

Working Towards More Reliable NGO Participation in EU Conservation Policy

Communication to EU Decision Makers

We, the undersigned NGOs and conservation network members, met in 2009 / 2010 for a series of capacity building workshops about “Sustainable Development in Lake Areas”, organized by Forum Synergies and the Global Nature Fund. We exchanged experiences about civil society participation in the implementation of the EU Nature 2000 and Water Framework Directives, and concluded the following:

1. Experience in many case studies shows that

NGOs play a crucial role in implementing EU conservation directives by their initiative, expertise and communication skills.

For example, this includes

- ☞ identifying conservation priorities
- ☞ awareness raising and environmental education
- ☞ management planning
- ☞ habitat management, monitoring and restoration
- ☞ initiating local projects of sustainable development

2. However 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, maintained by management salaries for transitory projects like LIFE.

3. 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

- ☞ 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
- ☞ financial support for NGOs to maintain permanent structures to support the implementation of their responsibilities. This support should be accessible by simplified procedures.

4. We call on EU commission and parliament to take these needs into account while developing the current reform of the Common Agricultural Policy framework. A new and responsible level of NGO participation in conservation activities will significantly contribute to the sustainable development of rural areas and enhance cooperation between EU and its citizens, to the benefit of both sides.