Report from the Conference:
European Economic Area (EEA) and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms:
Biodiversity and Sustainable Development in EEA Grants Cooperation

November 23-24, 2006
Oslo, Norway

Day 1: Chair: Mr. Hæge Andenæs, Director General, Ministry of Environment, Norway

Welcome address
Mr. Morten Wasstøl, Political Adviser to the Minister of Environment, Norway
- Due to the EEA Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Norway is prepared to work with the EU on relevant issues related to biodiversity and sustainable development, even if Norway is not a part of the EEA agreement regarding the Habitats (Natura 2000) and the Birds directives

The EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms
Ms. Ingrid Schulerud, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
- About 800 projects are expected to be cleared through the FMO in Brussels
- Norway is the largest contributor to the NGO sector in the new EU countries
- Biodiversity is not a marginal issue but right in the political mainstream
- Surprised that the Ministries of Environment have problems in getting through with their projects, - particularly the biodiversity projects
- Commended the work by the NGOs and recommended a stronger cooperation with them

EU's Action Plan on Biodiversity and opportunities for synergies between EU funds and EEA grants in the field of biological diversity
Mr. Ladislav Miko, Deputy Director, DG Environment
- Presented the EU Action Plan on Biodiversity towards 2010 and beyond, sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being
- Four policy areas: Biodiversity in Europe, biodiversity globally, biodiversity and the climate change, and the knowledge base
- LIFE Nature will end by 2006, and a new fund called LIFE+ will (hopefully) start up from 2007 with about 300 million Euros annually
- Stressed that it was not enough to establish Natura 2000 areas. Natura 2000 was supposed to be an ecological network, although this is only partly true today. It is necessary to look into broader ecosystems as well as in marine areas
- Urged for a better planning process
- Implementation is more important than legislation. An aim to finance good projects on implementation related to the 2010 target, as well as training, capacity building and communication
- Important to dedicate financial resources to biodiversity. It is also important to support local initiatives where EU resources are available, to combine funding programs and to support transboundary projects. Particularly important to support work in the field
- Stressed the need for partnerships between biodiversity and the business sector
- Stressed the importance of synergy effects between Convention on Biological diversity (CBD), EU and Pan European Biodiversity and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS)

Postal address: N-7485 Trondheim
Phone: +47 73 580 500
Fax: +47 73 580 501
Videoconf: +47 73 905 140
Internet: www.dirnat.no
E-mail: Postmottak@dirnat.no
Executive officer: Svein Terje Båtvik
Phone: 73 58 08 03

- Biodiversity should be integrated in all sectors, and not only be the responsibility of the Ministries of Environment
- Cited Vaclav Havel: "In the future there should be no need for a Ministry of Environment, but for an overriding Ministry of Decency"

Biodiversity in Norwegian Nature Management
Ms. Janne Sollie, Director General, Directorate for Nature Management (DN), Norway
- Current land use is the worst threat to biodiversity in Norway today
- There are about 3800 species on the Norwegian Red List
- Marine protected areas will probably be a priority in Norwegian nature management in the years to come
- DN's Norwegian Nature Inspectorate (SNO) controls activities and the compliance with rules and regulations in nature in Norway, particularly in protected areas. This might be a good example of a nature control system also for the EU
- Stressing sector responsibility in nature management
- Pointed to DN's tasks related to the implementation of the EEA financial mechanisms

Challenges for conservation and management of biodiversity in Europe - what role for the EEA grants?
Ms. Stefanie Lang, EU Regional Policy Officer, WWF European Policy Office, Brussels
- EU's Structural Funds lack a clear regional development vision, and are not using the NGOs properly. They require too large infrastructures, while the sectoral approaches are too narrow. There are too few links between economic, social and environmental objectives. The public, especially locally, is not adequately contacted
- There are large gaps between environmental concerns and development concerns
- The bureaucracy related to financing of projects is a real problem. This will often prevent protection as areas are developed while waiting for environmental funding. Even the structure related to obtaining NGO funds is too complicated
- Even "small" biodiversity projects are often overburdened by administration, reporting, evaluation and planning requirements
- The control of the use of structural funds is inadequate
- WWF argues there are funding gaps particularly in
    * Rivers and wetlands
    * Monitoring activities
    * Public awareness and communication
- Norway is not a part of the EU and should be able to set the rules without copying EU's complicated procedures

EEA grants in the biodiversity challenge
Mr. Norman Weisz, Senior Environmental Officer, Financial Mechanism Office (FMO), Brussels
- 36 application have so far been approved by FMO in Brussels, adding up to 29 mill. Euro for individual projects and 33 million Euros for block grants
- Explaining about the manuals and check-lists used by FMO to appraise project proposals
- Systematic monitoring of projects is a key issue, requiring good indicators

Species management in Estonia – Challenges and strategies
Mr. Mart Jüssi, Monitoring and Research Specialist, State Nature Conservation Centre, Estonia
- 34 management plans have been worked out in Estonia. Examples were given of species and how these management plans have been working in practice
- Good implementation is dependent on dedicated people and sufficient funding
- "Well informed people protect nature better than 140 pages of strategy"
- "Laws don't change nature, people do"

Habitat management in the Slovak Republic – Challenges and strategies
Ms. Jana Zacharóva, Senior Adviser, Ministry of Environment, Slovak Republic
- Slovakia has protected about 25 % of its land area as Natura 2000 sites. In addition comes national parks and nature reserves
- Particular problems encountered related to protection:
    * Mixed ownership
    * Sectoral approaches
    * Insufficient budgets
    * Lack of awareness
- Strategies for habitat management in Slovakia include purchase of land, leasing of land, promotion of integrated land management, schemes funded by the EU and public awareness

Day 2: Chair: Ms. Gunn Paulsen, Head of Division, Directorate for Nature Management, Norway

Optimisation of the use of the resources of the Natura 2000 network for sustainable development in the Carpathian Mountains
Ms. Agnieszka Olszanska, Research Assistant, Institute of Nature Conservation, Polish Academy of Sciences, Krákow
- "Conservation without money is conversation"
- In Poland most communities are against the Natura 2000 system
- The actual area in the Carpathian Mountains is transboundary, involving the Ukraine and Slovakia
- The most used prevention method for domestic animals in Poland against large carnivores is fencing, electric or traditional, - it has been decided not to use shepherd dogs
- One particularly efficient way of spreading information, questionnaires etc in the Carpathian area has been to engage school teachers

Sustainable and competitive Czech Forestry: Implementing and improving the Czech Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Standard
Mr. Michal Rezek, Forest Stewardship Council, Czech Republic/
Mr. Rasmus Reinvang, Programme Leader, Terrestrial Environment, WWF Norway
- FSC was created in 1993 with its international headquarter in Bonn
- The FSC certification is based on 10 principles and 56 criteria
- Today there are certified forests in 73 countries in all continents, 4945 companies comply, and there are more than 20 000 types of certified products. Half of the certified forests are in Europe, but in the Czech Republic only 1 % of the forests are certified
- Outlining a pilot FSC test to be undertaken in the Krkonose National Park bordering Poland

- In Norway a new "Living Forest"-standard was reached in 2006, but this is not equal to the FSC. Negotiations are going on to adapt to FSC standards

Biodiversity management in Norwegian forestry
Mr. Øystein Aasaaren, Norwegian Forestry Group, Norway
- Informing on the Norwegian system of environmental inventories in forests, and claimed that more than 90 % of Norwegian forests are environmentally "certified" according to the PEFC standard
- PEFC standards are based on the ISO 14001 standard
- Such certifications in Norway are made for a period of at least 10 years, although there are now attempts to establish a continuous updating via computerised systems

Developing institutional collaboration – lessons learned
Mr. Henn Pärnamets, Head of Structural Funds Bureau, Ministry of Environment, Estonia/
Mr. Jon Markussen, Adviser, County Governor, Oslo and Akershus, Norway
- This collaboration has a history since February 2003, with mutual exchange visits and field trips both to Estonia and to Norway.
- The collaboration started as a pilot project, and hopes were expressed that some Estonian project proposals would be financed through the EEA grants
- "While the grass is growing, the cow is dying"

Summing-up session by Ms. Gunn Paulsen:

- Good results already from the seminar towards making advances in collaboration in biodiversity conservation. Biological diversity is high on the political agenda in Norway
- Expressed gratitude towards the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for financing the conference, and for the initiators of the conference (Sylvi Ofstad and Ladislav Miko)
- Biodiversity projects falls under several financing arrangements under the EEA mechanisms, i.e. environment, sustainable development, scholarship fund, research fund, NGO fund.
- The Conferences has addressed two groups, namely (1) the ministries of environment, institutions and NGOs working in the biodiversity area, and (2) the focal points of the countries
- One of the possible follow-ups of the seminar could be how the various mechanisms could be used for financing of biodiversity projects (EEA and EU).
- In terms of overall themes for cooperation, the following three were emphasised; the 2010 target to stop the loss of biodiversity, the EU action plan to reach this target, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment as it relates to conservation and sustainable use under the CBD (convention on biological diversity).
- According to the above the following topics seemed important for cooperation; mainstreaming biodiversity into other prioritized areas, sector integration, sustainable use, education.
- Important for the country focal points to continue cooperation with their Ministries of the Environment, their environmental institutions and their NGOs when they return to their home countries – as well as forwarding projects to foster bilateral cooperation in the field of biodiversity.

All presentations are available at http://www.dirnat.no/content.ap?thisId=500026883