Newsletter

Reverse
EUROPEAN PROJECT
TO PRESERVE BIODIVERSITY

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Reverse project consists of an exchange of experiences between 14 European partners involved in the protection of biodiversity. Its aim is to promote biodiversity on a European scale, by favouring positive actions which have been identified by partners and may be easily transposed to other European regions.

REVERSE 3rd SEMINAR: LAND PLANNING & BIODIVERSITY

At the **3rd Reverse interregional seminar**, Reverse Partners met to work on the topic dedicated to **"Land planning & biodiversity".** This seminar took place in Murcia (Spain), in March 2011 and was organized by Murcia Region.

This theme was broached through different angles and various undertaken actions were presented:
* Integrating the respect of biodiversity into global land planning policies
* Maintaining ecological corridors through green and blue infrastructures
* Creating decision support tools to implement land development policies
* Creating regulatory management tools to protect sensitive areas
* Raising citizens and politicians' awareness about biodiversity

Study visits to two remarkable regional parks were organised :
The Regional Park of "Calblanque, Monte de las Cenizas y Peña del Águila" is located at the eastern part of the Region of Murcia, south of Mar Menor. This site is the best preserved littoral area in the region and is part of the European Natura 2000 Network.
At the Regional Park "Salinas de San Pedro" Reverse Partners visited the most important wetlands in the entire region, formed by salt marsh. This Special Protection Area for birds is the annual crossing point for colonies of flamingos and other migratory birds.

CONFERENCE "Green infrastructure, Biodiversity & Land use"

During this conference, held in Murcia on the 29th March 2011, Project partners across all Europe and Representatives from the European Commission presented the latest developments regarding the concept of green infrastructure and discussed funding opportunities and challenges, implementation and planning approaches as well as good practices.

Presentations on "Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity, the concept and practice in the EU", "Regional Policy support for Green Infrastructure, the opportunities and possibilities for improvement in the current financing period" and "Can linking Green Infrastructure with EIA and art. 6.3 and 6.4 of the habitats directive improve biodiversity protection?" were given by representatives from DG Environment and DG Region.

Cases study presented by Project Partners about "Planning and implementing Green Infrastructure on a regional level in Romania", "Application of technical criteria in the evaluation of urban plans in the Region of Murcia, or " Drawing up a new landscape programme and land use plan- Bremen Region" were concrete illustration of this thematic.

Last, key questions were discussed at roundtables:
* How to solve conflicts between Green and Grey Infrastructures?
* How improving Regional Policy funding for Green Infrastructure today and in future?
* Biodiversity conservation from the point of view of the Regions. How to solve the difficulties for a truly sustainable development?

To upload all presentations of this conference, please click here:

http://reverse.aquitaine.eu/41-minute

This conference was organised in the framework of the two INTERREG IVC projects: Reverse and SURF Nature http://surf-nature.eu/

A GLIMPSE OF GOOD PRACTICES

Land planning & Biodiversity

Here are presented four successful experiences from Reverse's Partners, which have demonstrated a proven effectiveness in terms of preserving biodiversity.

Designating a Green Network at county level
Presented by EMU (Estonia)

According to the Estonian Spatial Plan, the Green Network is a **coherent system of extensively-used areas** in a comparatively good natural state that helps to maintain the biodiversity and stability of the environment.

The hierarchy of the spatial planning system is organised mainly around basic administrative units in Estonia: country, county and municipality. The Green Network is, to varying degrees, addressed at all three levels of planning. The national long-term spatial plan, 'Estonia 2010', establishes basic principles of the Estonian ecological network by identifying corridors and 12 core areas of national and international importance.

In 1999, the second phase of county planning (thematic planning) was initiated. It aims to define environmental conditions for the development of land use and settlement. The main tasks of this phase included the design of the Green Network and the definition of valuable cultural/historical landscapes. By December 2002, each of the 15 counties of Estonia had to prepare a map of ecological networks on a scale of 1:50,000, as one of the layers of thematic spatial planning. For that goal, three methodologies were devised; one for designing Green Networks, a second for defining valuable cultural landscapes, and a third to combine outputs from the previous two. However, it took until the end of 2007 for all 15 counties to finish the preparation of these plans.

According to the Planning Act, the Green Network needs to be addressed in each municipality's comprehensive plan. The plan should specify the boundaries of the Green Network delineated in county thematic plans and lay down requirements for land use within the Green Network at a local level. The Estonian Environmental Action Plan for 2007-2013 sets a target to determine and implement measures for the Green Network within all municipalities by 2013, in terms of spatial planning and environmental conditions and restrictions. By 2007, the Green Network had been addressed in 53 comprehensive plans; 27% of municipalities.

Ecological network issues touch upon many spheres of land use, for example, infrastructure planning, forestry, agriculture and nature conservation. Successful implementation of the Green Network concept is achieved mostly by territorial planning at lower levels and setting conditions for land and other resources usage, including Environmental Impact Assessment. It requires acceptance of landscape ecological principles by stakeholders from a wide variety of land-use sectors. Therefore, **public awareness and dissemination of information among all stakeholders is a crucial factor** for successful implementation of ecological network.

Ecological and landscape connectivity strategy of the province of Alava
Presented by Basque Government (Spain)

The fragmentation of habitats and landscapes has become one of the main causes of loss of biodiversity in industrialised and densely populated countries, being more important than the simple destruction or degradation of habitats, although the latter are much more perceptible in general. The so-called "silent disappearance" of many populations and biocoenosis occurs when, following the fragmentation of their habitats, the number of individuals left is below the minimum viable population.

The objective of the Strategy of Ecological and Landscape Connectivity for the Province of Álava is to achieve an **effective planning and protection of biological corridors in Álava**, in accordance with the commitments of the Environmental Framework Programme of the Basque Country (2002-2012) and according to the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy.

First a technical analysis was carried out, which was the basis for the subsequent application of the Strategy. This technical analysis had the following objectives:
1. Characterize the **protection policies of ecological and landscape connectivity** in Europe and Spain.
2. Analyse the **ecological and landscape connectivity of the Province of Álava**.
3. **Identify, classify and delimit the most relevant areas** for ecological and landscape connectivity in Álava.
4. Analyse the **impact of fragmentation processes** in Álava.
5. Define a **protection** and, when necessary, **restoration strategy**, for the main ecological and landscape corridors in Álava.

The objective of the subsequent practical application of the Strategy, through the use of the planning of the Network of Ecological and Landscape Corridors in procedures for authorizations and Evaluations of Strategic Impact that have effects on urban planning, is to avoid a loss of biodiversity by means of the conservation of natural characteristics of the areas that guarantee connectivity.

The Ecological and Landscape Connectivity Strategy is turning out to be a very valid tool for the conservation of areas not protected by legal mechanisms, but which have important values that guarantee the maintenance of ecological processes between areas which are protected.
Nevertheless, transferability and application could be improved through the achievement of two milestones: Defining a methodology that makes it possible to evaluate results obtained from applying the Ecological and Landscape Connectivity Strategy and defining legal channels for the application of the Strategy to become normative, such that it could be regularly effective and for more types of procedures.

🌱 Local strategy "to promote the attractiveness of an area by enhancing landscapes" taking into account biodiversity
Presented by Aquitaine Region (France)

In the context of the preparation of the local landplaning document "SCOT", the application to the LEADER programme and the definition of a territorial project, the elected representatives of the "Pays Val de Garonne – Gascogne" territory in France have highlighted the need to develop activities which enhance the attractiveness of the territory.

In that respect, landscapes appeared to be really valuable. Because these landscapes offer a pleasant life environment, it seems relevant to enhance and preserve them. The **landscapes are here regarded as a genuine tool to improve the dynamics of territorial development**.

In this context, and thanks to regulatory land planning tools ("SCOT", "PLU"), other local practical tools ("landscapes contracts", specific engineering) and financial tools (LEADER programme), the elected representatives of the "Val de Garonne – Gascony" have decided to conduct a real policy favouring landscapes.

On the basis of a broad consultative process and a landscape charter, they drew a roadmap to make the landscape a major factor in the attractiveness and development of the territory.

As a first step, the main activities were to raise awareness and to communicate about the importance of landscape (linked with biodiversity) through workshops, field days devoted to sightseeing, conference, newsletter.... This essential step ensured political involvement in the landscape strategy. It allowed all elected representatives and local stakeholders to realize the importance of landscapes and the role they play in the attractiveness of the territory, and to work together for the same goal.

Meanwhile, an action plan was developed. It defines the priorities for action around four themes: urban planning, agriculture, water and roads.
Currently, elected representatives oversee the implementation of the first actions included within this action plan.

By **preserving and increasing diversified landscapes**, this policy helps protecting and increasing biodiversity by supporting **actions favoring biodiversity**, ex: plantation of local species of trees, reintroducing of natural hedges, copses.
Moreover, this landscape policy appeared to be a good approach to deal with different problems such as biodiversity preservation, because the theme of landscape is quite consensual and concrete.

🌱 Geocoaching@nature: raising citizens' awareness toward biodiversity
Presented by TTZ (Germany)

The geocaching@nature project aimed to implement a geocaching route in Bremerhaven. Geocaching can be best described as a modern form of **treasure hunt** or a paper chase. People hide a small container, called geocaches, with things and a geocache logbook inside, and then they publish the hiding place by posting the coordinates on the internet. Of course there is more behind. For instance there are different kinds of geocaching, from the easiest kind of geocache which is easy to find, to caches which can only be found with special equipment like diving or climbing equipment.

The environmental protection agency created a geocache route which passes 4 stations in Bremerhaven. The agency lends GPS devices for those who do not have an own. The first station is at the Container Terminal 4 in the north of Bremerhaven. The salt-flats to be found there are an important resting and breeding place for birds.
The next station is situated in a park. There the participants can find further information about endemic species by following the natural trail in the park. From there they have to go to Fehrmoor, which is a moor in the north of Bremerhaven. The fourth and last station is at the Geeste river which is close to the city center of Bremerhaven.

The participants have to find these stations, on foot or by bike. At each station they have to **solve a riddle or answer a question which is about nature and landscape of Bremerhaven**. If the riddle can be solved it would lead to the next point by providing the coordinates. In this way they can become acquainted to the close nature and areas of the city that are important in terms of environmental protection. Moreover their knowledge about local environment can be increased and their sensitivity towards nature conservation and environmental protection can be heightened. The offer is especially addressed to school children and teenager aged from 11 up to 16 and it is also of interest for families, hikers and tourists.

To get more information about these good practices and see more of them,
Visit our website !
http://reverse.aquitaine.eu/9-good-practices