

4. Participation - Democratic Dealing With Problems In Natura 2000 In The Countries Of The Alpine Space

Backgrounds and Theory

Reasons why the implementation of Natura 2000 has been facing with so many obstacles are many. One of them is undoubtedly an insufficient involvement of the general public and stakeholders in the program. As reported, not only in the countries of the Alpine Space but in most EU member states, science and responsible agencies prepared the lists of protected species and habitats without sufficient knowledge on the local Natura 2000 sites and without consulting experts from these areas (EUROSITE 2003, Ed. METERA, PEZOLD, PIWOWARSKI 2005, SFI 2006/2). In turn, most national administrations also designated the Natura 2000 sites without consulting landowners, local authorities and most important generators of economic development in these areas (SFI 2006/2), and finally, considerably rare management plans were and still are being made without involving all affected by decisions and all expressing interests in it.

Although the damage of such an inadequate approach to the general public and particularly to the stakeholders will hardly be compensated, it is clear that a different approach must be used in the continuation of the program. The reason for that is simple. Natura 2000 is not an experiment that is to be brought to an end by the group of ardent nature lovers interested in it, but it is the centrepiece of EU nature conservation policy whose success depends on all citizen's will, trust, understanding, responsibility, knowledge, and on sufficient operational capabilities; in short, in close engagement of all EU societies.

Checklists for organizers of management planning process

Preparatory phase

- Are all issues that need to be discussed clearly defined?
- Are all answers that need to be provided by involved defined (expectations)?
- Is the outcome of the process assessed?
- Are all relevant stakeholder groups that should attend the process identified?
- Are adequate working methods chosen?
- Is the technical staff chosen (facilitator, mediator, scientists, experts in law)?
- Is a suitable venue place (fully technically equipped, enough big and bright) reserved?
- Is there a chance to combine participatory event with some other tourist events?
- Are invitations for that event posted timely?
- Are all presentations covering all fields (nature, tourism, recreation) prepared?
- Is the schedule of an event prepared?

Executive phase

- Are all individuals and group leaders assigned with proper tasks and responsibilities?
- Is all necessary working material delivered to participants?
- Are rules needed in consensus-building precisely defined?
- Are all crucial topics, needed in clarifying problems, properly described and explained?
- Are all participants timely engaged in the process phases?
- How can different views and interests be characterized?
- Is there a chance of conflict escalation?
- Is there a need to engage experts experienced in alternative dispute resolution techniques or a facilitator will do?
- Is consensus built on most issues?
- Is it clear to everybody what consensus means and brings about?
- Are all open issues properly described?
- How will they be managed?
- Are all actions needed in implementing resolved issues defined?
- Are responsibilities for these actions assigned?

Crossborder participation

- Are similar problems in neighbouring communities (region, state) identified?
- Are ways how problems were managed known and can they be applied to my case?
- Are contacts with neighbouring community (region, state) that may help resolve similar issues established?
- Is there will and trust to manage problems jointly?
- Are there any other constraints, hindering collaboration?

Literature

EUROSITE 2003. 73rd Eurosite Workshop "Natura 2000, Conflict Management and Resolution". Parc Interregional du Marais Poitevin, France. 2-5 April, 2003 (www.eurosite-nature.org.)

METERA, D., PEZOLD, T., PIWOWARSKI, W. Ed. 2005. Implementation of Natura 2000 in New EU Member States of Central Europe Assessment Report. IUCN, The World Conservation Union.
Mitchell-Banks, P. 1997. Community, Culture and Conflict. V: SOLBERG, B./ MIINA, S. (ur.). Conflict Management and Public Participation in Land Management. EFI Proceedings, 14, s. 149-164.