

Summary Report on Workshop

Sustainable Development in Lake Areas: Empowering Local Initiatives and Civil Society



22 – 26 September 2010

Keramoti, Greece



Summary report

After workshops in Estonia, Poland and Slovenia, Forum Synergies and Global Nature Fund held their 4th workshop about “Sustainable Development in Lake Areas: Empowering Local Initiatives and Civil Society” in Greece from 22 to 26 Sept 2010. The workshop was financially supported by Fondation de France.

With 48 participants from 15 countries this workshop was the largest so far. We met in the small fishermen and tourism village of Keramoti in Nestos delta, a large river delta in north eastern Greece and part of the country's only national park. Until 100 years ago one third of the delta had been covered by riparian forests which had been reduced to a tiny rest of 150 hectares until the 1970ties. There would probably be no national park without German biologist Hans Jerrentrup who during his studies at Heidelberg university 30 years ago wrote his masters thesis about the delta, for the first time collecting maps and ecological evidence for its ecological values. He stayed there and helped to set up the NGO "Society for Protection and Eco-Development" (EPO), our host organisation, which despite very difficult circumstances finally succeeded in partial measures for nature conservation.

The Workshop

On the first day participants were welcomed by the management and board of the Nestos – Vistonis - Ismarida National Park, by the local Mayor and the presidents of the Fishermens' Cooperative and EPO. The local situation was explained in presentations of the National Park Management and two research institutions, and the participants were taken to a first field trip to visit the results of EPO's LIFE Project at the freshwater lakes near Hrysoupolis and the organisation's environmental education centre in Avramilia.

In the evening our local hosts together with Tillman Stottele, GNF advisory board and member of the Rotary Club in his hometown Friedrichshafen, had prepared a panel discussion which was held in the Rotary Club of Kavala. Key decision makers and honoraries had been invited to debate the most important tasks concerning environment and economic development for the region in the actual times of crisis. The subsequent dinner was sponsored by the mayor of Kavala.



The second day started with a 'panel interview' game where 3 international participants asked questions to 3 representatives of the local side to reflect the lessons of the first day and further clarify details and dynamics of the local situation. (see minutes for more details) It became clear that ecological thinking in the Greek public vanishes almost completely behind the struggle for daily life, except in cases where municipalities are threatened by heavy fines for not implementing EU directives (eg for recycling). In terms of ecological issues, recycling or energy saving are still closer to the people than biodiversity conservation which is regarded as a quite exotic idea. And any sort of stakeholder participation in Greece was virtually absent until 5 years ago.

After the interview reflection, examples of stakeholder participation and protection strategies were presented from Bulgaria, Poland, Serbia, Estonia and England.

Another highlight was a lunch on invitation of the Keramoti fishermen's cooperative, serving local fish and Greek salad at the harbour. The local fishermen are good partners to the environmentalists because their low input economical use of the vast lagoon areas makes them natural allies to resist demands for construction development in the coastal zone which would destroy valuable natural habitats.



In the afternoon participants split up in working groups to further elaborate the three project proposals about eco/rural tourism, environmental education and practical conservation exchange that had been started in Slovenia. Next steps and commitments were agreed and presented to the plenary.

A political declaration

A special emphasis on this 4th workshop was to derive a "political message" from the workshops and participants' case studies so far. This part of the workshop concept had remained somewhat in the shadow during the past events. So the third day was dedicated to politics: How can national and EU policies support local actors to take up the challenge of sustainable development?

In the beginning the president of the union of farmers' cooperatives presented the actual state of the regional LEADER programme and commented about the agricultural situation, being sceptical towards eco-farming. Titus Bahner then presented the current EU policy context and the actual reform debate about the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Forum Synergies co-organizes the "Agricultural and Rural Convention" (ARC, www.arc2020.eu) to formulate a coherent message from civil society towards the CAP reform discussion.

In this context we tried to review the relations between local administration and civil society groups in the participants' projects in more detail. Reflecting our experiences in the light of a systematic structure proposed by the moderator led to the result that NGOs and civil society groups in almost all cases play a significant role from the very beginning of protective measures until the development of accompanying initiatives of integrated sustainable development, but that they are rarely put in a responsible position by local administrations to do so.

On this basis we elaborated a "Declaration of Keramoti" as a summarizing political message from the findings of the "Sustainable Development in Lake Areas" workshops. The message was that

- ☞ NGOs play a crucial role in implementing EU conservation directives by their initiative, expertise and communication skills.
- ☞ But this work often relies on unstable structures, mainly due to temporary funding. Usually most of it, including highly qualified expertise, is voluntary and unpaid work.
- ☞ The potential of NGO contributions in the implementation of EU conservation directives and national policies is far greater than actually practiced.
- ☞ To realize this potential we need a better recognition of the role of NGOs in policy implementation; capacity building both for NGOs and local administrations; increased legal opportunities in national regulations to allow delegation of specific responsibilities to NGOs; and also financial support to maintain permanent structures. This support should be accessible by simplified procedures.

The declaration was signed by the participants and later put on the ARC website (in the context of a "nature 2000" thematic group). It influenced the final ARC declaration which was presented on 17 november 2010 to the EU commission.

The workshop was concluded with a common field trip to the protected remnants of the Nestos riparian forests and to the lagoons of Nestos Delta.

Evaluation

In summary the Keramoti workshop was a great success and valuable supportive event for the local host NGO in its very difficult struggle for an integrated and balanced ecological development of the Nestos delta. It was by far the largest workshop so far in terms of participants and it yielded a political message to European decision makers and which can be seen as a valuable contribution of the "lake project" in the context of the ongoing reform discussions of EU policies.





Workshop

Sustainable Development in Lake Areas: Empowering Local Initiatives and Civil Society



22 - 26 September 2010

Keramoti, Nestos Delta

Greece

Supported by





Welcome!

Forum Synergies and Global Nature Fund cordially invite you to a series of five workshops on participatory implementation strategies of environmental policies in lake areas, taking place in Estonia, Poland, Slovenia, Greece and France.

The workshops are meant to empower civil society actors to contribute to participatory sustainable development, and shall yield recommendations to local and EU governments about more participatory ways to implement environmental policies.

Goals and Objectives

The workshops are organised in the framework of the project “Sustainable Development in Lake Areas”, which is supported by Fondation de France.

The general objective of the project is to support initiatives in sustainable development by exchange on good practice of participatory implementation and local sustainable development. The exchange shall lead to capacity building of private actors, NGOs and local governments in environmentally sensitive areas.

The thematic workshops will contribute to the development of local democracy and to a more participative management of environmental resources, in order to fill the gap between European citizens and their institutions, and also via feed-back to decision makers to contribute to environmental and rural policies that better meet peoples' need for participation.

The project's objectives are

- ☞ to exchange experiences about different participatory implementation strategies of Nature 2000 and Water Framework Directive (WFD) in concerned rural areas
- ☞ to give local actors and authorities better access to practical knowledge about sustainable Nature 2000 and WFD implementation strategies via exchange with successful projects
- ☞ to develop political proposals to regional, state and EU governments to use the existing participatory options that are provided from EU-side in order to support sustainable development in rural areas.

The scientific partnership with University of Marburg / Germany assures that the project integrates political knowledge of integrated water body management.

The specific objectives of the Workshop in Nestos Delta are:

- To further exchange experiences about different participatory implementation strategies by the participating partners
- To strengthen the relations between the organisations and partners of the first 3 workshops, leading to common projects on conservation and sustainable development
- To boost the sustainable development process in the Nestos National Park through publicizing the procedures and results of this workshop.



Background

Empowerment of Local Actors

Sustainable development depends on actors – actors that are willing to persistently strive for sustainable ways of life in their daily behaviour and take initiative to generate renewable energy, consume locally grown & organic food, use tourism services that save energy and look for ways of a sustainable life style. Since economic regional development is one crucial pillar of sustainability, governments depend on local initiatives of people and civil society organizations to turn the chances of regulative frameworks and accompanying funding policies into practical action. Therefore an exchange about best practice in motivation and integration of local actors is an important contribution to sustainable rural development and the empowerment of civil society. An exchange between old and new EU member state participants seems particularly useful in this respect since it combines long-term knowledge about EU regulation practices with newly emerging civil society movements.

Participatory Processes

The Aarhus convention, signed in 1998 by most European countries, invites authorities to enhance the public participation in decision-making related with environmental issues. The Natura 2000 network (based on the 'Habitat' and the 'Birds' directives) is requesting from national governments to protect species and habitats of common interest by preserving their current existence. It does not specify by which measures and thereby leaves room for participatory implementation. The European Water Framework Directive is requesting from national states to achieve a "good ecological state" for all surface water bodies until 2015. It expects explicitly the implementation of an active public participation. The three directives – and especially the Habitat Directive – are in many cases seen as very critical by farming organisations and local governments who fear economical constraints. On the other hand, at the local level the participatory implementation options frequently are unknown to the relevant actors because of lack of good examples.

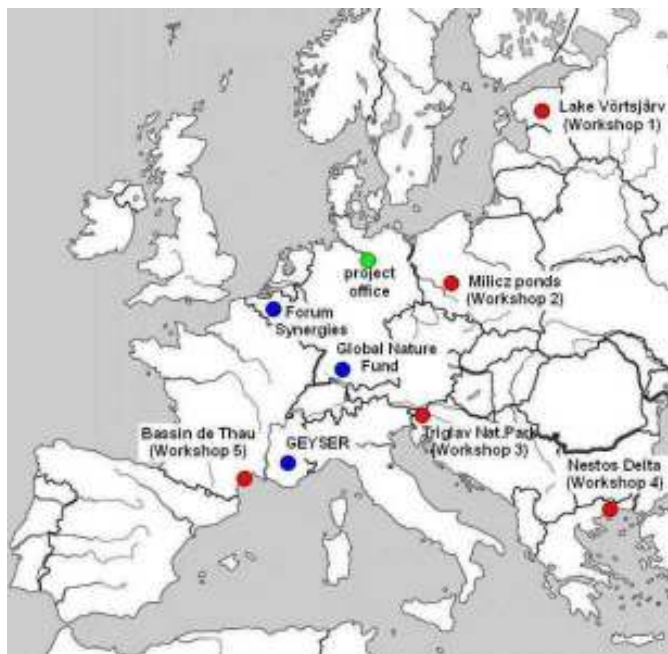
Lake Areas

Lakes, river basins and coastal areas are good topics for exchange workshops about participatory implementation strategies because they fall usually under both Natura 2000 and water framework regulation, they give a common thematic focus, are of high public relevance and give room for integrated development approaches. Furthermore there tend to be serious conflicts of interest between different stakeholders, giving need for mediation and participatory conflict solution. More specifically, a common problem of European lakes is eutrophication from agricultural sources. EU regulation (Nitrogen directive) requests farmers since 2000 to restrict fertilization in order to prevent nutrient runoff to ground and surface waters. But there are implementation deficits, and big leftovers from former times pose a question of acceptable cleanup strategies. All this gives reason to look for more participatory implementation.

The Workshop Sites

The project's five partner sites, of which Lake Võrtsjärv, Milicz ponds and Nestos Delta are members of Global Nature Fund's Living Lakes network, show the context of the project in different ways.

Lake Võrtsjärv near Tartu in Estonia, the biggest inner-Estonian lake, is mainly used by fishermen from the five surrounding villages with some recently evolving soft tourism and recreational activities. Nutrient intakes from the last decades caused heavy mud deposits in the shallow lake, deteriorating the water quality especially in summers with a thread of oxygen crises, and causing a reed belt of more than 100 meters to grow on its shore, preventing inhabitants to access the lake as they used to. There is need for an ecologically adapted solution under participation of the different interest groups.



The Milicz ponds near Wrocław in Poland are a great lake area that has been created by medieval monks for aquaculture. Nowadays they create an almost natural environment with very large numbers of birds and also plant species on the surrounding wetlands. Several ecological NGOs are active in the area and they initiated the LEADER+ process. Involvement of many partners range from environmental farming, fisheries and tourism to habitat improvements and conservation plans.

Lakes Bled and Bohinj are glacial lakes in the Julian Alps in northwestern Slovenia. Lake Bled is a very popular tourist destination. Lake Bohinj (Bohinjsko jezero), the largest permanent lake in Slovenia situated 25 km west of lake Bled in the borders of Triglav National Park, is still quite natural but suffers of increasing pressure from urbanism and tourism. The National Park Administration's has a lot of experiences in sustainable lake management and Alpine land use.

Nestos Delta consists of 18 small lakes and 8 brackish lagoons and is located in North-eastern Greece, about 200 km to the east of Thessaloniki. Intensive agriculture is one of the greatest threats to these precious wetlands. Due to agricultural EU-subsidies more land is cultivated. The excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides in the delta region is causing big problems, and the water quality of the lagoons and lakes deteriorates constantly. EPO – the Society for Protection of Nature and Ecodevelopment is working since 22 years for the protection, management and sustainable development, collaborating with state services, authorities and other stakeholders.

Thau basin (Bassin de Thau) is the largest lagoon on the Mediterranean coast of France. The shallow lagoon experiences a high pressure of uses from fishery, mussel cultivation, agricultural land use and nutrient intakes from its catchment area, but also recreational use from its densely populated surroundings. There are conflicts of interest but also significant possible coalitions of interest e.g. between environmentalists and fish and mussel farmers.



Structure of the Workshops

After arrival of the participants in the afternoon of the first day and a welcoming evening, the workshops proceed in three steps.

On the first day the host organisation presents their situation and the foreign guests pose questions to better understand the situation and relate it to their own experiences. The participants are taken to a first field trip to get a more practical feeling about the local situation.

The second day allows the international guests to contribute their views, ideas and experiences with respect to the local situation. Another field trip brings the participants to local initiatives and civil society groups to talk with them about their vision, their practical options and the specific local obstacles to their engagement.

The third morning session is dedicated to politics: How can national and EU policies support local actors to take up the challenge of sustainable development? Towards the end of the session the moderators try to crystallise conclusions in order to formulate a valuable feedback to EU decision makers.

In order to enable the local public to participate in the meeting there is a political evening with a public presentation of the foreign guests and with latest information about EU political tendencies. Local politicians, national and EU governmental officials are invited to explain their view on possible support for sustainable development initiatives. A cultural event with presentation of local culture and room for talk and drinking gives participants a direct contact to the people.

Workshop Dates

Lake Võrtsjärv, Estonia	15-18 June 2009
Milicz Ponds, Poland	21-24 October 2009
Triglav National Park, Slovenia	21-25 April 2010
Nestos Delta, Greece	22-26 September 2010
Thau Basin, France	April 2011 (date to be confirmed)

Conference Venue Keramoti (Nestos Delta)

Keramoti is a small coastal fishermen's village that has developed very fast in the last 2 decades because of the ferry boat connection to the island of Thassos and its nice beaches. The Workshop will take place in the **info centre of the Nestos-Vistonida-Ismarida National Park Authority** in Keramoti.

Accommodation will be provided in small local hotels in Keramoti. Field trips to Nestos Delta will be organised by busses. It is possible to arrive in Keramoti by plane from Athens (to airport of Kavala) or by bus/train from Thessaloniki / Kavala / Keramoti.

Participation Fee

Due to the support by the Fondation de France, no conference fee for participation will arise, and invited participants may be granted a 50% reimbursement on their travel costs.

Since the number of possible participants is limited to about 40, please consider your early registration at lakeproject@forum-synergies.eu.



Hosting Organisations, Supporters and Partners

Forum Synergies

Forum Synergies is a European network of practical pioneers in many aspects of sustainable rural development that has gathered rich and varied practical experiences since 1994. Forum Synergies holds contacts to different rural organisations as well as to policy makers on EU level, turning practical experiences into an input for the evolution of EU sustainability policies.

Global Nature Fund (GNF) and Living Lakes Network

GNF was founded in 1998 with the objective to foster the protection of nature and environment as well as animals. GNF's work consists mainly of initiating and implementing nature and environment protection projects to preserve the animal world, the protection of migrating species, their habitat and their migratory routes.

In 1998 the Living Lakes network has been launched by Global Nature Fund. At the moment there are 45 partner lakes represented by more than 55 member organisations. Our vision is that all lakes, wetlands and freshwater bodies of the world should be healthy ecosystems and being used in a sustainable way.

EPO: Society for Protection of Nature and Ecodevelopment

EPO - Society for Protection of Nature and Ecodevelopment is working since 22 years for nature protection, management and sustainable development, collaborating with state services, authorities and other stakeholders for a better future of the Nestos region. EPO is involved in EU supported Life projects for the management of the wetlands, creating buffer zones, vegetated filter strips, re-connection of old river branches, reforestation of riparian forest, construction of breeding islets for terns and other water-birds, as well as setting up a feeding scheme for vultures. Besides that EPO works on alternative development, especially Ecotourism planning a series of nature trails, observation platforms and other infrastructure, publishing of information materials and guided tours. EPO represents the environmental NGOs in the board of the Nestos-Vistonis-Ismarida National Park.

Fondation de France

Fondation de France was established in 1969 to encourage the growth of private philanthropy as an intermediary partner. The foundation sets up action programs in many fields: solidarity, the elderly or disabled, and for the benefit of children. Fondation de France also promotes professionalism in the management of the voluntary sector in France and Europe.

GEYSER

Since 1983, the French non-profit association Geyser is strengthening innovative social practices in rural areas in France and abroad. Its members and staff coordinate networks and working groups, implement training sessions for local actors and build bridges between practitioners, researchers and policy makers. Currently, Geyser is working mainly in the fields of environmental mediation, participatory democracy and ethnoecology.

Programme

Wednesday, 22 September 2010

Welcome

18:00	Arrival of participants
19:00	Check-in and dinner in Keramoti
20:00	Open evening

Thursday, 23 September 2010

Workshop Day I:

Overall situation & Stakeholder participation in Greece

8:00	Breakfast
9:00	<p>Welcome from the hosts - Introduction of programme <i>Hans Jerrentrup, EPO</i> <i>Tilman Stottele, Global Nature Fund</i> <i>Titus Bahner, Forum Synergies</i></p> <p>Self-presentation of participants, projects and topics of interest <i>Moderation: Titus Bahner (FS), Tilman Stottele (GNF)</i></p>
10:00	<p>Involvement of local stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fisheries policies in lagoons, - agriculture-extensivisation - a chance for nature conservation, - sustainable tourism, - conservation-management <p>(Short presentations from local representatives)</p>
11:00	Coffee Break
11:15	<p>Involvement of local stakeholders</p> <p>Examples of participants (e.g. agri-environmental measures, extensivisation of land use and restoration of habitats) & discussion</p>
12:30	Lunch in Keramoti or lunch package for take-away
14:00	<p>Field trip</p> <p>The freshwater lakes near Hrysoupolis and the results of EPO's Life Actions. <i>guided by Hans Jerrentrup, EPO</i></p>
17:15	<p>Visit to EPO-Centre for environmental education in Avramilia <i>guided by Hans Jerrentrup, EPO</i></p>

19:00	Dinner in a traditional tavern in Paradisos village
20:00	Open evening
<p>Friday, 24 September 2010</p> <p>Workshop Day II:</p> <p>Participatory Development Options - European Experiences</p>	
8:00	Breakfast at Hotels
9:00	<p><i>Presentations and discussion</i></p> <p>Restoration of wetlands and lakes involving local stakeholders</p> <p>Examples from the participating countries; how to implement the international and European legal framework for conservation and sustainable development.</p>
10:00	Coffee Break
11:00	<p><i>Presentations (10') and discussion</i></p> <p>Experiences with NGO and Stakeholder Participation in Other Lake Regions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ ... ☞ ☞ ... <p><i>Moderation: Titus Bahner (FS)</i></p>
12:30	Lunch with the fishermen's cooperative near Keramoti
14:00	<p><i>Group work</i></p> <p>Capacity Building and Participatory Development in Lake Areas</p> <p>Continuation of the project proposals of the 3rd. workshop in Slovenia: How can the project ideas become "functional projects"? Who will do what? How can we set up reasonable financing of the projects?</p> <p><i>Moderation: Tillmann Stottele (GNF) & Titus Bahner (FS)</i></p>
16:00	Coffee Break
16:30	<p>Presentation of Group Results and Plenary Discussion</p> <p>on the European Context</p> <p><i>Moderation: Tillmann Stottele (GNF) & Titus Bahner (FS)</i></p>
20:30	Dinner in Keramoti together with Rotary club of Kavala and local representatives

Saturday, 25 September 2010

Workshop Day III: Policies and the Case for European Cooperation

8:00	Breakfast
9:00	<p><i>20' presentation and discussion</i></p> <p>ARC - a message from civil society towards CAP reform 2013</p> <p>Forum Synergies co-organizes the “Agricultural and Rural Convention” (www.arc2020.eu) to formulate a coherent message from civil society towards the ongoing reform of the EU common agricultural policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ update on policy context and the “state of the ARC” ☞ summarizing policy conclusions from our previous workshops ☞ what could be our message(s) to decision makers? <p><i>Titus Bahner (FS)</i></p>
10:30	Coffee Break
11:00	<p><i>Discussion</i></p> <p>Approaches to a better cooperation of lake-related NGOs in Europe</p> <p>What is the future of our group? Should we set up a closer collaboration network? First thoughts about the final workshop in spring 2011.</p> <p><i>Moderation: Tillmann Stottele (GNF) & Titus Bahner (FS)</i></p>
11:45	<p>Workshop Evaluation and Next Steps</p> <p>Consolidation of workshop results and outlook to next workshop in France</p> <p><i>Moderation: Tillmann Stottele (GNF) & Titus Bahner (FS)</i></p>
12:30	Lunch in Keramoti
14:00	<p>Field Trip</p> <p>Riparian forest area and the lagoons of Nestos Delta</p> <p><i>guided by Hans Jerrentrup, EPO</i></p>
19:00	Dinner in Keramoti
20:00	Open evening
Sunday, 26 September 2010	
Departure	
8:00	Breakfast
9:00	Departures



General Information

Time Zone	Central European Time = Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) plus 1 hour
Weather	The weather in the region in September is usually still very warm and sunny, giving the opportunity to do many things outdoor.
Workshop Language	The workshop language will be English.
Currency	Euro
Communication	The international code for Greece is +30. Mobile phone networks cover most areas.
Electricity	Voltage is 220 V, Plugs C & F. Information on adapters and plugs is available under http://kropla.com/electric2.htm

Address of Conference Venue

To be confirmed

Hosts and Conference Team

Info centre of the Nestos-Vistonida-Ismarida & EPO - Society for Protection of Nature and Eco-development

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