

Committee for conservation of wetlands

Transfer project in the framework of the Klaus Toepfer Fellowship Programme

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Executive summary

Poland became a party to the Ramsar Convention (RC) in 1978 and up to 2008 the Ministry of the Environment (ME) was obliged to implement the RC. In 2008, a new governmental body was created, called General Directorate for Environmental Protection (GDEP), and by decision of the ME it has been appointed to continue the implementation of the obligations under the RC. To support the implementation of the RC, the Polish Secretariat for the Ramsar Convention (PSRC) was established in GDEP, with one person employed and finances guaranteed from the National Fund of Environmental Protection and Water Management (NFEPWM).

In order to work effectively, the PSRC requires a sound knowledge of real aspects of wetlands protection nationwide from people directly engaged. This lies behind the Recommendation 5.7 of the Ramsar COP 5, that encourages parties to establish a national Ramsar or wetland committee. On this base the idea was born: to establish a group, which would consist of people from institutions responsible for wetlands conservation to support the work of the PSRC.

The main goal of undertaken actions was to build a network of people, who can support the governmental body in wetlands conservation issues in Poland, according to the provisions of the RC through the fulfillment of the Recommendation 5.7. First action taken within the Transfer Project was to organize a meeting with all possible partners to discuss about possible cooperation as a committee, possible future activities of the PSRC as well as exchange of information about wetlands conservation in Poland. The following institutions were invited: ME, NFEPWM, representatives of 16 regional directorates for environmental protection (RDEP), water management administration, forestry administration, scientists and NGOs. The meeting was attended by 34 representatives.

The report of this meeting, containing a summary of all topics discussed, was prepared in the form of recommendations and presented to the management of GDEP. Proposals by participants for the creation of a committee oscillated around three possible options (committee led by PSRC, independent body or free platform to exchange information). Additionally, very important for PSRC are suggestions by participants for future work, i.e. to elaborate "Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness Programme", to designate new Ramsar sites, etc.

The meeting provided an opportunity to present different points of view and underline strengths and weaknesses of different types of committees. Moreover,

it showed that a platform for exchanging information about wetlands is in high demand. The report with the recommendations will help to make a decision and choose the best solution for future cooperation to implement the RC and protect wetlands in Poland. Having a strong group built around the RC could also help to raise interest in wetland conservation through new initiatives and to mobilize public support.