if in fact the fish populations are artificially maintained through interventions by fishermen, the methods for re-naturalisation are again completely different. Talking of "lack of genetic variability" in small lakes as the possible reason for population decrease is not robust, because in the previous times these lakes were even more isolated than today and the fish survived.
2) No direct impact measurable.
3) Indirect impacts not clear.

PL0494 Czarna Orawa - River basin protection

1) Peat bogs are already protected and are very localised and specific habitat types without real direct threat, and only indirect threats from long distance pollution. Brooks and rivers are more exposed to destruction by reduction of water flow or by extraction of gravel.
2) In general description of the project too vague to be sure about the impacts, especially direct impact.
3) Proper education can have an impact on biodiversity conservation, but the impact is remote and not measurable. Establishing a public forum can be a useful tool for public processes concerning biodiversity conservation, but it will not guarantee an impact.

Slovakia

SK0025 Dubnik - Protection of bats in winter roost

1) Some bats are among the highly threatened species and still there is a problem of maintenance of secondary habitats, such as the abandoned mine. Here the question is how much money and effort are needed to secure the bat colony over-wintering shelter, and how much additional expense is required to make the mine more easily accessible for the visitors (which is, in fact, a serious disturbance to bat population).
2) As bat colonies are very sensitive and it quite easy to estimate number of animals, the positive impact of project is easily measurable and would be obvious in the time-frame of the project.
3) The methodology would be developed and tested, to be used for bat conservation management plans in other localities in the future.

SK0061 Tatranska Javorina - alpine biology research institute

1) Rare high mountain areas were among the first protected nature reserves and today in Central Europe they are mostly no longer threatened by direct human activities. Activities are well controlled and limited to foot-tracks. Only long-distance negative impacts such as air pollution or global warming are a threat, but such a threat cannot be tackled by in-situ protection..
2) Direct impact is not clear.
3) More information will always help to improve the understanding of the problems of biodiversity better, but the availability of knowledge about the high mountain biota is already fairly good and is sufficient to know how to design conservation management.

SK0115 Management models for grassland habitats

1) Comparable to CZ0071: extensively used meadows are among the most endangered habitat types in Central Europe, with high species richness quickly decreasing because of changes of use (abandonment, "improvement", use of fertilizers, introduction of commercial seeds, intensification of use), so they are a good and important target for biodiversity conservation projects.
2) Direct positive impacts of applied traditional mowing methods can gain measurable results quickly, but are not clearly planned in this project.
3) It is not completely clear where experience and good practice for sustainable grassland management will be gathered from, and how to include them in the methodological tool to provide guidelines for the future.

SK0121 Besa and Cicarovce - conservation of water birds diversity

1) The level of threat of the target is medium, and focusing on water birds means that the approach can be very biased.
2) Direct positive impacts are questionable. If the area is exposed to the regular floods, this cannot be taken as a risk but as an important environmental factor positively effecting water-bird population.
3) Indirect impacts not clear.

ANNEX 8. MONITORING QUESTIONNAIRE

This monitoring questionnaire was sent to national Focal Points in respect of projects CY0012, EE0011, EE0045, ES0010, LT0071, LV0052, PT0039 and PT0040.

Biodiversity Questionnaire	
Person responsible for completion of this questionnaire	
Location	
Email	
PLEASE email response to: peterbhall@hotmail.com	

Project registration number	
Title of the project	
Type of project assistance	Individual Project
Name of project promoter	
Name of promoter contact person	
Name of project partner(s)	
Total grant approved (€)	
Date of grant approval	
Planned completion date	
Beneficiary state	
Key priority sector	

Brief project description

The purpose of the Project is

The completed Project shall include the following activities and results:

The Project Promoter is

The Focal Point shall ensure that the Project Promoter shall provide at least XX percent of the estimated eligible project cost.

1 Objectives

The project's purpose and overall objectives are given in the grant agreement.

Have any changes been made to the project objectives?	
Have the changes been approved by the Donor state(s)?	
Has the relevance of any objective changed?	
If any changes to the objectives have not been approved or the relevance has changed, please respond to the following questions:	
Specific reasons?	
What are the implications for the total project?	

2 Progress

This is an overall assessment of whether the project is following the agreed timeline.

Indicate any deviation from agreed project timeline.	
If there is any significant deviation:	
Specific reasons for deviation?	
What are the implications for the total project?	
What actions will be taken?	

3 Achievements (indicators) and quality

Please complete the table below for the main indicator(s), which may be activity based or total project based.

Indicator	
Planned achievement to date	
Actual achievement	
If there is any significant deviation, please respond to the following questions:	
Specific reasons for deviation?	
What are the implications for the total project?	
What actions will be taken?	

4 Budget

The budget is given in the application and referred to in the grant agreement.

Have any adjustments been made to the project budget?	
Are any modifications to budget larger than the limit for approval?	
Have such modifications been approved by the Donor state(s)?	
Is the budget still realistic or have circumstances changed that?	
If any adjustments have been made or the budget is not realistic, please respond to the following questions:	
Specific reasons?	
What are the implications for the total project?	
What actions will be taken?	

5 Expenses

The main purpose of the questions below is to relate the actual expenses to the project plan.

Planned total eligible project expenses to date	

Planned claimed grant expenses to date	
Amount claimed to date	
If there is any significant deviation, please respond to the following questions:	
Specific reasons for deviation?	
What are the implications for the total project?	
What actions will be taken?	

6 Co-financing and in-kind contributions

It is a requirement of the grant agreement that the co-financing is made available in proportion to the grant payment.

Planned co-financing to date, including in-kind contributions	
Amount co-financed to date including in-kind contribution.	
If there is any significant deviation, please respond to the following questions:	
Specific reasons for deviation?	
What are the implications for the total project?	
What actions will be taken?	

7 Revenue generation (if applicable)

Revenues may be generated during the project implementation and/or after the implementation.

Planned revenue generation to date	
Amount of revenue generated to date	
If there is any significant deviation, please respond to the following questions:	
Specific reasons for deviation?	
What are the implications for the total project?	
What actions will be taken?	

8 Commitments for financing after implementation (if applicable)

It is very important that the required finances and organisational preparations are made in due time before the operational phase of the project starts, meaning the phase after the project implementation period.

Have required commitments been made for the operational phase financing?	
Have reasonable organisational preparations been made for the operation and maintenance of the project after implementation?	

If there is any significant deviation, please respond to the following questions:	
Specific reasons for deviation?	
What are the implications for the total project?	
What actions will be taken?	

9 Project or grant management systems (if applicable)

Are the required management systems in place?	
Are effective monitoring and controlling systems in place?	
If any significant deviation is determined, please respond to the following questions:	
Specific reasons for deviation?	
What are the implications for the total project?	
What actions will be taken?	

10 Partnership (if applicable)

Any changes in the actual roles of the partners or the partnership itself should be identified. If cooperation is problematic please indicate the reasons.

What is the actual role each partner is playing in the project?	
Are there any problems in the partnerships?	
If there is any significant deviation from the grant agreement, please respond to the following questions:	
Specific reasons for deviation?	
What are the implications for the total project?	
What actions will be taken?	

11 Required permits obtained, or other legal issues

In case certain legal (planning, environmental, etc.) permits need to be obtained in relation to the project implementation. These can have a significant impact on the project. There may be other legal issues of relevance, e.g. related to EU law, that either has been known or come up during implementation.

Are all required permits obtained?	
Are there any legal issues that may influence the implementation?	
If any issues are identified, please respond to the following questions:	
What are the reasons?	
What are the implications for the total project?	
What actions will be taken?	

12 Compliance with publicity plan

Have the principles defined in the publicity plan been complied with?	
If there is any significant deviation, please respond to the following questions:	
Specific reasons for deviation?	
What actions will be taken?	

13 Risk

The risk situation regarding both previous incidents and the risk management in accordance with the plans should be briefly assessed.

Has the project experienced risk related incidents, and how have they been managed?	
Are there any changes to the risk situation on the project?	
If there is any significant deviation, please respond to the following questions:	
Specific reasons for the change?	
What are the implications for the total project?	
What actions will be taken?	

14 Bilateral cooperation (if applicable)

Is the project contributing to bilateral cooperation with Donor states as planned?	
If there is any significant deviation, please respond to the following questions:	
Specific reasons for deviation?	
What are the implications for the total project?	
What actions will be taken?	

END

ANNEX 9. LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Date	Title	Name		Position	At
FMO Brussels (EEA & Norway Grants					
Various	Mr	Rune	Vistad	Environment Officer	FMO, Brussels
Various	Ms	Emily	Harwit	Monitoring & Priority Sector Coordinator	FMO, Brussels
21-Sep	Ms	Kristin	Sverdrup	Head of Reporting and Evaluation	FMO, Brussels
Norway					
04-Sep	Mr	Steinar Egil	Hagen	Deputy Director General	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
04-Sep	Ms	Solfrid	Foss	Senior Adviser	Norwegian Ministry of the Environment
UK					
14-Sep	Dr	Stephen	Jury	Curator of Herbarium	Reading University, UK
23-Sep	Mr	Ivor	Richards	Managing Director	RML Bioengineering Ltd
Slovakia & Czech Republic					
27-Aug	Ing	Jaroslav	Mojžiš	Deputy Director	Bratislava, Štefánikova 2, Government Office
27-Aug	Mgr	Natália	Ďurková	Project Manager	Bratislava, Štefánikova 2, Government Office
27-Aug		Júlia	Petrášová	Project Manager	Bratislava, Štefánikova 2, Government Office
01-Sep	Dr	Jan	Šeffer	Director	DAPHNE -Institute of Applied Ecology, Podunajská 24, 821 06 Bratislava, NGO
01-Sep	Mgr	Viera	Šefferová Stanová	Deputy Director	DAPHNE -Institute of Applied Ecology, Podunajská 24, 821 06 Bratislava, NGO
04-Sep	Ing	Miluše	Poláková	Project Manager	Krajský úřad Zlínského kraje, třída Tomáše Bati 21, 761 90 Zlín, Czech Republic
04-Sep	Mr	Petr	Pavelčík	Project Manager	Krajský úřad Zlínského kraje, třída Tomáše Bati 21, 761 90 Zlín, Czech Republic
07-Sep	DiS	Jana	Nováková	Project Manager	National Park České Švýcarsko, Krásná Lípa, Pražská 52
08-Sep	Dr	Zuzana	Guziová	Project Manager	State Nature Protection, Mlynská dolina 1, Bratislava
09-Sep	Dr	Jiří	Zicha		Ministry of Environment, Vršovická 65, Prague
09-Sep	Ms	M.	Košťálová		Ministry of Environment, Vršovická 65, Prague
09-Sep	Ing	Václava	Lamačová	Project Manager	Agency for Nature and Landscape Protection, Nuselská 39, Prague
09-Sep	Mgr	Tereza	Mináriková		Agency for Nature and Landscape Protection, Nuselská 39, Prague
09-Sep	Ing	Dominika	Caputová	Head of Monit. Unit	NFP, Ministry of Finance, Letenská 15, Prague
09-Sep	Ing	Ludmila	Lefnerová	Head of Unit – Centre for Foreign Assistance – programming and coordination	NFP, Ministry of Finance, Letenská 15, Prague
09-Sep	Mgr	Šárka	Kovačková	Programme Man.	NFP, Ministry of Finance, Letenská 15, Prague

10-Sep	Ing	Apolónia	Sejková	Project Manager	Foundation Dubnické opálové bane, Červenica - Dubník, 082 07 Červenica, SR
10-Sep	Dr	Petr	Voříšek	Coordinator	Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme, Na bělidle 34, Prague, CR
11-Sep	Ing	Rudolf	Trebatický	Head of Department	Dpt. of Env. activities, Ministry of Agriculture, Dobrovičova 9, Bratislava
14-Sep	Ing.	Zuzana	Bártová	Project Manager	Regional Authority Moravian-Silesian region, 28. rijna 117, Ostrava
14-Sep	Ing.	Tomáš	Kotyza	Head of Department	Regional Authority Moravian-Silesian region, 28. rijna 117, Ostrava
16-Sep		Trine	Skymoen	Ambassador	Royal Norwegian Embassy, Palisády 29, Bratislava
16-Sep	Ms	Soňa	Sulíková	Secretary of the Amb.	Royal Norwegian Embassy, Palisády 29, Bratislava
18-Sep	Ing	Zuzana	Knetigová	Head of Dpt.	Ministry of Environment, Dpt. of Nature Conservation, Bratislava
Poland					
27-Aug	Ms	Jolanta	Śliwińska	Head of Development Unit	Municipality of Tczew
27-Aug	Ms	Ewa	Czerwińska	Officer of Development Unit	Municipality of Tczew
28-Aug	Ms	Anna M.	Wiśniewska	Project Manager, Faculty of Environmental Sciences and Fisheries	University of Warmia and Mazury
28-Aug	Ms	Marta	Wasiak	Faculty of Environmental Sciences and Fisheries	University of Warmia and Mazury
31-Aug	Ms	Agata	Uliszak	Project Implementation Team	Institute of Nature Conservation of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Cracow
31-Aug	Ms	Katarzyna	Staszyńska	Project Implementation Team	Institute of Nature Conservation of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Cracow
31-Aug	Ms	Małgorzata	Owsiany	Vice-Director	Regional Board for Water Management in Krakow
31-Aug	Mr	Rafał	Kokoszka	Officer	Regional Board for Water Management in Krakow
31-Aug	Mr	Ryszard	Babiasz	Officer of the Department of NATURA 2000 sites	Regional Directorate of Environment in Krakow
03-Sep	Mr	Stefan	Jakimiuk	Project Manager	WWF Poland (World Wide Fund For Nature)
04-Sep	Ms	Anna	Przeniosło	Director of Norwegian Funds Department	National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management
04-Sep	Ms	Maria	Roszkowska	Officer of Norwegian Funds Department	National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management
04-Sep	Ms	Edyta	Kuźmińska	Officer of Norwegian Funds Department	National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management
04-Sep	Ms	Irena	Olek	Officer of Norwegian Funds Department	National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management
04-Sep	Ms	Agnieszka	Araźna	Officer of Norwegian Funds Department	National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management
04-Sep	Mr	Mariusz	Wojszczak	Officer of Norwegian Funds Department	National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management

09-Sep	Mr	Paweł	Magdziarek	Acting Head of Unit, Financial Instruments Department	Ministry of Environment
09-Sep	Ms	Marta	Kozioł	Specialist, Financial Instruments Department	Ministry of Environment
09-Sep	Mr	Maciej	Jędrzejek	Specialist, Financial Instruments Department	Ministry of Environment
09-Sep	Ms	Urszula	Demidziuk	Head of Foreign Assistance Programming Unit	National Focal Point, Ministry of Regional Development, Department for Aid Programmes and technical Assistance
09-Sep	Mr	Tomasz	Kołodziej	Specialist; Foreign Assistance Programming Unit	National Focal Point, Ministry of Regional Development, Department for Aid Programmes and technical Assistance
09-Sep	Ms	Małgorzata	Zalewska	Deputy Head	National Focal Point, Ministry of Regional Development, Department for Aid Programmes and technical Assistance
09-Sep	Ms	Justyna	Krawczyk	Head of Monitoring Unit	National Focal Point, Ministry of Regional Development, Department for Aid Programmes and technical Assistance
09-Sep	Ms	Aneta	Krzywicka	Head of Implementation Unit	National Focal Point, Ministry of Regional Development, Department for Aid Programmes and technical Assistance
09-Sep	Ms	Marta	Krępska	Implementation Unit	National Focal Point, Ministry of Regional Development, Department for Aid Programmes and technical Assistance
10-Sep	Ms	Karina	Gradowska-Karpińska	Advisor EEA Grants	Royal Norwegian Embassy, Warsaw
10-Sep	Ms	Sidsel	Bleken	Counsellor (EEA Grants)	Royal Norwegian Embassy, Warsaw
10-Sep	Ms	Barbara	Tokarska-Guzik	Head of Department of Plant Systematics	Faculty of Biology and Environmental Protection. University of Silesia
10-Sep	Ms	Magdalena	Maciejewska	Deputy Director of Department of Scientific Policy Instruments	Ministry of Science and Higher Education
11-Sep	Mr	Wojciech	Mróz	Project Manager; Dep. for Integration of Data on Nature	Institute of Nature Conservation of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Cracow
Slovenia					
04-Sep	Ms	Vesna	Cafuta	Specialist	NGO: Societas Herpetologica Slovenica
03-Sep	Mr	Mladen	Kotarac	Specialist	SME: Center za kartografijo favne in flore
03-Sep	Ms	Jana	Kus	Specialist	NGO: Symbiosys; small grant beneficiary
03-Sep	Dr	Gregor	Torkar	Part time teacher at Pedagogic Faculty, University of Ljubljana	NGO: Lutra
03-Sep	Ms	Hermina	Golob	EEA Focal Point for Slovenia	SVRSEZ, Ljubljana
02-Sep	Dr	Simona	Strgulc-Krajšek	Biotechnical Faculty, Dept. of Biology	University of Ljubljana
24-Sep	Ms	Julijana	Lebez Lozej	Ministry for Environment	Coordination of Life financial mechanism
21-Sep	M	Mateja	Šepec	NGO	Regional Environmental Center

24-Sep	Dr	Janko	Rode	Coordination of organic farming projects	Ministry of Agriculture, Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry
Bulgaria					
09-Sep	Dr	Dimitar	Peev	Director	The Institute of Botany at the Bulgarian Academy of Science
15-Sep	Ms	Margarita	Grudova	Expert in International Cooperation Department	Executive Environment Agency at the Ministry of Environment and Water
19-Sep	Mr	Tzvetan	Zlatanov	Senior Science Analyst	Forest Research Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
18-Sep	Ms	Veleslava	Abadjieva	National Coordinator	The GEF Small Grants Program (SGP) - Bulgaria
23-Sep	Ms	Jordanka	Dineva	International Projects coordinator	The Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation
23-Sep	Ms	Raina	Hardalova	Biodiversity Department Manager	Ministry of Environment and Water
23-Sep	Ms	Krasimira	Avramova	Director Environmental Monitoring Directorate	Executive Environmental Agency
23-Sep	Mr	Hristo	Nikolov	Development Programme Director	Greenbalkans
24-Sep	Ms	Miroslava	Dikova	Business and Biodiversity Director	The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds
24-Sep	Ms	Dimitrina	Boteva	Biodiversity Program Coordinator	EcoLogic Consultancy

ANNEX 10. LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Source	Title (year)
Norad	Mid-term Evaluation of the EEA grants (August 2008)
EEA grants/ FMO	Evaluation Manual 2008 – 2012
European Commission	BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN "Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond", 2008
European Commission	A mid-term Assessment of Implementing the EU Biodiversity Action Plan COM(2008) 864 final (December 2008)
European Commission	Commission calls for a shakeup in EU biodiversity policy IP/09/649 (eight point plan for nature protection) (April 2009)
Council of the European Union	A mid-term Assessment of Implementing the EU Biodiversity Action Plan and Towards an EU Strategy on Invasive Alien Species 11412/09 (June 2009)
Gellis Communications	Scoping study for an EU wide communications campaign on biodiversity and nature (2007)
European Commission	Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond (Staff Working Document) SEC(2006) 621 (May 2006)
European Commission	Nature and Biodiversity cases: Ruling of the European Court of Justice (2006)
European Commission	LIFE – Third Countries 1992-2006 (2007)
European Commission	Good Practice in Action: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/nat2000/ sust_tourism_gpract.pdf
Nordic Consulting Group	A review of the selection process and dialogue in the implementation of the EEA Grants with special focus on Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia (April 2008)
Ekopolis	Call for Proposals [Slovakia] 19 November 2008
EEA grants/ FMO	Various publications relating to environmental protection and biodiversity
EEA grants/ FMO	Detailed Appraisal Reports (supplemented by internal assessments) for all biodiversity projects (Various)
Norwegian Environmental Agencies	Co-operation for a better environment (and other publications)
RSPB	Handbook for developing and implementing Pro-Diversity Business projects (BTAU)
The Brussels Office SA	EU structural and cohesion funds – A report for the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment (July 2008)
European Environment Agency	Territorial Cohesion – Analysis of environmental aspects of the EU Cohesion Policy ion selected countries (2009)
Cambridge University Press	*Flora Europaea* (Vols 1-5) (Various)
Polish Ministry of Environment	Fourth National Report on the Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity – Poland, March 2009