

Natura 2000 communication strategy for the Czech Republic

Transfer project in the framework of the Klaus Toepfer Fellowship Programme

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Executive summary

This project was focused on communication topics related to the implementation of network of sites of Community importance (SCI) – known as the Natura 2000 network. Nature conservation is often connected only with restrictions and bans and therefore perceived very negatively. The Natura 2000 network is significantly based on the protection of areas affected by human activity. Thus, cooperation with people who are directly using the land in such areas is essential. Public opinion on nature conservation is strongly steered by media presentation, which more often speaks about conflicts than benefits. Therefore, the main output of the project is a communication strategy on the Natura 2000 network, which should tackle the topics related to these problems. The strategy is based on the detailed analysis of stakeholders, in which I took into account the ways in which they are influenced by SCI protection as well as their potential to influence successful conservation of the Natura 2000 network. I analysed the current communication practice including the identification of gaps in addressing the stakeholders during different stages of the Natura 2000 network implementation. One part of the project was focused on consultations with regional conservationists. Based on their experience I have identified best practices in communication with different groups of stakeholders. In conclusion I summarized the findings and prepared the communication strategy aiming at the current possibilities to improve the communication on the Natura 2000 network and thereby support its effective implementation.

The outputs of the project will serve as a framework for improvements of the communication in the Natura 2000 network implementation and for raising awareness about the Natura 2000 network. It is also important as a strategic document for the Unit of Natura 2000 of the Czech Ministry of the Environment which is responsible for the implementation of this network because it contributes to better understanding of the role which communication plays in the Natura 2000 implementation process. Thus, the document could help to set the priorities within the new EU programming period (2014 – 2020). It could also form a starting point for the preparation of a relevant project on some more specific communication topics.

This project was completed within the Klaus Toepfer Fellowship. During the educational programme several relevant lectures (and lecturers) helped me especially in the project areas concerning communication topics and strategic planning, protected areas systems and the types of protected areas governance, ecological networks and the participatory approach, and strategic planning in nature conservation.