Environment and Climate Regional Accession Network ECRAN

Environment and Climate Regional Accession Network (ECRAN)

ECRAN Nature WG Work Plan 2014

December 2013

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ECRAN – Nature Working Group (Activity 2.7)

Introduction

This draft workplan is based on the Nature Working Group (NWG) ToR and aims at proposing the activities needed to meet the objectives of particular tasks and sub-tasks. It is presented to the Annual Meeting of Nature Working Group national coordinators (NCs) for their deliberation. Please note that many of the dates are only tentative, as the real date will depend on the coordination of work with TAIEX, availability and readiness of particular experts from abroad, but also natural and climatic conditions as regards the field work. The NCs are invited to discuss and amend particular proposals. The NWG Coordinator reserves the right to change the dates and propose changes in the scope of work if for any reason some of the planned activities would prove as not feasible or economically not justifiable.

This workplan covers the first full year of ECRAN (i.e., January 2014 – December 2014).

Task 2.7.1: Organisation of annual Working Group meeting

Annual meeting of national coordinators is envisaged for December 2014.

No.	Date	Key outputs
1	December 2014	Annual Meeting of NCs

Task 2.7.2: Appropriate Assessments, training programme on nature priority topics

- subtask a): 3 pilot AAs within the ECRAN region.

Three pilot projects/sites should be agreed upon and the first AA undertaken in 2014.

No.	Date	Key outputs
1	mid-January 2014	Proposals for AA projects/sites received from the NCs; three pilot AAs selected; the 2014 pilot AA No. 1 decided
2	January - February 2014	Search for the STE – Chief AA supervisor and his recruitment
3	January – February 2014	Identification of participants to the pilot AAs from Beneficiary countries
4	April 2014	Screening workshop at pilot AA No. 1
5	May – September 2014	Main assessment workshop at pilot AA No. 1
6	October – December 2014	Evaluation and IROPI workshop at pilot AA No. 1

- subtask b): 1 study AA tour to the EU

No activity is envisaged in 2014 as the participants to the study tour have to first gather their practical experience through their participation at the pilot AAs.

- subtask c): Regional training on the process of designation of potential Natura 2000 sites

A comprehensive training (preliminarily 3-day long) focused on all the requirements of establishment of the Natura 2000 network will be organised.

No.	Date	Key outputs	Observations
1	April 2014	Regional training seminar held	

- subtask d): Assessment of readiness of ECRAN Beneficiaries for N 2000 designation

Based on the decision reached at the NWG meeting on the approach to this subtask, a call for the assessment team and work methods will be launched and the assessment will start.

No.	Date	Key outputs
1	February 2014	Call for the TAIEX assessment team launched
2	March - April 2014	Work method elaborated and agreed upon
3	May – December 2014	First three country assessments undertaken

Task 2.7.3: Design and delivery of Regional Awareness Raising Programme

Four different regional seminars are envisaged under this task. In 2014, the first of them (theme to be agreed upon by the NCs) will be held.

No.	Date	Key outputs
1	November 2014	Regional training seminar held

Task 2.7.4: Participatory Management Plan

The process of preparation of Participatory Management Plan should last all three years of the project. In 2014, the pilot site should be agreed upon, the short-term expert in charge of this task recruited, methodology to be used agreed upon, and the work started.

No.	Date	Key outputs
1	Mid-January 2014	Nominations for pilot sites (protected area) received and selection made
2	February – March 2014	The STE in charge of this task recruited
3	April – May 2014	Methodology selected and agreed upon, work starts
4	June – December 2014	MP preparation in progress

Task 2.7.5: Establishment of Regional Cooperation among Nature Protected Areas (NPA)

Based on decision made by the NCs at the 2013 Annual Meeting, the relevant form of regional cooperation of protected areas will be chosen.

- subtask a): establishment of the regional cooperation

Depending on the agreed form of cooperation, the list of protected areas (PAs) from the region interested in networking is to be developed, relevant organisational structure proposed, and the first meeting aimed at establishment of the formal cooperation held.

No.	Date	Key outputs
1	January - February 2014	Search for PAs from the region interested in networking
2	March 2014	Organisational structure proposed and agreed upon
3	April 2014	Founding meeting of the regional cooperation held, official representatives selected/elected
4	April - May 2014	Expression of interest to liaison with relevant European networks of PAs

- subtask b): participation at EU networks annual meetings

Depending on the feedback to the expression of interest for networking with European PAs, representative(s) of the newly established regional cooperation should take part at the annual meeting(s) of the latter.

Annual meeting of the newly established regional cooperation representatives joined with a technical seminar (theme to be specified later) should be organized with participation of the representative(s) of one or more European networks willing to collaborate.

No.	Date	Key outputs
1	2014	Participation of representative(s) of the newly established regional cooperation at the annual meetings of the European networks
2	End of 2014	Annual meeting and technical seminar

- subtask c): 3 training missions to the EU PAs

This subtask is not expected to be implemented in 2014 as it first requires establishment of the regional cooperation under the subtasks a) and b) and careful selection of trainees, which will take time.

Summary ECRAN Nature Workplan 2014

Nature WG Activity 2.7	Dec 2013	Jan 2014	Feb 2014	Mar 2014	Apr 2014	May 2014	June 2014	Jul 2014	Aug 2014	Sep 2014	Oct 2014	Nov 2014	Dec 2014
Task 2.7.1 Annual Meeting	*1st Annual Meeting*												
Task 2.7.2: Appropriate Assessments, training programme on nature priority topics, subtask a): 3 pilot AAs within the ECRAN region.		*Pilot sites for AA selected, identification of STEs and participants from the beneficiary countries*	*identification of STEs and participants from the beneficiary countries*		*Screening workshop at pilot AA No. 1*	*Main assessment workshop at pilot AA No. 1*	*Main assessment workshop at pilot AA No. 1*	*Main assessment workshop at pilot AA No. 1*	Main assessment workshop at pilot AA No. 1	*Main assessment workshop at pilot AA No. 1*	*Evaluation and IROPI workshop at pilot AA No. 1*	*Evaluation and IROPI workshop at pilot AA No. 1*	*Evaluation and IROPI workshop at pilot AA No. 1*
Task 2.7.2: Appropriate Assessments, training programme on nature priority topics, subtask c): Regional training on the process of designation of potential Natura 2000 sites					*Comprehensive training (preliminarily 3-day long) focused*								

Nature WG Activity 2.7	Dec 2013	Jan 2014	Feb 2014	Mar 2014	Apr 2014	May 2014	June 2014	Jul 2014	Aug 2014	Sep 2014	Oct 2014	Nov 2014	Dec 2014
					on all the require ments of establis hment of the Natura 2000 network								
Task 2.7.3: Design and delivery of Regional Awareness Raising Programme												*Regiona l Awaren ess raising seminar , topic and location TBD*	
Task 2.7.4: Participatory Management Plan		*Nomina tions for pilot sites (protect ed area) received and selectio n made*	*The STE in charge of this task recruite d*	*The STE in charge of this task recruite d*	*Method ology selected and agreed upon*	*Method ology selected and agreed upon*	*MP prepara tion in progres s*	*MP prepara tion in progres s*	*MP prepara tion in progres s*	*MP prepara tion in progres s*	*MP prepara tion in progres s*	*MP prepara tion in progres s*	*MP prepara tion in progres s*
Task 2.7.5: Establishment of Regional Cooperation among		*Search for PAs*	*Search for PAs*	*Organisa tional*	*Foundin g*	*Expressi on of*						Mission 2	

Nature WG Activity 2.7	Dec 2013	Jan 2014	Feb 2014	Mar 2014	Apr 2014	May 2014	June 2014	Jul 2014	Aug 2014	Sep 2014	Oct 2014	Nov 2014	Dec 2014
Nature Protected Areas (NPA)		*from the region interested in networking*	*from the region interested in networking*	*structure proposed and agreed upon*	*meeting of the regional cooperation held, official representatives selected /elected*	*interest to liaison with relevant European networks of PAs*							

Annex 1 Overview of activities envisaged under the Nature WG ToR

Agenda item: Introduction to the activities expected within the ECRAN project under the Nature working group

Nature WG ToR covers the full period of ECRAN (i.e. October 2013 – September 2016).

Overview of the tasks:

2.7.1 Organisation of annual Working Group meetings

Expected outputs:

- bringing together relevant representatives of the beneficiary countries
- discussing the needs of particular countries and the ways how the ECRAN project could address them best
- adopting workplans and other documents
- exchanging information among all countries on progress in the implementation of the work plan discussing bottle-neck and the ways to solve them

2.7.2 Appropriate Assessments, training programme on nature priority topics

Appropriate Assessment (AA) is a legally binding tool of EU MS serving to protection of Natura 2000 network from deterioration and destruction due to uncoordinated implementation of various development plans and projects. It is governed by Art. 6 of the Habitats Directive and almost 40 rulings of the Court of Justice of the EU which are binding for the EU MS. The experience of one of the ECRAN countries (Croatia) has shown that it is feasible to introduce the AA process far before the accession to the EU provided a network of sites equivalent to Natura 2000 exist and nature conservancy staff is well trained on the requirements of the AA. For the time being, in several ECRAN countries there are projects either running or to be launched soon aimed at full transposition of the Habitats Directive including establishment of national ecological networks – future parts of the Natura 2000 network. ECRAN project should complement those projects by providing opportunity to experience and learn from real AAs in the field. Even for those ECRAN countries that are not expected to adopt the EU legislation soon this methodology can be inspiring for their own nature protection policies, and they may decide to voluntarily take over some of the underlying principles of the AA. To this purpose, the first two subtask may serve:

- subtask a): 3 pilot AAs within the ECRAN region
- subtask b): 1 study AA tour to the EU

As mentioned above, the ultimate goal of the AA is to serve protection of the Natura 2000 network. To preparation of future Natura 2000, two other subtasks of this task should serve:

- subtask c): Regional training on the process of designation of potential N 2000 sites
- subtask d): Assessment of readiness of ECRAN Beneficiaries for N 2000 designation

Expected outputs:

- three "participatory" AAs conducted jointly with the beneficiaries: the AA theory is best explainable at practical examples – real assessments led by experienced professionals arranging a hands-on

human dynamics
public sector consulting

This Project is funded by the
European Union

A project implemented by
Human Dynamics Consortium

training of (future) AA practitioners from Beneficiary countries during the entire assessment process

- study tour on the AA to the EU: in many EU MS, the AA has become a routine procedure commonly applied to both major and small projects. At the same time, there are countries and projects where AA is poor or subject to attempts to circumvents the rules. The Beneficiaries should be provided with opportunity to see the AA in real – both good and bad practices, as well as the prerequisites of its functioning – good data on Natura 2000 sites, good national guidelines, authorities in charge.

- regional training on the process of N2K designation: there has been a lot of myths around the preparation of Natura 2000 as well as some confusions with establishment of apparently similar networks like Emerald, IPA, PBA. Also, unrealistic expectations as to the length of the preparatory process have been observed. ECRAN countries belong to biodiversity hot-spots which means there is substantially more natural assets there compared to other parts of Europe; at the same time, their expert capacities as well as financial resources are incomparably power. Therefore, the ECRAN countries need to be provided with clear idea on the data, expertise, time and funding requirements for achieving what is expected under "Natura 2000 network". At the same time they need to be fully and truthfully informed about the consequences of establishment of Natura 2000 network. Training should address all these issues in a way pointing out specificities of the ECRAN region.

- assessment of readiness of ECRAN Beneficiaries for N2K designation: this is a discussion point. The participants will be provided with two options:

a) according to the project ToR, there should be "assessment of status of implementation of N2K in ECRAN beneficiaries and identification of steps towards SPA and pSCI designation". However, this task, strictly speaking, cannot be applied to all ECRAN countries (as Albania, BiH and Kosovo do not have any obligation to prepare Natura 2000 yet) and even for the other countries it can hardly be applied in full: legally speaking, there has been no obligation to establish and designate such types of sites: only fYROM, Montenegro, and Serbia have their legislation partly compatible with EU Nature Directives in this respect. Thus, such an assessment would merely reveal that in practical terms there has been little implementation so far but without any possibility to see the distance to the target;

b) to expand slightly the ToR requirement and to focus on the latter, i.e., measuring the distance to the target – to assess what is needed in particular ECRAN Beneficiaries to meet the target, i.e., to designate Natura 2000 network.

The participants are expected to discuss these options during the meeting and decide on one of them.

2.7.3 Design and delivery of Regional Awareness Raising Programme

Expected outputs:

- four regional seminars organized: the themes proposed in the ToR will be further discussed, specified, and the seminars gradually prepared, starting probably in autumn 2014

2.7.4 Participatory Management Plan

Management plans are considered key documents for proper management and governance of protected areas. They should not only describe the protected sites but above all establish conservation objectives (what is to be achieved as regards particular target features of the site) and propose conservation measures aimed at meeting these objectives in a defined period of time. In the past, many management plans were approached in a descriptive, "scientific" way – as documents produced by experts from outside,

drafted from the theoretical point of view, as "wish lists" without any realistic link to existing capacities, traditional way of management of the areas in questions, and without any regard to local population. Not surprisingly, such management plans often remained "dead documents" in drawers, not used by anybody. The worldwide experience has shown that if the management plan is to meet its purpose – i.e., to serve as a "cookbook" for daily work of the protected area custodians – it should be prepared in a way involving both nature protection staff and the local population into the process of its preparation from the very beginning. Such a participatory process is difficult but in long-term, it pays off: management plan is perceived as a property of all stakeholders who feel its owners; the participatory process itself has an important educational role (the local stakeholders learn about the conservation principles while the protected area staff learn from locals on the history of the "natural" management of the area) and the benefits for both nature and people are much bigger than if this were just a "paper document" perceived as useless formality. The ECRAN project should demonstrate these advantages by its contribution to the process of preparation of one (planned) management plan of a large-scale protected area (envisaged to become a N2K site too in the future) and enable the ECRAN Beneficiaries to learn from this process.

Expected outputs:

- one complete management plan for a large-scale PA prepared in the participatory manner

2.7.5 Establishment of Regional Cooperation among Nature Protected Areas (NPA)

Many protected areas face the same challenges and their staff is trying to find out the ways of addressing them without having an opportunity to discuss their experience with their colleagues from the region. Similarly, certain types of natural management may be identical in different protected areas and there is no need to invent them again and again without sharing the experience with the others. Last but not least, there are some kinds of issues and problems which are being addressed throughout Europe, and the information exchange would be beneficial for protected areas staff. Therefore, an idea emerged to establish a regional cooperation among large-scale protected areas and to link this activity with existing networks of protected areas in Europe. The best way how to address this issue is to be discussed at the annual meeting.

This task has three subtasks:

- subtask a): establishment of the regional cooperation
- subtask b): participation at EU networks annual meetings
- subtask c): 3 training missions to the EU PAs

Expected outputs:

- regional cooperation established
- participation of a delegate at annual meeting(s) of selected EU network
- three weeks of training for 3 x 4 PAs representatives in the EU organised

Annex 2 Proposed way of communication & selection criteria for participants to the events

Agenda item: Discussion and agreement on the working manner within the Nature working group

Action Required: The ECRAN Nature Working Group National Coordinators (NWGNC) are invited to comment on and adopt the document.

Background:

Nature WG encompasses very different tasks which will need operational communication between the Nature Working Group Coordinator (NWGC), Project management and the Beneficiaries. Therefore, a way of communication to best meet the project´s requirements should be agreed by the Nature Working Group (NWG) members.

Contrary to the other WGs, there will be a need for different groups/types of participants to the events conducted under particular tasks. Should the project be efficient and bring real benefit we must secure that the right people will be at the right place at the right time.

1. Proposed way of communication

a) annual meetings

Purpose:

- once a year, bringing together Nature Working Group National Coordinators (NWGNC)
- making principal decisions about the direction of particular tasks
- adopting workplans and other documents

b) e-mail per rollam agreement between the Nature Working Group Coordinator (NWGC) and Nature Working Group National Coordinators (NWGNC) on pending issues

Purpose:

- adopting decisions on pending issues during the period between the annual meetings

c) e-mail communication between Nature Working Group Coordinator (NWGC) and particular Nature Working Group National Coordinator (NWGNC)

Purpose:

- to discuss and operatively resolve daily (emerging) issues/challenges during the project course
- to discuss and agree on the potential lists of participants (both nominal and institutional) to particular tasks/events (where nominal or institutional participation is needed)

d) e-mail communication between the Nature Working Group Coordinator NWGC, project TL and/or Project Director and particular Nature Working Group National Coordinator NWGNC

Purpose:

- dealing with bilateral issues in need of official approval of the Project management

- settlement of problems
- confirmation of nominations for the study tour/training in EU PAs

e) direct e-mail communication of the Nature Working Group Coordinator NWGC with the task nominees from c) above

Purpose:

- daily informal communication with selected nominees for particular tasks/events

f) (circular) e-mailing to the Nature Working Group National Coordinators (NWGNC)

Purpose:

- to keep Nature Working Group National Coordinators (NWGNC) formally informed on the issues agreed with the nominees to particular tasks/events
- to keep all Nature Working Group National Coordinators (NWGNC) formally informed on the course of particular tasks during the year

Note: all emailing correspondence will automatically be copied to the Team leader and Project Director.

2. Selection of participants to the tasks/events – draft criteria:

Proposed way of nominations:

i) Nature Working Group National Coordinators (NWGNC) upon request of the Nature Working Group Coordinator (NWGC) submits their proposals

ii) in cases of unclarity, the Nature Working Group National Coordinators (NWGNC) discusses the nominations with the Nature Working Group Coordinator (NWGC) and/or with the Project management

iii) Nature Working Group Coordinator (NWGC) has a right to exclude a nominee if he/she does not correspond to the task´s requirements, or for capacity reasons

iv) Nature Working Group Coordinator (NWGC) sends the adopted final list of nominees to the Project management

Criteria for participants to particular tasks:

2.7.1

National coordinators – no deliberations needed

2.7.2

Subtask a):

- Representatives of nature protection authorities at central level in charge of site protection
- Representatives of regional nature protection authority in charge of site protection from the region where the pilot AA takes place
- Representatives of EIA authorities at central level (if capacity allows)
- Representatives of regional EIA authorities from the region where the pilot AA takes place (if capacity allows)
- Representatives of nature protection agencies (EPA where NPA does not exist of is replaced by EPA) at the central level
- Representatives of nature protection agencies at the regional level

- Representatives of NGOs devoted to nature impact assessments (if capacity allows; not eligible for funding by TAIEX)

- Persons (academics, private persons or representatives of consultancy firms) already dealing with/seriously interested in nature impact assessment known to authorities of agencies mentioned above (if capacity allows; not eligible for funding by TAIEX)

Subtask b):

- Representatives of nature protection authorities at central level in charge of site protection

- Representatives of nature protection agencies (EPA where NPA does not exist of is replaced by EPA) at the central level

- Representatives of nature protection agencies at the regional level

Subtask c):

- Representatives of nature protection authorities at central level in charge of preparation of the N2K

- Representatives of nature protection authorities at regional level in charge of preparation of the N2K

- Representatives of nature protection agencies (EPA where NPA does not exist of is replaced by EPA) at the central level in charge of preparation of the N2K

- Representatives of nature protection agencies at the regional level in charge of preparation of the N2K

- Representatives of NGOs devoted to preparation of the N2K

- Academics, scientists, experts interested in N2K preparation (recommended/seconded by nature protection bodies)(depending on the capacity)

- Representatives of associations of farmers, foresters, hunters, private landowners (if seriously interested and after consultation with nature protection bodies and NCs) (depending on the capacity)

Subtask d): not relevant

2.7.3

Audience to be chosen later according to the theme of particular seminars

2.7.4

- Representatives of nature protection authorities/bodies (custodians) in charge of large-scale PAs

- Representatives of nature protection authorities at central level in charge of large-scale PAs

- Representatives of nature protection authorities at regional level in charge of large-scale PAs

- Representatives of regional and/or local self-governments (on a selective basis; not eligible for funding by TAIEX)

2.7.5

To be agreed per rollam once the character of regional cooperation has been clarified and agreed

Annex 3 Proposed selection criteria for the pilot site for preparation of participatory management plan

Agenda item: Discussion on the selection criteria for the pilot site for the Task 2.7.4 Participatory Management Plans

Action Required: The ECRAN NWG national coordinators are invited to comment on and adopt the document and to deliver their proposals for eligible sites by the deadline agreed during the meeting.

Background:

As has already been highlighted in the introduction to NWG activities, management planning within the large-scale protected areas should be an activity aimed not only at the product (management plan itself) but also the process of its drafting as during this process all the stakeholders (including nature conservancy staff) learn from each other on the conservation goals, history of the area and its management by humans and needs of local population; it also provides a possibility to jointly identify development opportunities compatible with conservation goals, etc. This type of preparatory process of management plan is called "participatory" as there is not a traditional polarisation between the "loud minority of authors" versus "silent majority of stakeholders affected by the plan" but all the players somehow affected by the plan should, in the end, become its authors and owners. ECRAN project is envisaged to assist in drafting one such a participatory plan. As this should be a real "pilot" exercise providing opportunity to other ECRAN Beneficiaries to learn from this process the crucial issue is the right choice of the protected area in need of such a management plan.

Previous RENA Project identified three possible pilot sites for the future ECRAN management planning activity:

- Dojran Lake (Greece/FYR of Macedonia);
- Shar Mountains NP (Kosovo*/Albania/FYR of Macedonia);
- Una National Park (Bosnia and Herzegovia/Croatia);
- Kopacki Rit/ Gornje Podunavlje (Croatia/Serbia).

However, this does not mean that there cannot be more suitable sites in other ECRAN countries. In any case, before the proper selection of the pilot site, criteria have to be identified and agreed on how to approach this issue. Once the criteria are agreed, Nature WG Coordinators from ECRAN beneficiairy countries will be asked to submit their proposal of possible pilot sites in line with the agreed criteria. The proposed sites will be evaluated and final results communicated and approved by the EC and the beneficiaries.

The ECRAN Project is not intended to fund the whole process of preparation of the PMP. On the other hand, it should not be just an "exercise" but the outcome of this task should be a real management plan, adopted as an official document by the body in charge of the selected protected area. Therefore, a pilot site has to be identified where some prerequisites in terms of legislation, national funding, sufficient number of staff, staff´s willingness to use ECRAN as their own opportunity, good relationships with main stakeholders, municipalities and NGOs, etc., are met. From the ECRAN Project point of view, the pilot site should also be accessible without major difficulties and should also provide enough space for the representatives from other ECRAN countries to participate at the events and learn from the experience gained during the process of PMP preparation.

Proposed criteria

a) National legislation in place asking for management plans for large-scale protected areas (at least optionally)

b) National legislation prescribing the content and procedure of management planning in a way which allows flexibility

c) given protected area is in need of the new (or renewed) MP

d) given protected area is intended as a future Natura 2000 site

e) given protected area has enough biological and ecological data on its target features so that clear conservation objectives can be established (if not yet done in the past)

f) given protected area has its professional staff numerous enough to independently draft the MP (i.e., at least one particular person exclusively in charge of MP preparation – but a small unit would be better) and capable to communicate in English

g) the PA staff willing to learn something new, to gather experience from the others as well as from abroad, and willing to share the process with other ECRAN beneficiaries

h) national/institutional funding of the MP preparation fully secured for coming 3 years (i.e., ECRAN + TAIEX would only fund the extra costs brought about by the participatory process)

i) there are no striking conflicts between the PA and surrounding (or nested in) municipalities

j) long-term cooperation between the PA staff and surrounding (or nested in) municipalities exist

k) given protected area is accessible from the capital by public transport within one day maximum

Advantage:

m) given protected area is a transboundary one. However, then all the above mentioned criteria must apply for both PAs, plus there is one additional criterion:

n) there must be free movement (even though the passport check may be needed) between both transboundary PAs within those areas for both their staffs as well as ECRAN experts from abroad.

Another advantage would be:

o) meeting/lodging space owned/run by the given protected area enabling to arrange the meetings/trainings for the ECRAN experts/beneficiaries for low or zero costs.

Proposal for candidate site for Task 2.7.4 Participatory Management Plan	
Country:	
Full name of the site and its category according to national law:	
Basic administrative description of the site (area, year of designation, location of headquarters, approx. No of staff, etc.):	
Contact to the person(s) in charge of management planning (or main contact person):	
Basic ecological/conservation description of the site (1 – 5 sentences describing the reason why the site was designated, if it is mountainous/lowland/other, etc.):	
Reason why the site will /could be a N2K site (e.g. Emerald site, IBA, …):	

Agreed criteria

(please fill in each line; indicate + / - or provide a very brief description in the right hand column)

a) National legislation in place asking for management plans for large-scale protected areas (at least optionally)	
b) National legislation prescribing the content and procedure of management planning in a way which allows flexibility	
c) given protected area is in need of the new (or renewed) MP	
d) given protected area is intended as a future Natura 2000 site	
e) given protected area has enough biological and ecological data on its target features so that clear conservation objectives can be established (if not yet done in the past)	
f) given protected area has its professional staff numerous enough to independently draft the MP (i.e., at least one particular person exclusively in charge of MP preparation – but a small unit would be better) and capable to communicate in English	
g) the PA staff willing to learn something new, to gather experience from the others as well as from abroad, and willing to share the process with other ECRAN beneficiaries	
h) national/institutional funding of the MP preparation fully secured for coming 3 years (i.e., ECRAN + TAIEX would only fund the extra costs brought about by the participatory	

process)	
i) there are no striking conflicts between the PA and surrounding (or nested in) municipalities	
j) long-term cooperation between the PA staff and surrounding (or nested in) municipalities exist	
k) given protected area is accessible from the capital by public transport within one day maximum	
Advantage:	
m) given protected area is a transboundary one. **However, then all the above mentioned criteria must apply for both PAs, plus there is one additional criterion**:	
n) there must be free movement (even though the passport check may be needed) between both transboundary PAs within those areas for both their staffs as well as ECRAN experts from abroad.	
Another advantage would be:	
o) meeting/lodging space owned/run by the given protected area enabling to arrange the meetings/trainings for the ECRAN experts/beneficiaries for low or zero costs.	
Remarks/message:	

Annex 4 Proposed selection criteria for the pilot AAs

Agenda item: Discussion and agreement on the basic approach to the Task 2.7.2 Appropriate Assessments (1st part)

Action Required: The ECRAN NWG national coordinators are invited to comment on and adopt the document and to deliver their proposals for eligible projects by the deadline agreed during the meeting.

Background:

ECRAN Project envisages three pilot Appropriate Assessments (AAs) conducted in a way corresponding to the requirements of Art. 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.

The AA is a process governed by the provisions of Art. 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive as well as around 30 rulings of the Court of Justice of the EU. Its purpose is to identify plans/projects likely to significantly adversely affect Natura 2000 sites and prevent their implementation. Under specific circumstances, some of such projects may nevertheless be implemented provided strict conditions prescribed by the Directive are met. The ECRAN project will provide its Beneficiaries the opportunity to participate at the AA process conducted in a way identical to the AA in the EU countries.

To achieve this goal, three pilot cases are needed to identify. The ToR has left open if to select three "projects" or three "sites". According to the EU-wide experience, the most useful will be a combination: the Beneficiaries should identify and agree on three suitable projects which, of course, should display some impact on particular sites.

The following criteria were drafted based on best practices from those EU countries known by their responsible approach to the AA. They will be in detail explained during the meeting.

Proposed criteria

A. Project criteria

a) project must be real and realistic in terms of the likelihood of its implementation

b) full technical and technological data on the project must either be publicly accessible, or there must be a project proponent willing to participate at the AA exercise and provide the full project technical documentation (design documents) to ECRAN

c) project must be likely to adversely affect a site(s) to be an equivalent of Natura 2000

d) ideally, project should have both direct and indirect likely impacts (e.g. a direct land take + emissions/access roads affecting a more distant site)

e) project should be medium-size

f) project should be at the same time eligible for EIA

g) project may have impacts on more than one but no more than on three sites

B. Site criteria

a) Ideally, one future SPA[1], one future SCI[2] with main focus on habitat conservation, and one future SCI with main focus on species conservation (hereinafter: "site") would be needed. It can be sites of national ecological network, Emerald sites, IBAs, or comparable sites meeting the further criteria.

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[1] SPA – Special Protection Area – a site classified according to the Birds Directive serving bird conservation only

b) The site must be clearly defined (boundaries) and mapped (ideally with GIS shape files).

c) The site must have its target features clearly identified and described both quantitatively and qualitatively (for habitat types: mapping within the site ready, areas of all habitats known, quality of habitat occurrences (degree of conservation, representativity) known, national data on these habitat types available (to at least roughly see what proportion of the habitat type in the country/biogeographical region is embraced by the site); for species: similar parameters focused on population/metapopulations available) in a detail required by the Natura 2000 Standard Data Forms (2011 version).

d) The data under c) must be underpinned by recent field research (not compilations from ancient literature only) – as one of the stages of the AA is to check these data in the field.

e) The site should be medium-size, with not too many target features potentially affected (up to 10 maximum).

f) There should be no overlap of the SPAs and the SCIs.

g) Ideally, the site should have a devoted and interested custodian (body) willing to participate at the AA exercises and to assist with logistics (advantage).

C. Additional criteria

a) Project should be close to the capital or at least have a good public transport access from the capital (or a city with international airport) within less than 3 hrs drive.

D. Advantage

Project should be of the type causing biggest concerns from the nature protection point of view in the given country.

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[2] SCI – site of Community Importance – a site designated according to the Habitats Directive for selected types of natural habitats from Annex I and/or selected species from Annex II

Proposal for the pilot AA under Task 2.7.2	
Country:	
Name of the project and project holder (proponent):	
Approximate location of the project:	
Future N2K sites (or their equivalents) likely to be affected by the project (names, categories – future SPA, future SCI):	
Contact person(s)(if appropriate):	
Agreed criteria (please fill in each line; indicate + / - or provide a very brief description in the right hand column)	
A. Project criteria	
a) project must be real and realistic in terms of the likelihood of its implementation	
b) full technical and technological data on the project must either be publicly accessible, or there must be a project proponent willing to participate at the AA exercise and provide the full project technical documentation (design documents) to ECRAN	
c) project must be likely to adversely affect a site(s) to be an equivalent of Natura 2000	
d) ideally, project should have both direct and indirect likely impacts (e.g. a direct land take + emissions/access roads affecting a more distant site)	
e) project should be medium-size	
f) project should be at the same time eligible for EIA	
g) project may have impacts on more than one but no more than on three sites	
B. Site criteria	
a) Ideally, one future SPA, one future SCI with main focus on habitat conservation, and one future SCI with main focus on species conservation (hereinafter: "site") would be needed. It can be sites of national ecological network, Emerald sites, IBAs, or comparable sites meeting the further criteria.	
b) The site must be clearly defined (boundaries)	

and mapped (ideally with GIS shape files).	
c) The site must have its target features clearly identified and described both quantitatively and qualitatively (for habitat types: mapping within the site ready, areas of all habitats known, quality of habitat occurrences (degree of conservation, representativity) known, national data on these habitat types available (to at least roughly see what proportion of the habitat type in the country/biogeographical region is embraced by the site); for species: similar parameters focused on population/metapopulations available) in a detail required by the Natura 2000 Standard Data Forms (2011 version).	
d) The data under c) must be underpinned by recent field research (not compilations from ancient literature only) – as one of the stages of the AA is to check these data in the field.	
e) The site should be medium-size, with not too many target features potentially affected (up to 10 maximum).	
f) There should be no overlap of the SPAs and the SCIs.	
g) Ideally, the site should have a devoted and interested custodian (body) willing to participate at the AA exercises and to assist with logistics (advantage).	
C. Additional criteria	
a) Project should be close to the capital or at least have a good public transport access from the capital (or a city with international airport) within less than 3 hrs drive.	
D. Advantage	
Project should be of the type causing biggest concerns from the nature protection point of view in the given country.	
Remarks/messages:	

Annex 5 Draft ToR for the NPA Network/Cooperation platform

Agenda item: Discussion on the approach to the Task 2.7.5 Establishment of Regional Network of NPAs

Action Required: The ECRAN NWG national coordinators are invited to thoroughly discuss the issue, decide on the form of regional cooperation, and recommend the way in which further key documents should be developed.

Background:

The good cooperation between the PAs which has started in the RENA should be continued in ECRAN with the more official networking of the PAs. So far very little contact between PA staff in different beneficiary counties (even in cross-border areas) has been observed.

The aim of ECRAN is to support establishment of a sort of cooperation network or platform with regular meetings, recommendations and conclusions.

However, before such cooperation can be established, some key questions should be answered, e.g.:

i) the purpose of such regional cooperation: information exchange? Discussion on common problems? Learning of new trends from abroad? Focus on conservation management or rather on governance and financing?

ii) should the focus be in "national protected areas issues" or "Natura 2000" issues (these views may be even contradictory!)

iii) what form would best fit – a simple regional platform with less formal structure, or an organisation with more robust structure but also more demanding in terms of organisational capacities and funding?

The answers to these questions are expected to ensue from the discussion at the Annual Meeting.

Expectations

Establishment of the Regional Cooperation of Nature Protected Areas will further include the following steps:

1. Identification of PAs that would be interested in active participation and further coordination with other PAs in the region and in the EU;

2. Depending on the interest expressed, establishment of ECRAN Protected Areas Cooperation (platform or network);

3. Establishment of collaboration with similar networks, e.g.: ENCA Network (http://encanet.eu/home/); Pan Parks Network, (http://www.panparks.org/); EuroParc Federation (http://www.europarc.org/home/); GreenForce. (http://www.greenforce.org/); Dinaric Arc Initiative (http://www.dinaricarc.net/dai.html).

4. Following the establishment of collaboration with the above listed similar networks, ECRAN Secretariat will provide support to the following activities:

⎯ Attendance of one ECRAN PA Cooperation representative to the plenary meetings of the similar networks (where applicable). This representative should have the assignment to provide specific and relevant (added value) input to that network meeting and also to identify specific information of added value to ECRAN PAs. The representative will be obliged to properly report back to ECRAN.;

‒ Organisation of up to three annual meetings with Park Managers, including the representatives of the identified similar networks with whom the collaboration has been established (see step 3). The proposed meeting themes (to be confirmed) would be the following:

Meeting 1: Increase capacity for protection of big mammals (wolf, lynx, bear)

Meeting 2: Management Planning and Implementation

Meeting 3: Migratory birds

‒ Organisation of training missions to the EU on National Parks and Natura 2000 management. Staff from National Parks will be given the opportunity to participate in a one-week training at a competent authority implementing the Natura 2000 areas and features in their country. Maximum 12 staff spread over three EU National Parks (i.e. maximum 4 staff per National Park).

Next steps

Based on the outcomes of the Annual Meeting regarding this task, the NWG Coordinator will prepare and submit for adoption to all NCs the draft ToR for the regional cooperation, a proposal of its governance structure, and amend the proposed Work Plan 2014 accordingly.