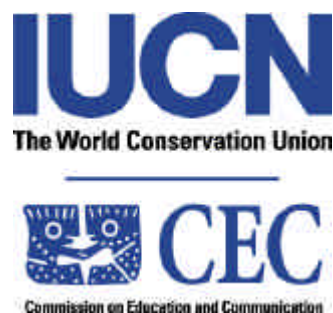


Technical and Evaluation Report

Building Capacity for Effective Communication for Biodiversity - Phase 3



**Project implemented by IUCN Commission on
Education and Communication**

September 2000- March 2002

**Funded by Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture,
Nature Management and Fisheries and Ministry of
Foreign Affairs**



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Project Summary

Project name

Building Capacity for effective communication for the Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy: Phase 3

Location

Poland, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Slovenia

Theme

Environmental communication in support of the PEBLDS Action Theme 3, so as to stimulate and facilitate public support and participation in biodiversity and landscape conservation.

Target group

Government staff responsible for the implementation of biodiversity strategies on the national, regional and local level.
Communication staff in state institutions and NGOs in the field of nature and landscape conservation.

Project managed by

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With SPAN Consultants, the Netherlands

Duration

September 2000 – March 2002

Total project budget

Dfl. 614,420

Total expenditure

Dfl 599,278.88

Introduction

This is the evaluation report of the third phase of a capacity building project – Building Capacity for effective communication for the Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy: Phase 3, held from September 2000 to March 2002. It will be referred to as “effective communication for biodiversity” in this report.

The project was undertaken by IUCN, the Commission on Education and Communication and SPAN Consultants.

The project has mentored biodiversity communication projects in Slovenia, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

These projects have been developed with the country participants, providing at the same time guidance in project planning and communication planning.

This phase 3 of the project built on the preceding two phases undertaken in the same countries. In the first phase a core group of conservation managers in government and NGOs of the 5 countries has been individually trained in stakeholder management and communication. In the second phase an increased core group has been supported in implementing their new skills in ongoing projects and activities in their respective countries.

This third phase aimed to address the problems identified in the earlier phases. These problems are:

- a dominance of scientific approaches to nature management, rather than a people oriented approach that takes account of what is possible and realistic in society;
- conservation managers' lack of social and communication skills;
- weak project planning and management skills limiting fund raising for conservation and communication.

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The project sought to integrate interactive communication processes in the way conservation organisation's work while undertaking projects determined by the country. Interactive communication aims to listen to the issues in the society and to plan communication based on those issues so as to motivate and involve stakeholders to become part of the biodiversity problem solving approach and thereby also to become part of the implementation.

This project has aimed to build support for and capacity to use communication in engaging stakeholders in policy making, and management planning as an important means to reduce or prevent conflicts over natural resource management. As yet, the role of communication as an instrument for biodiversity and landscape conservation is less understood and applied than technical measures. As countries move to join the EU, implement National Biodiversity Strategies and Natura 2000 plans, the need for effective communication is becoming more critical.

This project supports the Dutch *Programme International Nature Management* and the aims of the Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, PEBLDS and Article 13 of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded this project.

Background

In 1997 IUCN started phase 1 of this planned 4 phase project to develop effective communication capacity in 5 Central European countries.

Phase 1 consisted of a 12 day training course in Debe, Poland, held in June 1998, for representatives of government and NGOs on how to plan communication. During the training course country groups applied their learning to plan a communication activity in their own country. In phase 1 we were able to immediately follow up to mentor on the initial communication plans in two of the countries, Slovenia and Poland.

The experiences from phase 1 suggested the need to consolidate the competence of those who had undertaken the training course, to expand the number trained in communication, and to make communication materials available in local languages. This was undertaken in phase 2.

Phase 2 of the project in 1999 focused on national actions in Hungary, Slovenia, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia. The Debe core group of communicators was the focus from which to expand the communication training and to drive the activities nationally.

Facilitators mentored this team, expanding the individual's ability to undertake communication training. The number of people with knowledge of communication planning expanded.

Communication projects were carried out. Skills were developed to plan and manage small communication projects. Some countries worked on materials such as brochures and their distribution, others on stakeholder management processes. The approach used was to learn by doing, helping to plan as well as possible, and also recognizing that mistakes would be made.

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Reflection was stimulated after each activity so as to learn from what went well and what needed to be improved.

The value of communication was promoted internally by advocacy of the facilitators, through decision makers' participation in workshops and through exposure to the products and publications. Support for communication was built in some agencies but more was needed to consolidate and integrate communication.

Towards the end of the project an international workshop was held to which 2-4 representatives of each country came to share what they had done and learnt, to evaluate what had been learnt and to plan what if anything should be the next steps in the project. There were 50 % new people in this group, pointing to an expanded basis of support in the 5 countries.

The project concept – phase 3

The phase 3 of the project was based on the indicators for success determined at the close of phase 2 of the project.

These indicators include support for developing individual communication skills, impacting on the organisation's appreciation of and use of communication, and changing institutional practices in regard to stakeholder approaches. The group also sought intercultural exchange.

The indicators for the project are set out below.

For individual learning

- ⇒ Build confidence, credibility and advice through the help desk
- ⇒ Support to analyze, prioritize and plan communication activities
- ⇒ Increase facilitation and communication skills
- ⇒ Encourage a supportive attitude in bosses and colleagues
- ⇒ Increase the critical mass of those who understand and practice interactive policy making
- ⇒ Develop the leadership and core group from the Poland training course 1998 in Debe.

At the organisational level

- ⇒ Build a basically positive attitude towards communication as an instrument
- ⇒ Provide building bricks for cultural change in the organisation associated with more effective communication management
- ⇒ Encourage more attention for internal communication
- ⇒ Financial and moral support of bosses for activities

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At the institutional level

- ⇒ More attention for exploring win- win approaches between ministries and other actors
- ⇒ Willingness to look with fresh eyes at traditional conservation issues
- ⇒ Acceptance of added value of social and stakeholder approaches
- ⇒ Acceptance of the importance of a communication strategy
- ⇒ Using existing institutions for communication capacity building

At the international level

- ⇒ IUCN credible as an initiator of the concepts and project
- ⇒ Technical support to the countries
- ⇒ Opportunities to get mirror from other countries and discover blind spots or new approaches
- ⇒ Inter cultural exchange

Objectives

The project sought to achieve the following objectives relevant to each country and its institutional capacity to:

1. integrate the stakeholder management approach in ongoing national biodiversity strategies and action plans being developed, such as in Slovenia.
2. to implement communication planning, development and evaluation of communication programmes and materials and to undertake necessary research on the population.
3. to institutionalise capacity building for the stakeholder management approach in their county, through training and by establishing partnerships with existing education and training facilities for conservation managers.
4. share lessons learned in each of the countries in an international event.
5. stimulate further interest in participatory approaches to communication through a high level meeting amongst decision makers.

At the inception of the project IUCN was asked to make these objectives more specific. In each country a project plan was prepared to define the objectives. These were reported to the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries in the inception report and are shown in the Annex.

This report will therefore detail the results from each country against the objectives in the project plans in detailed sub sections of the report.

The objectives per country and sub project are listed over.

Country Sub-project Objectives

Hungary Objectives

1. Finalize the communication framework for wetland conservation as follow up to the commitment of Hungary to the Ramsar Wetlands Convention CEPA Outreach Programme 1999-2002.
2. Show how effective communication can increase impact on wetland conservation in an existing Ramsar-site;
3. Strengthen capacity and develop instruments to optimally use communication as an instrument in wetland management and planning.

Czech Republic Objectives

The overall goal will be to demonstrate the value of communication in helping to solve Natura 2000 and Biodiversity problems and to increase capacity for its further development and use.

Objectives

1. To increase the facilitation skills and expertise of the core group within the Czech Republic.
2. To increase the numbers of staff within National Parks, Protected Landscape Areas, Local Authorities and NGOs with communication understanding and practical skills.
3. To build capacity among selected Agency/Institute, PLA, National Park and Local Authority staff in project planning and management.
4. To identify and disseminate lessons learned from Phase 3 of the project.
5. To implement 2 successful communication projects relating to Natura 2000 problems.
6. To give convincing feedback to the Minister of Environment of the value of Communication as a tool to support the Natura 2000 and Biodiversity work of the Ministry of Environment.

Poland Objectives

The overall goal for the project is to:

- demonstrate the value of communication in solving problems in the Natura 2000 designation process and in Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, through application to the Narev River example, and
- increase the capacity of people in Poland to use and develop further their skills and expertise in its use.

The objectives are to:

1. upgrade the skills and knowledge of the core group of facilitators in Poland.
2. increase numbers of people in Poland who have knowledge and understanding of communication as a tool to assist solution of biodiversity problems.
3. identify and disseminate lessons learned for use in other communication projects being developed in Poland e.g. REC.
4. develop a working understanding of methods of project evaluation, planning and management among the core facilitator group and selected partners.
5. provide convincing feed-back to senior Ministry of Environment staff of the value of communication in both Natura 2000 and Biodiversity Action Plan problems/targets.
6. implement and evaluate a successful communication programme related to the effects of changing agriculture on habitats

Slovak Republic Objectives

1. create awareness among governmental staffs in nature conservation on the consequences for their daily work of accession to the European Union
2. build capacity among governmental staffs in nature conservation in project management and donor relations.
3. build capacity among NGOs and governmental staffs in nature conservation in stakeholder management

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- 4. carry out pilot projects in stakeholder management for major conservation issues in the Slovak republic
- 5. disseminate lessons learned in the pilot projects among nature conservation staffs and experts
- 6. use the pilot projects to raise public awareness for biodiversity conservation

Slovenia objectives

1. support the creation of awareness among governmental sectors about the biodiversity and their involvement (input) in the NBSAP
2. build capacity among nature conservation staffs in communicating the BD and stakeholder management
3. use the pilot projects to raise awareness for biodiversity conservation among stakeholders in at least two selected Slovenian biodiversity hot spots

Methodology

The essential elements of the methodology were:

- ❖ The three facilitators from SPAN consultants from phase 2 continued. Frits Hesselink worked with Slovenia and Slovak Republic; Eddie Idle with Poland and Czech Republic; and Rutger Jan Schoen and later Gwen van Boven with Hungary.
- ❖ Initial planning meeting to agree on results to be achieved, activities to be undertaken and methodology.
- ❖ Some of the core group of people from Debe led as the trainers in the country, or project managers. In other cases new operatives were drawn in to manage the project or play a role in the training.
- ❖ A wider circle of contacts has been built in the country to expand the basis for the work, to involve regional institutes of the government.
- ❖ Letters were sent from IUCN Director General to government agencies to initiate the project and invite support.
- ❖ Initiate work on country priorities through mentoring the team to develop a project plan and agree on who does what
- ❖ Preparation before country visits undertaken by email, fax and phone with country participants
- ❖ Mentoring of project management and communication projects by email, fax and phone
- ❖ In-country visits used for preparation of an activity and mentoring of the activity.

- ❖ Local consultants in communication used to broaden the network of support for the participants, to expand their ability to professionally use consultants
- ❖ Mission Reports in a standard format circulated amongst the facilitators and project manager following country visits
- ❖ Inculcating a learning approach by feedback and evaluation on each activity undertaken
- ❖ In country visits used to make contacts with decision makers to encourage support of the activities
- ❖ Cross fertilisation of approaches in an international workshop and by the facilitators
- ❖ Evaluation of individual learning and impact on performance in the organisation by the participants
- ❖ Evaluation by facilitators and project manager

Participants

The project worked with some of the core group of people from Debe, along with people involved in phase 2 as well as with new people in regional agencies.

- ❖ In **Slovenia** the main partners in the project the Director, Albin Krapez of MOP/URSVN, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, State Agency for Nature Conservation. Branka Hlad from the Ministry managed the project and worked with staff from a protected area and the regional institute in Pirana.
- ❖ In the **Slovak Republic** Joseph Kamarik, Director of Nature and Landscape Conservation Department and Martin Kassa, Director of State Nature Conservation. The team was led by Ema Gojdicova and Karina Kralikova with support from Martin Sarossy and Daniel Dite.
- ❖ In the **Czech Republic** the project was supported by Dr Milos Kuzvart, Minister of the Environment. The project was managed by the Czech Environment Institute Alena Rietschmiedova and Zdenka Tancosova. Input on the sub projects was from Tomáš Kažmierski and Roman Hamerský and Vladimír Silovský.
- ❖ In **Poland** the project was managed by the polish Institute for Environmental Protection, Dr Jadwiga Sienkiewicz assisted by Dr Zybszko Pisarski. The Regional Environment Centre REC gave support to the sub project. Ana Kalinowska in the Ministry of Environment supported the project and facilitated the relations with staff in the Ministry.
- ❖ In **Hungary**, Dr Janos Tardy, Ministry of Environment, Authority for Nature Conservation was the partner. The team consisted of: Andras Bohm (coordinator and focal point); Norbert Janaki,

▪
Andras Schmidt; a representative of Birdlife Hungary and Tata
Town Council

The names of people involved in the project and in the workshops
undertaken are listed in the *Country Annexes* within the Mission
Reports.

Programme Delivery

The results achieved against the objectives of the project are described in the reports on each county project that follow and these support the general project objectives 1-3.

Near the conclusion of the project, an international workshop was held for the main managers of the projects to present their work and share their experience. This workshop was held in Bratislava Slovak Republic November 30 to December 1, 2001. This was in support of the project objective 4.

The project intended to increase institutional recognition of communication. The project interventions to encourage this recognition included letters from IUCN Director General at the inception of the project, and by regular briefings to decision-makers by the consultants. Within each country national workshops were held to present the results of the project and arguments for communication and the stakeholder approach. Efforts were made to engage most decision-makers in those events.

It was proposed that the project would undertake a high level event to promote the communication instrument, project objective 5. This was not implemented as a high level meeting for decision - makers from the 5 countries as originally conceived. The resources from the project allocated for this operation were put towards making a promotional event for the Conference of the Parties on the role of the communication instrument in mainstreaming biodiversity. The tools produced for this event are being used in the countries.

Evaluation

Within each country project, the facilitator has undertaken an evaluation with the participants of each activity. This has been an important learning tool for the project. Emphasis has been put on learning from mistakes, as these can be more memorable than analyzing the factors for success. The facilitators would suggest ideas and approaches and question the thinking behind the proposed course of intervention, but would allow for errors to occur. So the intent was never the perfect communication plan, but learn by trial and error in a mentored way. Building evaluation into the way of working is seen as a fundamental part of the project.

Each country sub-project report analyses the results achieved and evaluates the work.

Evaluation by Participants

In addition the 14 country participants at the international workshop were given a questionnaire to assess the degree to which they believed that their knowledge, skills and attitudes were influenced by the project. Some of these participants are newer in the project, so diverse results might be expected.

The questionnaire also asked about how this learning had been applied in the way the participants acted or performed at work and to assess the changes in the work place.

These results mostly record a level of achievement by the project relating to a good to very good achievement of the overall project objectives 1-3. One question relates to project objective 4 - on international exchange. A further question assessed the effectiveness of the means used to deliver external inputs from the consultants.

The questionnaire is in the *Annex Evaluation*. As well the country by country tables of responses are included in the annex. The graphs are drawn from the totals of the responses.

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Participants were asked to rank their responses on a scale of 1-7, where 1 is nothing and 7 is a lot. This is shown in the horizontal axis. Measures from 4-7 show a reasonably good to high level of positive response. On the vertical scale the number of responses is shown.

KNOWLEDGE

1. "What changes have there been in your knowledge?"

The changes in knowledge were assessed in relation to six areas of communication

Chart 1: Knowledge about being an effective communicator and planning a communication activity

Most participants reported very strong results in knowledge, the range 5-7, about planning a communication activity.

There was a more mixed reaction to changes in knowledge about being an effective communicator themselves. Some (4) of the participants stated that their change in knowledge was less than the mid range, whereas 10 were in a range of more positive gains from 4-7.

Chart 2: Knowledge about how to evaluate their communication and how to influence the boss

Participants report positive gains in knowledge about how to evaluate their communication work with most in the range of 4-7. A wider disparity in changes in knowledge is reported about how to influence the boss. Four participants stated that there was nothing or only a little learnt, though most reported gaining knowledge up to a ranking of 6.

Chart 3: Knowledge about managing a project and undertaking a training activity

In general the participants have gained knowledge about how to manage a communication project at a very positive level. Similarly the participants have good gains in knowledge about how to undertake a training activity.

SKILLS

2. What skills have you learnt that help you to?

This question aimed to find out whether the participants felt that they had learnt skills to undertake communication work in 11 areas. All charts show very positive responses.

Chart 1: Prepare a project plan, manage a project and evaluate the work that you do.

Given that the project provided assistance to participants to improve project planning skills, it is gratifying to see that for most the skills to prepare a project plan were well developed, as most responses are in the range of 5-7. Skills to manage a project and evaluate the work that the participants do peaks at level 5.

Chart 2 Skills learnt to work in teams and change the way you work.

The project seems to have been very successful for most in a developing a high level of skill to change their usual way of working. While this question does not determine exactly in what ways, it is an assumption that this applies to a more planned and consultative way.

A consistent strong showing is seen in developing skills to work in teams. This skill was developed through sub project planning and management processes.

2. What skills have you learnt that help you to?

Chart 3 *Skills to manage a communication task or activity, and to train others in communication*

The project has increased skills in how to train others in communication, with all respondents in the range of 4-7. While good skills are claimed by most participants to manage a communication project, there are some (4) who feel that they still have not a lot of skill in this area.

Chart 4 *Skills to work with stakeholders and facilitate a workshop*

There is strong acknowledgement of skills being developed to work with stakeholders. This result supports the project objective number 1, integrating a stakeholder management approach. With regard to facilitating workshops, there is a wide range of responses, perhaps reflecting the different experience between those that have been part of the project since the inception of phase 1 and those who are more recent participants. Five report feeling only a smaller gain in skills in facilitating workshops.

Chart 5 *Skills to effectively communicate and plan a communication activity*

All participants recorded that they have gained skills in being able to effectively communicate, none gave a score of 1-2, and responses were in the range from 3-5.

The gain in skills was even stronger in regard to planning a communication activity as all scores were in the range of 4-7. This is interesting to compare with the assessment in chart 3 above, where participants did not feel their skills to manage a communication task were as strong as those to plan it.

ATTITUDES

3. To what extent have your attitudes changed?

The project has had a positive impact on attitudes in the 4 areas assessed.

Chart 1 To what extent have your attitudes changed in regard to your confidence and credibility and in evaluating and learning from your work

Most report a change of attitude in both areas, with results most strongly in the range of 4-6 expressing a growth in confidence and credibility. Two reported a score of 7 in regard to change in attitude on evaluating and learning from their work.

Chart 2: To what extent have your attitudes changed in regard to arguing for communication in the work place and managing communication projects

All have changed attitudes in regard to arguing for communication in the work place, with highest scores in the range of 5 –7.

With regard to attitudes to managing communication projects, most responses are in the range 5-6.

The changes in attitude augur positively for a good measure of success in building institutional support for communication as aimed for by objectives 1-3 of the project.

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

3.What changes have occurred in your work place as a result of your involvement in this project?

This question assessed the changes in the organization as a result of the project. The results here might be expected to be mixed as the participants came from many different organizations. The focus of the external consultants was usually on the principal or government institution, and to a lesser extent on regional institutes or park agencies.

Chart 1: What changes have occurred in your work place in regard to cultural change in the organization, increase in projects submitted for funding, and resources available for communication

There is a broad range of impacts reported from the project on the culture of the organization, ranging from none to 6. A similar broad range of responses occurs for the increase in projects submitted for funding, and in the resources available. However for these 2 areas, a higher number 6-9 report that there has been a good impact to very good impact on the financial resources available for communication and in the projects submitted for funding.

Chart 2: What changes have occurred in your work place in regard to more attention for internal communication, and recognition of your work by colleagues

All participants report an impact on the work place in regard to more attention to internal communication and recognition of the work by colleagues. Most responses lie in the range from 3- 6.

Chart 3: *What changes have occurred in your work place in regard to attention to financial and moral support of bosses and the number of people with whom the participant relates.*

All participants report some changes in the work place in regard to the financial and moral support from the boss. Most respondents rank the impact of the project between 4-7.

In terms of the project stimulating an increase in relationships and working partnerships, the project has been successful. Participants report impacts in the range of from 3- 5 and 3 report a maximum impact on the scale of 7.

Chart 4: *What changes have occurred in your work place in regard to a positive attitude towards communication and demand for information or help in communication*

All respondents claim an impact for the project. A large proportion of participants state that there is a high level of positive attitude to communication in the work place.

Demand for information and support is mixed, with 6 saying it is in the range of 2-3 and 10 in the range of 5-7, i.e at a high level.

PERFORMANCE

5 As a result of what you have learnt what concrete steps have you taken in your work, or on how you perform in your work?

These questions were trying to find out whether the participants had indeed taken their own learning in knowledge skills and attitude into action in the work place, i.e. what was the level of application or performance.

Chart 1: The concrete steps taken at work to use existing institutions for communication capacity building and increasing critical mass of communicators

Most respondents affirm that existing institutions are being used to build capacity in communication in the country, with a high peak of 9 respondents at the high level of 5. This reflects the use of regional institutes being involved in the project. These institutes have also gained experience in managing projects. It does not necessarily imply that the project has been successful in integrating communication training in government training mechanisms, which was an intent of the project originally.

In regard to increasing critical mass, one reported no impact to increase the critical mass of communicators and one a lot. The rest responded in the main in range from 3-6, with most scoring high at 6. The project is generally expanding the numbers of people in each country with communication skills.

Chart 2: The concrete steps taken at work to accept the added value of social and stakeholder approach and accept the importance of a communication strategy

Results are very positive in accepting the added value of a communication strategy for biodiversity work. Nine participants stated that this acceptance was at high levels from 5-7. Twelve participants state that in performing their work they accept a social and stakeholder approach in their work and thus meeting objectives one and 2 of the project.

Chart 3: *The concrete steps taken at work to accept more attention to "win win" solutions and to look with fresh eyes at traditional conservation issues.*

At work the majority of participants in the project report paying more attention to seeking "win win" solutions. In fact in the reporting some participants noted how rigid the conservation stakeholders were. Most participants responses cluster in the range of 4-5.

A broader range including to higher levels of influence occurs in the responses to the way that participants look at traditional conservation issues. There seems to have been a very good impact in stimulating new ways of looking at the issues, adding more evidence of the project achieving its objectives.

Chart 4 *The concrete steps taken at work to accept the added value of evaluating your work and encouraging a supportive attitude in bosses.*

All participants consider that change in performance has happened, at least to some extent towards encouraging a supportive attitude with bosses and in evaluating communication work. The highest peak was at range 3 where five were weakly able to encourage more supportive bosses, though 8 other participants ranked their performance at higher levels.

Participants are positive about their performance in evaluating their work, with 11 rating their performance above a ranking of five.

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Chart 5 The concrete steps taken at work to accept the better analyze and prioritize communication and manage a project.

The results in both these areas are very positive. Most responses are ranked between 5-7. The project has contributed to applying project management principles and skills and analyzing and prioritizing communication in their work.

Chart 6 The concrete steps taken at work in working with stakeholders and to prepare a project.

Again very positive results are evident with most participants stating that they are using at a high level their know how to prepare projects. To a lesser degree the participants credit the project with enabling them to apply their work to working with stakeholders.

Chart 7 *The concrete steps taken at work to prepare presentations and negotiate with others.*

In preparing presentations participants report a very high level of application of the learning from the project. All report learning in the range of 4-7.

Participants state that the learning from the project is being applied in negotiating with others at a good to high level. All but 2 ranked above 4 their application of negotiating with others.

Chart 8- *The concrete steps taken at work to apply planning to all projects and apply effective training methods*

While 10 state that they apply planning to all projects to a high degree – at a ranking of 5-7, four state that they apply their learning to their performance in the range of 1-3. While nine participants apply effective training methods In their work, five state more weak application of training methods.

This result affirms the project's relative success in institutionalizing capacity building for communication.

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Chart 9 The concrete steps taken at work to contribute to communication planning in the organization and apply planning approach to communication

Nine participants report a range of 5-6 level, applying a planning approach to communication. Nine participants report contributing at a strong level of 5-6 to the communication planning in their organization.

General comments

Chart 1: Opportunities to reflect on your work from other countries and inter cultural exchange

Most participants valued the opportunities to reflect on their work with that from other countries and benefited from the inter cultural exchange.

Chart 2 Effectiveness of advice from the help desk and effectiveness of advice in face to face with the facilitator

Participants report that the face to face exchange with the facilitator of the project is very effective. All participants gave this a ranking of 6-7.

In contrast the help desk had more of a range of ranking for effectiveness with two participants stating that it was not effective at all. This result may have been influenced by the fact that not all workshop attendees were key organizers of the project and in regular contact with the external consultant.

Overall Evaluation of the Project

Concept of the project & feasibility of the activities

Due to a long delay between Phase II, which ended in December 1999 and the start up of phase-3 in September 2000, an extra round of in-country consultation was undertaken in all countries to adapt the project to the changed circumstances. These 5 inception missions assisted the country team to determine priorities, expand the base of core-team members and to prepare project documents as a basis of activities for all countries. This served to respond to the request from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries to provide "more specific information about the stakeholder groups finally targeted through the sub projects and about the national organisations that are involved in implementation".

All countries supported the project at a high level in the government. At the outset a letter was sent from the IUCN Director General to the Minister, Deputy Minister or Agency Head. The project consultants also briefed key decision-makers on the project and regularly reported to them on the project's progress.

Countries were prepared to identify biodiversity projects where communication support could add value to the work proposed. This flexible and country driven process meant that the activities were specific to the countries' current agenda like contributing to preparing for *Natura 2000*, a Ramsar – wetlands Convention - communication strategy, or improving relations with people in protected areas. For success it was important that these activities were not additional activities given the already taxed capacity in the government agencies.

The inception report presented the project documents for the five sub projects and described the common elements in the approach in each country and any major deviations to the project proposal as well as a justification for them. In addition to supporting communication, the project was asked to provide capacity building in project management.

In *Hungary* the project activities were oriented to wetland conservation, rather than to the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy in general. The project supported the national Ramsar Strategy, and specifically the execution of the Ramsar Convention requirement that every Ramsar member will have a communication strategy and the capacity to manage its

implementation. One Ramsar site was used for practical learning by doing experience in communication.

In ***Slovenia*** the activities provided training and coaching for the Ministry and regional institutes of the Nature Conservation Agency on project and communication management and in stakeholder management. Two pilot communication projects were developed one on pond conservation and the other for a landscape park.

In ***Slovakia*** the activities included informing on the nature conservation impacts of accession. Project management and communication skills were developed for two projects, one on an endangered orchid and the other and endangered bird, the Corn Crex. The national team was supported to implement the projects using stakeholder negotiations, public awareness activities and the production of materials. An evaluation workshop to share the lessons learned was held for government agency staff.

In ***Poland*** the activities focused on developing and implementing a communication plan for an area, the Narev River, where an invasion of willow scrub threatens the grassland landscape and habitat for rare birds (White Stork, Corn Crake, Aquatic Warbler) and amphibian species (Tree Frog). A workshop was held to develop the communication plan and to up grade the skills of the facilitators and another workshop to evaluate the results. A workshop was held for the staff in the Ministry of Environment on the strategic importance of communication and planning.

In the ***Czech Republic*** the project planning meeting was also used to train facilitators to manage communication planning. Then 2 workshops were held to develop a communication plan for two sub project issues relating to *Natura 2000* and Biodiversity. One of the issues chosen was the public perception of forest management within a new National Park of Ceske Svycarsko, likely to be included on the *Natura 2000* list. To conform to the Habitats Directive, aggressive introduced tree species will have to be removed from the site. As this removal was unpopular, the project worked on the communication to deal with those perceptions. The second issue concerned problems of local opposition to the establishment of a Strict Reserve Zone of Sumava National Park and the restoration of a mined peat bog.

The provision of a budget line to provide small funds to each country meant that the national projects defined in the planning workshops had some means of financial support to assist in their delivery. For most

countries this proved very important. In Poland the amount was not so appealing to the government, as this project could provide far less than is available from other projects currently being implemented.

The sub projects undertaken in the countries were usually undertaken out of the "centre", so bringing the experience and influence of them back to the centre was worked at by holding national workshops at the centre for decision makers. In two countries the sub projects were undertaken at the central government office. In addition regular contact was undertaken with decision-makers in the government to raise interest and build support for the activities with bosses and colleagues.

Participation in the project aimed to improve efficiency and effectiveness though it did make some extra demands to undertake these actions in a more planned and evaluated manner. Participants gave time to attend a project planning workshop, and the international workshop. At the country level there was good commitment & team spirit with many giving additional hours of personal time to make the activities work.

The country co-ordinators for the project had additional tasks imposed on them, which in some cases created pressure and the need to give personal time. A co-ordinator for the project was willing to take on the task in each country, though sometimes funding to support that function was required. In four countries the project co-ordinator has been consistent with the previous phase of the project. The task was managed well, especially as the project plans for each country made clear the tasks, responsibilities and timetable.

Continuous encouragement and checking by way of the help desk served to keep the projects at national level on schedule, and reinforce the planning and management steps required. The visits by the consultants kept the pressure on the process.

The use of local consultants increased professional input and guidance in the period between visits of the external consultants. Fundamental to smooth implementation was having the external and internal consultants agree on the approach to communication.

The professional input from the SPAN / IUCN consultants was highly regarded and the face to face consultations highly rated by the country participants.

The project attracted new partners into the national sub project activities, including members from the community, local councils, NGOs and diversified the interactions of the teams. Integration of these stakeholders in planning the sub projects gave practical experience of how to work with people with different perceptions and approaches. It also resulted in a lot of lessons pertaining to what is realistic and feasible in the sub projects in view of the funding and time available. There was a tendency for the sub projects to be too ambitious.

Country project management by the consultants meant that the project stayed within time, quality and money budgets. SPAN undertook overall management of the financial allocations for the country projects.

The evaluation process through out the project – after each activity - and enumeration of lessons learned by the national teams built a good learning process into the project

The facilitators served as a conduit of information about what was happening in other countries and maintained a competitive spirit amongst the country counterparts. However the exchange and interaction between the project participants could be increased throughout the project by email news and web site postings.

The idea to build the communication training into existing institutions – particularly government training institutions - in some countries was not feasible, as countries like the Czech Republic do not have such training programmes. However, the project built capacity of government institutes that provide services to government agencies and to regional institutes and agencies of the government. The Polish REC, a beneficiary of the project, is now undertaking training programmes in communication.

The international workshop that brings together key people from each country provided a valuable opportunity to exchange practical experiences and for opportunities to explore issues amongst the group.

The high level meeting for state secretary or deputy Minister for the five countries did not prove to be feasible as a means to advocate for communication. Instead the project developed some advocacy tools for decision-makers. These tools have the advantage of having a broader application than to just the 5 countries. The tools were used to support advocacy for communication at the Conference of the Parties for the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Continuity with the next phase of the project has been superior than in the past when long delays were experienced between phases leading to a loss of momentum.

Evaluation of the content of the project's input

The content for the project was to increase individual knowledge, skills and attitudes to undertake communication planning, and work in more participative ways, such as in stakeholder management processes in support of biodiversity issues.

Most of the countries requested support to strengthen their project preparation and project management skills. Specific project management training was undertaken in four of the five participating countries, since these processes underpin successful communication planning and management as well as increasing the possibilities for the countries to raise funds to expand their communication work.

The donor wished to be able to demonstrate biodiversity conservation gains as a result of the project. As suggested in the inception report this was not very feasible given the time scale and funding level of the project. However some small steps can be demonstrated. In the Czech Republic, one of the sub projects brought about acceptance of the removal of alien species from a *Natura 2000* site. In Slovenia a community was mobilised to restore a pond with the result that other communities want to do the same, giving the conservationists hope that they may be able to achieve a network of ponds better managed for biodiversity. In Slovakia there is a community aware of the importance of an endangered orchid and financial incentives have been mobilised to encourage sheep grazing to assist its conservation. Some farmers in the Slovak Republic agree to mow in certain ways so that the corn crane is able to better flee the mowing. Some farmers agree not to mow some grassland areas to leave a refuge for the birds- though this gain applied to difficult terrain to mow.

In Slovenia through guidance from the project, relations with the military have meant that nesting birds are no longer disturbed in April, when they nest. The army now undertakes its exercises at the end of summer.

Otherwise the project can only claim a step forward for biodiversity conservation, a communication strategy for wetlands, improved relations

in a protected area, people engaged in action to restore a peat bog or maintain the cultural and biological diversity of a landscape in Poland.

Content of the project at the individual skills level

The project aimed to increase the confidence and credibility of those participating in communication and project management. Those who have been associated with all phases of the project have benefited most.

As shown in the charts, the participants report good to strong learning in knowledge, skills and attitudes in project management, communication planning and working with stakeholders. They are able to better analyse the communication problem in an issue, prioritise activities and plan their work. Participants have improved skills to facilitate interactive workshops and to make effective presentations. As yet skills to implement communication are still weaker than the ability to plan communication, talk about it and to train others. Bosses and colleagues have been supportive and the acknowledgement of communication and the skills of the participants is acknowledged and used. In Slovenia, there is an increase in the critical mass of people involved in interactive policy making in the government agency.

Project activities were developed based on suggestions made by teams in the countries involved. The process of planning and implementing these projects strengthened understanding of project management. One factor that had to be worked against with the teams was to lower ambition and to be realistic with time, money and quality.

Content of the project at the organizational level

The project aimed to build a basically positive attitude towards communication as an instrument in the 5 governments in the project. This appreciation aimed to provide building bricks for cultural change in the organization. The project also aimed to draw more attention to internal communication and increase the financial and moral support of bosses for activities.

The project inputs included workshops for target groups crucial in the national biodiversity conservation system. National & regional training was provided for different groups in the planning and use of communication instruments. Support was provided for networking and publicity about the communication work, such as featuring information on the national web sites, publicity in the news, newsletters and at national workshops. In addition inputs were made to assist in developing a national

communication strategy that was developed with stakeholders in Hungary. Practice and experience in using appropriate tools for communication were included such as using surveys and focus groups.

Throughout the project good contact was made with decision-makers in the government centrally and regionally.

However the real uptake and integration of the project in the work of the central government of Poland and Czech Republics was more difficult than in other countries. Government staff from these two countries participated in a workshop on communication and even the Czech Minister of Environment attended. However the use of the government institute in the Czech Republic and the REC in Poland as managers of the project tended to push the issue outside of the daily business of the government, even though the projects focused on Natura 2000 proposals that the government was working on.

In contrast the central government agency in Slovenia recognised the added value of communication and the project assisted stakeholder management and communication to be well integrated into the National Biodiversity Strategy preparation. The learning by doing projects were based in regional institutes. Altogether there was a strengthening of skills at both levels, regional and central.

Similarly in Hungary the management of the project was taken on by the central government agency and added value to the ongoing work to create a national Ramsar communication and outreach strategy in compliance with the Convention. The small learning by doing project focused on one Ramsar site and the team gained experience in pre and post testing, working with research institutes and managing stakeholder processes.

In Slovakia the project had a central and regional government focus and the participants gained experience in project management skills and communication while undertaking these.

At the international workshop some questions were asked as to whether the chosen projects were substantive concerns for biodiversity and indeed whether the orchid *Spiranthis*, a rather insignificant endangered orchid, could be called an icon for biodiversity conservation- as the group claimed!

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This issue led the project team to consider using the skills of the team in different ways in future. The conservation expert in the team could be used in all five countries in future to comment on the substantive conservation aspects, while the other members of the team undertook the communication planning component.

Content of the project at the institutional level

During the project the consultants emphasised attention to exploring win-win approaches between ministries and other actors when undertaking stakeholder processes. Participants report that they apply these principles in their work to different degrees, though most in the range of 4-5 on a 7 point scale.

As a result of the project joint working groups have developed to support the work emerging to implement national conservation policies for the Convention on Biological Diversity, Ramsar and PEBLDS.

The participants report also a strong performance in their willingness to look with fresh eyes at traditional conservation issues. Amongst the project participants there is an acceptance of the added value of working with stakeholders and appreciating the various perceptions in society. In the Polish project the project co-ordinators remarked on the very inflexible attitudes of the conservationists in negotiations. In Slovenia, the park manager learnt to listen to the perception of the people who lived in the park and was able to appreciate their viewpoints. Feedback on the value of this approach was evident to the participants when the managers experienced better relations with the people who live in a protected area. Similarly accepting different ways of undertaking a project when diverse stakeholders were involved resulted in broader ownership and involvement in action as happened in the bog restoration project in the Czech Republic.

The project was successful in building an appreciation of the importance of a communication strategy.

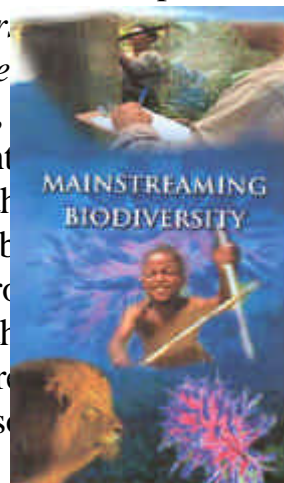
The project also worked with existing institutions to develop their communication capacity building, such as the Czech Environmental Institute, the REC in Poland, and regional institutes in Slovenia. The staff of these institutes was involved in training others in communication, with the support of the project.

The project was not able to stimulate as hoped a postgraduate or advanced training course on biodiversity communication in Poland. The idea to integrate communication training in the civil servant training programme in the Czech government was not possible as there is no mechanism for government staff training. However training courses for protected area managers and other natural resource managers were held though it cannot be claimed that these are truly institutional mechanisms.

The project planned to undertake a high level summit on communication for biodiversity decision-makers. The intent of the project was to raise the standing of communication in the eyes of the key decision-makers in the 5 countries involved by having credible spokespersons argue for the importance of communication. Different options were considered as to how to undertake this task. One possibility considered was to ask the IUCN President to visit the five countries, though her visits seemed likely to attract many other side issues and were difficult to schedule. We did not make use of the opportunity provided by the CBD preparatory meeting in Hungary for such a summit – in hindsight seemingly a missed opportunity though by then another approach had been put in place. The Hungary meeting was used in a different way, as a means to interview credible people in the Convention and PEBLDS on the importance of communication on video.

The work programme on CEPA – communication, education and public awareness had been drafted and was to go before the Conference of the Parties. In order to support the passage of this work programme through the Parties' deliberations, CEC in concert with UNESCO and the CBD Secretariat agreed to develop tools to advocate for communication at the Conference of the Parties for April 2002. The tools developed were a video and brochure on *Mainstreaming Biodiversity*.

communication, education and public awareness products could be of value in the five countries, of communication in the COP would add weight institutionalizing communication, the funds for the "summit" were re directed into supporting the ab project did not pay for the video or brochure pro UNESCO, CBD and IUCN) but it did support the write the text for the brochure, develop the figure outline for the video. The project consultants also as CEC volunteers.





The ten-minute video produced was shown to the plenary of the COP, with over one thousand viewers. The video presents the importance of communication to implementing the Convention and emphasises that the issues for biodiversity are 80% communication and not just technical issues. Spokespersons in the video are the President of the COP (Mme Faber), a member of the CBD (Peter Schei) Bureau and head of PEBLDS (Peter Skoberne). The brochure "*Mainstreaming Biodiversity – the role of communication, education and public awareness*" presents arguments for communication as a policy tool. Both the video and brochure are available to the project facilitators to use in each country to promote communication with decision-makers.

Unfortunately we were not able to screen the video to the ministerial meeting at the COP. However the materials are now available for use at subsequent high level meetings.

The international workshop was valued for exchange between the countries. The participants pointed out what had been undertaken in the projects, what went well and what they had learnt from their mistakes. At times the external consultants had to offer reflections on some of the learning points missed by the presenters. For example in the Slovenian pond story, what was not presented was the first communication plan conceived by the team for pond conservation. This first plan was made behind their desks with no consultation. It proved to be vastly different to what was in fact done and pointing out the difference was a powerful lesson in the importance of listening and consulting the stakeholders.

The workshop participants made high quality presentations, incorporating video clips, photos, humour and drama. The workshop participants

assessed the presentations. An incentive was provided. An offer of taking the best presentation to the Global Biodiversity Forum workshop in the Hague April 2002. One of the projects was presented in the Hague, providing that participant with international exposure.

In each country the workshops were mostly undertaken in the country language. This was important and very effective and proved not to be a major problem to the external facilitator, who was regularly briefed on the progress.

Contributions from the international level

IUCN is viewed as a credible organization for biodiversity related projects in the region and a provider of competent technical support. The letters from the IUCN Director General at the inception of the project contributed to setting the stage for the importance of communication and creating the organisational relations in the project.

The international workshop provided an opportunity to exchange experience and to have a mirror held up to their work. The workshop allowed for the exchange of materials and presentations by the participants and a comparison of ways of working, questioning the approaches and recognition of common strengths and weaknesses.

IUCN has spread examples of the work in articles and presentations internationally. For example the work in Slovenia protected areas was presented as case material in an international IUCN protected areas meeting in Italy in 2001. The Hungarian case was reported in the brochure "*Mainstreaming Biodiversity*". The Slovenian ponds story was presented at the Global Biodiversity Forum 2002 and will be reported in the report of that workshop. The last case was also featured on the IUCN web site.

The work to promote communication at the international level in lieu of a summit in the 5 countries is reported on earlier.

Logistics and organization of the project

Despite changes of personnel involved in the project in Poland, there were mostly good relationships developed with the local project organizers, local consultants and IUCN consultants creating trust and professionalism.

Responsibilities of consultants for individual countries seemed to work well.

The mission reports enabled the three consultants to share knowledge and learn from each other and share difficulties and approaches.

Managing the small grants takes time, though this responsibility was better managed by the country project organisers this time as requirements for reporting and accounting were made more explicit. The consultants set constraints on how the money was to be used.

A meeting between facilitators and the manager was held half-way through the project to discuss problems and compare progress.

The country managers of the projects have increased time pressure on them, and some require funding for this activity. The level of funding for in country activities is small, and in some countries is not very attractive compared to other project funds available.

Now the reports are available from the small projects more will be done to publicise the overall lessons on the CEC web site.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The quality of input from the SPAN external consultants was high. All are very experienced in the field of communication and their standing and professionalism enabled them to be credible ambassadors for communication with decision-makers. A high return was received on the investment in terms of products and learning.

Efforts by the external consultants and IUCN to contact decision-makers through out this project were important for support for the project and also to bringing decision-makers along on the importance of communication. IUCN received a request from Slovenia for the project to be extended.

Each country contributed the time of government and NGO staff to participate in the activities, providing facilities, the time of staff to participate and funds for the products.

While managing the small funds for the communication projects is costly in project management time, the provision of a budget to allow for materials production and operations is an important incentive and removes what can often be an obstacle to go forward quickly. Clear responsibilities for managing the funds and clarity on responsibilities to report made the task better managed than in a previous phase.

The provision of a budget for local consultants strengthens the inputs made by the external consultants. There is however a belief that those from outside bring something above and beyond the local consultant.

Participants seemed to rely heavily on the advice they received from local consultants, such as information from focus groups, and still require confidence and experience to be able to use these professionals effectively.

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The project is adding value to the quality of work undertaken by those involved and to some extent their institutions. There is no doubt it is important to continue this project to build on what has begun. The participants have become good at talking about communication, training others, and more effective as project developers and managers. There is still more to be achieved to institutionalize communication as a tool of management and policy. However full-fledged institutionalisation of the communication function in government institutions is a major long-term undertaking, which goes beyond a project of this scale.

The project added value to other projects on going, like the GEF sponsored National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in Slovenia. By assisting with the communication management this project was able to give practical assistance to the government to initiate an improved stakeholder process to prepare its strategy.

Countries have different readiness to benefit from the project inputs. These factors can change as the government changes and staff functions are altered. Most difficulty to integrate within the government exists in the Czech Republic, for capacity reasons and in Poland because of competition from other projects and capacity.

Because of the capacity available in some countries, the project creates demands on staff involved. Even for the government institutes, like the Czech Institute, the activities tended to be added on rather than being part of the work plan, since the government drives the Institute's agenda. This put considerable pressure on the participants to undertake the work. The fact that there was a large input of voluntary time in the project speaks for the value that was being gained by many of those involved.

The international leverage is seen as important and helpful to raise this issue on the agenda of national governments. IUCN made use of its position to help raise the profile of communication in the biodiversity convention.

The mid-term meeting of the project team was important to check on progress and share learning. The mission reports shared amongst all the team provide a good means to track the work and highlight areas needing attention.

It is recommended that the project go on to consolidate and strengthen the individual capacities of the expanded group, to strengthen relations with

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the governments in their work on biodiversity action plan implementation and to further encourage government agencies to incorporate communication in their work.

10. Financial Report

The financial report shows an expenditure of DFL 599,278.88 from the budget of DFL 614,420. Deloitte and Touche, who checked that expenditures claimed matched products, audited the financial reports.

The following statements provide:

1. Auditor's report
2. IUCN Financial Report

Separate files of all expenditures for SPAN Consultants including, country operational costs are included as part of the financial reporting.

In the financial report there are two budget lines that require an explanation.

Operational and local consultants

In the final financial reports from SPAN the costs associated with the operational budget line 500 for local project support and the budget line for local consultants 313 were given as one report. This reporting resulted from the fact that the IUCN contract given to SPAN specified a total amount for operations, including these figures for local consultants and operational activities. Once the detailed report was received, it did not seem cost effective to try to tease these details apart. This was explained to the auditors. It is hoped that this is acceptable since the total expenditure for these two budget lines is not exceeded.

As Poland and the Czech Republic under-spent on the operations a proportion of those funds were used for staff time to support the development of the brochure and video produced on the role of communication in biodiversity for the high level event at the Conference of the Parties.

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High level summit

The funds from the operational budget line (500) DFL 10,000 to hold this summit was used to provide for staff costs associated with developing the messages to communicate the value of communication to decision makers. The products that resulted are the text for the brochure "*Mainstreaming Biodiversity*" (see Annex) made available at the Conference of the Parties in the Hague and the script for the video with a similar message.