



Bird Protection and Study
Society of Vojvodina



PRESS RELEASE

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Natura 2000 needed for EU accession

Zrenjanin, Serbia, 27 October, 2010 (IUCN/BPSSV) – Natura 2000, the largest network of protected areas in the world, was drawn to the attention of participants in the workshop organized in Tamiš river valley – a site identified as an Important Bird Area and a potential Natura 2000 site. At the workshop the selection and the designation process of Natura 2000 sites were displayed to stakeholders from the region showing also the benefits of the network such as EU financial support for specific activities. Mapping of potential Natura 2000 sites is a necessary step for countries on the road to the EU.

For the EU potential candidate countries the accession to EU is not a smooth process but a long journey with a number of challenges on the way. The process of integration is meant to prepare countries to assume the obligations of EU membership including adherence to the political aims of the Union. This includes synchronization of the national legislation with the EU one, ensuring its implementation by introducing new acts at national level, involvement of all stakeholders in the process of decision-making, improvement of regional cooperation etc.

“Conserving biodiversity in the Western Balkans, as part of the European natural heritage, will not merely contribute to the target for halting the biodiversity loss but will secure sustainability of local communities’ development,” - says **Veronika Ferdinandova, Biodiversity Project Officer at IUCN SEE**. The turbulent developments during the last decade raised a number of threats to biodiversity, including overexploitation of natural resources due to poverty, intensification of agriculture and forestry practices, land abandonment, pollution, etc. Among the most threatened ecosystems are wetlands, mountain meadows and forests.

“Tamiš river and its valley in Serbia, with its preserved alluvial habitats, is by far the most important wetland in the country from the point of view of bird conservation,” says **Marko Tucakov of Bird Protection and Study Society of Vojvodina**. The area has not been protected by the national law yet although it harbours enormous natural wealth: the biggest heron colony in Serbia with more than 1000 pairs, including Glossy Ibis – the only breeding site of the species in Serbia, and the biggest Whickered Tern colony in Serbia and region, with almost 1100 pairs. Two sites along the river, were identified as areas important for birds (so called IBAs) thus becoming part of the IBAs network in Serbia covering 14,29% of its territory. Once the country joins the EU it is expected that all IBAs will become part of the European Natura 2000 network thus increasing the protected area of the country from 5,83% to 14,26%.

The process of introduction of the EU Habitats (HD) and Birds Directives (BD) in Serbia has commenced, however, there are still gaps in understanding with regard to HD and BD implementation and identification of Natura 2000 sites in the civil society sector. To this end the meeting held today is a necessary step on the way of understanding and supporting the implementation of the EU environmental policies and strategies, in particular the EU Nature Directives. More effective communication of environmental issues to stakeholders, increased understanding of the opportunities the nature policy can offer as well as facilitating the dialogue between governmental and non-governmental organizations and local communities accompanied by effective sites management are of mighty importance for successful enforcement and implementation of the legislation.

Notes to editors

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About IUCN

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges by supporting scientific research; managing field projects all over the world; and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN, international conventions and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

The world's oldest and largest global environmental network, IUCN is a democratic membership union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and almost 11,000 volunteer scientists and experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 professional staff in 60 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world. IUCN's headquarters are located in Gland, near Geneva, in Switzerland.

www.iucn.org

About Bird Protection and Study Society of Vojvodina

Bird Study and Protection Society of Vojvodina (BSPSV) was established on 18 November 1989. Society was founded as a result of activities of the Commission for Study and Protection of Birds of The Society of Ecologists of Vojvodina, which gathered professional and amateur ornithologists mainly from the territory of Serbian Province of Vojvodina. Initially, the activities of the Bird Study and Protection Society of Vojvodina involved issuing of journal and annual gatherings of its members. Today, after twenty years, Bird Study and Protection Society of Vojvodina is an active and committed organization that carefully maintains a network of active members throughout Serbia who work on bird and habitat conservation and increase of knowledge about birds in Serbia at local, regional and national levels.

www.pticevojvodine.rs

Natura 2000

Natura 2000 is the centrepiece of EU nature & biodiversity policy. It is an EUwide network of nature protection areas established under the 1992 Habitats Directive. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. It is comprised of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated by Member States under the Habitats Directive, and also incorporates Special Protection Areas (SPAs) which they designate under the 1979 Birds Directive. Natura 2000 is not a system of strict nature reserves where all human activities are excluded. Whereas the network will certainly include nature reserves most of the land is likely to continue to be privately owned and the emphasis will be on ensuring that future management is sustainable, both ecologically and economically. The establishment of this network of protected areas also fulfils a Community obligation under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm