

Environment and Climate Regional Accession Network (ECRAN)

ECRAN Nature WG Work Plan 2015

January 2015

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ECRAN – Nature Working Group (Activity 2.7)

Introduction

This draft work plan is based on the Nature Working Group (NWG) ToR and aims at proposing activities needed to meet the objectives of particular tasks and sub-tasks. It is presented to the second Annual Meeting of Nature Working Group national coordinators for their consideration and approval. Please note that dates indicated in the work plan for the second half of the year are only indicative, and the final dates will be confirmed couple of months before the event, depending on the coordination of work with TAIEX, availability and readiness of particular experts, availability of the Beneficiaries, as well as on natural and climatic conditions (as regards the field work).

The NCs are invited to provide their comments to the proposed work plan in order to adopt the final version during the annual meeting of Nature WG to be held on 11 February 2015 in Vienna, Austria. 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 work plan covers the second full year of ECRAN (i.e., January 2015 – December 2015).

Task 2.7.1: Organisation of Annual Working Group Meeting

The third annual meeting of national coordinators is envisaged for December 2015; however, the exact date will be arranged and confirmed by the ECRAN Secretariat depending on the availability of the WG members. The objectives of the Annual Meeting will be to provide Nature WG NCs with the report on Nature WG activities implemented in 2015 and to discuss and approve the work plan for the last year of the ECRAN project.

No.	Date	Key outputs
1	December 2015	Annual Meeting of NCs

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

- subtask 2.7.2A: 3 pilot AAs within the ECRAN region.

A. Pilot Appropriate Assessments in ECRAN countries

In 2014 three pilot locations were agreed and the Appropriate Assessment (AA) pilot programmes started in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. ECRAN SSTE expert Vlastimil Kostkan(CZ) was recruited and contracted for leading the field work activities, participation and providing key input at the workshops as well as presenting the results of the pilot assessments.

Each programme consists of the following stages at every pilot location:

1. Visit to the pilot site, introduction to the project and project description

2. The first ("screening") subregional AA workshop (theory of AA, theory of AA screening, pilot project screening)

3. Field main Appropriate Assessment

4. The second ("main assessment") subregional AA workshop (theory of main assessment, main pilot assessment Step-by-Step, theory of Art. 6(4) Habitats Directive).

The first two stages listed above were implemented in 2014. The last two stages are going to be implemented in 2015. During April and May 2015, SSTE Kostkan will conduct the main field assessment at each pilot site.



The exact dates and schedule for the main field assessment for each of the pilots will be communicated to the Nature WG NC in each of the pilot site *host country* providing them with the opportunity to join SSTE Kostkan during his field work. The purpose of the SSTE Kostkan's field work is to carry out the assessment in order to "feed" the second workshop with real pilot site data. Subsequently, the second subregional workshop in each pilot country will be organised in June 2015 (Turkey) and in September – October 2015 (Serbia and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

ECRAN countries are invited to delegate the same participants to the 2nd workshop as to the 1st one in order to maintain continuity. However, they are not prevented from delegating additional participants in reasonable numbers if they find it useful.

No.	Date	Key outputs
1	April 2015	Main AA in the field at pilot locations in Serbia and Turkey (SSTE
		V. Kostkan). Participation of dedicated staff from the host country
		on their own costs and responsibility possible.
2	May 2015	Main AA in the field at pilot location in Macedonia (SSTE V.
		Kostkan). Participation of dedicated staff from the host country
		on their own costs and responsibility possible.
3	June 2015	The second (main assessment) AA subregional workshop in
		Ankara, Turkey. Main participation: Turkey, optional: all other
		ECRAN countries
4	September -	The second (main assessment) AA subregional workshop in Novi
	October 2015	Sad, Serbia. Main participation: Serbia, Montenegro and BiH,
		optional: all other ECRAN countries.
		The second (main assessment) AA subregional workshop in
		Kavadarci/Skopje (tbd), Macedonia. Main participation:
		Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, optional: all other ECRAN countries

B. Study tour to the EU

The ToR of the ECRAN project envisages as an *optional* activity a study tour to EU MS, aimed at practical training in AA. However, AA is a procedure which is routinely executed within the EU MS depending on the requests from the investors and the course of EIAs (with which AA is mostly merged). Therefore, it cannot be predicted when and what is going to be dealt with in any EU MS. In addition, there are up to 90 different approaches to the AA across the EU: main aim of the task 2.7.2A is to present ECRAN beneficiaries with a synthesis of the best practices across the EU while only minority of them can be observed at a single place. AA including the permitting procedure takes from several months to several years, hence during one week study visit, participants would be able to see only the documents submitted to authorities and decisions of those authorities.

Taking the above into account, project team finds the implementation of such study tour not feasible and redundant and propose to the Nature WG members to remove this task from the work plan for the remaining period of project implementation.

- subtask 2.7.2C: Assessment of readiness of ECRAN Beneficiaries for N 2000 designation

This task was successfully launched in all ECRAN beneficiary countries in 2014. The Natura 2000 ECRAN/TAIEX expert (Michael Hošek) visited all ECRAN countries and presented the methodology. The first set of documents was provided to SSTE Hosek following his first missions to each of the beneficiaries. In 2015, the following activities are planned to be implemented:



- Consultation missions to each of the beneficiary countries in order to discuss the data received so far as well as any additional documents and other issues needed for further assessment (generally a one-week mission to each of the beneficiary countries in the period February – May 2015);
- Preparation and delivery of the first draft country assessments and their submission to individual countries for internal discussion (deadlines to be agreed between SSTE Hošek and individual countries during his first consultation mission);
- Second round of consultation missions to beneficiary countries in case of gaps or need for further clarification and additional information (September – December 2015);
- Delivery of the pre-final draft of country assessment reports to both individual countries and ECRAN secretariat (December 2015).

ECRAN countries will be invited to comment on the first and pre-final draft country assessment reports. Based on the comments provided, the final reports will be completed in 2016.

No.	Date	Key outputs
1	February - May 2015	Individual country consultation missions of Natura 2000 SSTE
		Hošek to each ECRAN country
2	September -	Individual country consultation missions of Natura 2000 SSTE
	December 2015	Hošek in ECRAN countries – second round as appropriate
		(optional)
3	December 2015	Delivery of pre-final draft of country assessments for in-country
		consultations and comments (feedback expected in early 2016)

Task 2.7.3: Design and delivery of Regional Awareness Raising Programme

Four regional seminars are envisaged under this task. As per the work plan, the implementation of this task is planned to start in 2015 (preparation and organisation of two out of four regional seminars, while the remaining two will be organised during 2016).

Main topics proposed for the first two seminars to be implemented in 2015 are listed below. The first topic was determined based on the requirements of the countries expressed during the workshops implemented in 2014. The second proposed topic reflects one of the most important topics for nature conservancy in general and is very relevant for ECRAN region remarkable by its high biodiversity.

Natura 2000 – from theory to practice (May 2015)

During regional training on Natura 2000 establishment (November 2014, Podgorica, Montenegro) training participants expressed the requirement for follow up training focused on the practical demonstration of major steps and outcomes of the process of building up Natura 2000 preferably organized and delivered in one the EU MS. Such a fully practical training (two days in the field) could be organized in the Czech Republic with focus a.o. on the following issues: delineation of SPAs and SCIs in the field (scientific vs practical and administration perspective); SPA management; SCI overlapping with national protected areas – putting together conservation objectives for different target features; resolving conflicts between conservation objectives; local infrastructure projects and Appropriate Assessment. The options for delivery of such training in one of the EU MS will be checked by ECRAN Secretariat and TAIEX. In case the option is not feasible, the focus and the methodology of the training will be modified to fit the usual requirements of organization in one of the beneficiary countries.

Protected areas in the 21st century (June 2015)

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Protected areas have always been cornerstones of nature conservation – both worldwide and in the EU (Natura 2000 network). Planned regional seminar will have the objective of providing the forum for discussion on some of the most often questions raised in relation to the protected areas, e.g. Do they really meet objectives of recent international conservation policy? Why do we need them? Do we protect them for their intrinsic value for nature or for benefits for society? What is better - centralized or decentralized governance? Wilderness, new wilderness and human-altered ecosystems: what, where, why? Pros and cons of sticking to IUCN protected areas; need for adaptation of national systems before joining the EU. New trends after the 2014 World Park Congress. Added value of ECRAN region to biodiversity conservation in the EU. – Target group for this regional technical seminar will be nature conservation policy makers and protected areas managers from the ECRAN regions.

National Coordinators are invited:

- to discuss this list during the annual meeting
- to propose amendments/changes and, finally,
- to agree on the topics for the 2015 seminars.

No.	Date	Key outputs
1	May 2015	The 1 st regional training seminar held
2	June 2015	The 2 nd regional training seminar held

Task 2.7.4: Participatory Management Plan

In 2014, the pilot site for this task, National Park Alps in northern Albania – was selected and ECRAN/TAIEX expert Sissi Samec (AT) recruited. The process of preparation of Participatory Management Plan started in April 2014 and the last event of 2014 took place in November. In 2015, the following activities will be implemented:

- Stakeholders meeting (April 2015);
- Planning meeting (May 2015);
- Final consultation meeting (September October 2015) provided that all the objectives of previous meetings will have been met; if this is not the case then the consultation meeting will be postponed to 2016.

All meetings took place in Albania as close as possible to the pilot site; the final consultation meeting may take place in Tirana (tbd).

No.	Date	Key outputs
1	April 2015	Stakeholder meeting in Shkodra or Thethi region
2	May 2015	Planning meeting in Shkodra or Thethi region
3	September –	Final consultation meeting in Shkodra or Thethi region or in
	October 2015	Tirana

Task 2.7.5: Regional Cooperation in Strengthening Capacities in Implementation of CITES

Task 2.7.5 initially aiming to be establishment of Regional Network of Nature Protected Areas has been redesigned in order to avoid overlapping and duplication of efforts with WWF and IUCN who established similar network through Association of Dinaric Parks (ADP) (December 2014). Task 2.7.5 has been modified to address the needs of the beneficiaries in a traditionally highly challenging field of international trade in



endangered species – implementation of the Washington Convention (CITES). The amended task is going to build up on the current regional cooperation, involving a number of CITES stakeholders in ECRAN countries (scientific authorities, enforcement authorities etc.). In 2015, two regional seminars are proposed to be focused on focus on 3 main activities:

- 1. general requirements under CITES and the EU wildlife trade regulations -
- 2. scientific requirements under these regulations and tasks of scientific authorities -
- 3. controls by enforcement agencies.

Primary target groups from each beneficiary will be the CITES Management Authority, CITES Scientific Authorities and the CITES Enforcement Authorities. Depending on agreement with the EU commission, it might also be proposed to have one comprehensive workshop on CITES than a dedicated one for scientific authorities.

Planned regional workshops will be prepared and implemented in close collaboration with the European Commission DG Environment Unit for Global Sustainability, Trade & Multilateral Agreements, EC TAIEX and relevant EU MS authorities. Based on their outcomes and evaluation by ECRAN beneficiaries, further follow up activities will be designed and implemented in 2016.

No.	Date	Key outputs
1	May - June 2015	First regional seminar on CITES:
2	October – November 2015	Second regional seminar on CITES:





Summary ECRAN Nature Work Plan 2015

Nature WG Activity 2.7	Jan 2015	Feb 2015	Mar 2015	Apr 2015	May 2015	June 2015	Jul 2015	Aug 2015	Sep 2015	Oct 2015	Nov 2015	Dec 2015
Task 2.7.1 Annual Meeting		2 nd Annual Meeting	2015		2015	2013		2013			2015	3 rd Annual Meeting
Task 2.7.2: Appropriate Assessments, subtask a): 3 pilot AAs within the ECRAN region				Pilot AA Turkey: expert field assessm ent mission Pilot AA Serbia: expert field assessm ent mission	Pilot AA Macedo nia: expert field assessm ent mission	Pilot AA Turkey: second subregio nal AA worksho p			Pilot AA Serbia: second subregio nal AA worksho p	Pilot AA Macedo nia: second subregio nal AA worksho p		
Task 2.7.2: Appropriate Assessments, subtask c): Assessment of readiness of ECRAN countries to Natura 2000 establishment		Consulta tion mission to Kosovo	Consulta tion missions to Macedo nia and Montene gro	Consulta tion missions to Serbia and Albania	Consulta tion mission to Turkey					2 nd round of consulta tion missions	2 nd round of consulta tion missions	2 nd round of consulta tion missions



Nature WG Activity 2.7	Jan 2015	Feb	Mar	Apr 2015	May	June	Jul 2015	Aug	Sep 2015	Oct 2015	Nov	Dec
		2015	2015		2015	2015		2015			2015	2015
Task 2.7.3: Design and delivery of					First	Second						
Regional Awareness Raising					regional	regional						
Programme					awarene	awarene						
					SS	ss raising						
					raising	program						
					program	те						
					те	seminar						
					seminar							
Task2.7.4:Participatory				Consulta	Planning					sultation		
Management Plan				tion	meeting				meeting;	Shkodra,		
				meeting	Shkodra/				Thethi c	or Tirana		
				Shkodra/	Thethi							
				Thethi								
Task 2.7.5: Regional Cooperation					1 st reg.						2 nd reg.	
in Strengthening Capacities in					WS						WS	
Implementation of CITES												



Annex 1 Report on activities implemented under the Nature WG in 2014

The following text is a brief overview of what was done within the Nature WG in 2014. Its purpose is to provide National Coordinators with overall information only; details on particular events can be found in official reports poSSTEd at the ECRAN web page.

Overview of the tasks:

2.7.2 Appropriate Assessments, training programme on nature priority topics

This task consiSSTEd of three independent parts.

2.7.2A Three pilot AAs

In January 2014, three pilot AAs were agreed based on proposals of ECRAN countries – former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. Subsequently the ECRAN expert for AA, SSTE Kostkan (CZ), was recruited and outline of this task elaborated.

In April and May 2014, SSTE Roth and SSTE Kostkan visited all three pilot locations:

- Former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia Strict Nature Reserve Tikvesh
- Serbia protected areas Okanj bara and Rusanda, Vojvodina province
- Turkey Lake Tuz near Ankara.

Pilot locations were studied, field observations prepared, and data and documents needed for preparation and, later, implementation of the pilot AAs were agreed with competent authorities/bodies of the pilot host countries.

It was found that while the Serbian pilot was ready for use for the purpose of ECRAN – there was a real project (even in two alternatives) and two valuable conservation sites envisaged as future Natura 2000 sites as well – the other pilots lacked the prerequisite for the AA, i.e., projects likely to adversely affect the conservation sites (=future Natura 2000 sites). However, such a situation had been expected already and during first Nature WG Annual Meeting held in 2014, it has been agreed that if such a situation would occur ECRAN would fabricate a type of project suitable for the purpose of pilot AAs. Based on that, following fabricated projects were developed:

- for former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia pilot a project of "Ecoresort Tikvesh" hotel, cableway, tourist infrastructure, network of hiking trails, all this set into the real terrain;
- for Turkish pilot a project "cargo airport" consisting of two runways, cargo storage capacity and a new connection (4 lanes) to the adjacent motorway.

In September – November 2014 three "screening" subregional workshops took place, focusing on theory of AA in general and theory of the screening phase of AA in particular, demonstrating to the participants the approach suitable for AA screening illustrated on several examples from abroad and, above all, on the pilots. Each workshop started with the field excursion to the pilot site in order to provide the participants with a flavour of the site and natural conditions.

For practical reasons ECRAN countries were divided into subregional groups around each pilot site; however, it was possible to attend also the other workshops meant for other groups in case of interest. Thus, the very first workshop held in Kavadarci, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was attended by participants from





the host country, Albania and Kosovo^{*1}; the second one in Novi Sad, Serbia by participants from the host country and Montenegro, while the third one in Ankara, Turkey by the representatives of the host country, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo^{*}, Montenegro and Serbia. Experience with AA and AA screening of several EU MS was presented by invited TAIEX experts from Croatia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic.

All three workshops were evaluated as successful and useful by their participants despite some organisational problems especially at the very first workshop (field excursion not meeting its purpose due to refusal of the bus driver to take participants to the location of AA pilot).

2.7.2B Training on Natura 2000 establishment

This one-off activity took place in Podgorica, Montenegro, in November. Regional workshop of a larger scale was attended by all ECRAN countries (including representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina) aimed at presenting the entire process of Natura 2000 establishment from A to Z, describing requirements of the EC and illustrated at carefully selected examples from Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania. In addition, views of international NGOs as well as European Topic Center for Biodiversity (ETC/BD - the main technical body evaluating the Natura 2000 country proposals for the EC) were presented.

This workshop was positively evaluated by all participants who, despite the fact that no follow-up of this particular task was expected by ECRAN ToR, in unison demanded such a continuation. No promise could be given to them by ECRAN but one possible option – a regional seminar under the task 2.7.3 dedicated to field training on Natura 2000 selection and management – will be discussed during the annual meeting.

2.7.2C Assessment of readiness of particular ECRAN countries for Natura 2000 establishment

Nature WG agreed at its first annual meeting that this task would consist of evaluation of the gaps that each of the beneficiary countries has to fill in in order to reach the ultimate goal – establishment of Natura 2000. Subsequently an expert on Natura 2000, SSTE Hošek (CZ), was recruited and contracted partly by ECRAN and partly by TAIEX. Then, SSTE Hošek developed draft methodology for the assessment, based on official documents and approaches of the EC.

In April – June and October 2014, SSTE Hošek and SSTE Roth visited all ECRAN beneficiary countries and their respective institutions responsible for Natura 2000 preparation (except for BiH due to the lack of official nomination of Nature WG Coordinator and hence lack of official contact person for organisation of such a mission), presented the methodology, set the first official contacts and agreed on the working manner. SSTE Hošek will elaborate on the country assessments based on official documents and data provided by individual countries. In 2015 up to two missions to each of the countries will be conducted by SSTE Hošek in order to fill in data gaps and make consultations with administration and technical institutions. Draft country reports will be presented for comments to the respective countries and the EC. Based on the comments provided final country reports will be prepared during 2016.

2.7.4 Participatory Management Plan (PMP)

This task has been very challenging from its very beginning as the ECRAN ToR had envisaged only single pilot in a region consisting of seven countries. Three of them made their proposals: Albania, former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, and Montenegro. After weighing all pros and cons, the selection process ended up with selection of National Park Alps, Albania as the pilot for PMP. In the area of selected pilot site, two NPs

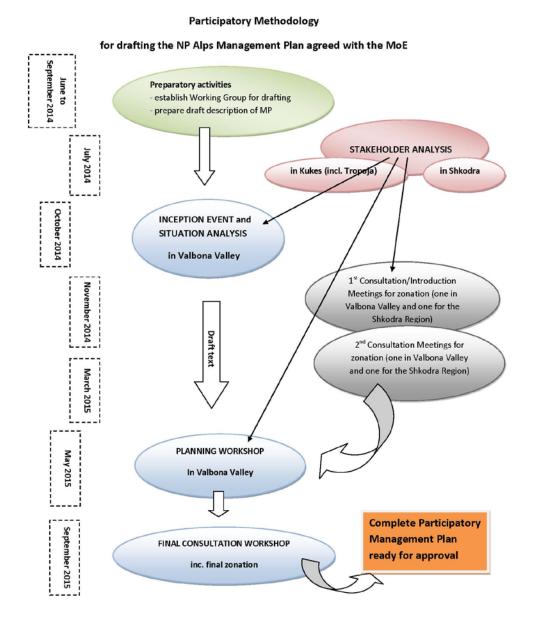




^{*}This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

(Thethi and Valbona Valley) and one strict reserve (Lumi i Gashit) have exiSSTEd for a longer time; since 2008, Albanian authorities have planned unifying and extending these areas into the new national park.

First of all, ECRAN/TAIEX recruited an expert, SSTE Samec (AT), well familiar with this type of work in this region. The first ("screening") mission to Albania, both to Tirana and the NP Alps region, was undertaken by SSTE Samec and SSTE Roth at the very beginning of June 2014. It was agreed with the host country authorities that ECRAN would only add the "participatory" component to the ordinary management



planning secured by the Ministry of Environment. As a follow up, SSTE Samec elaborated the entire work plan for 2.7.4 (see the chart above; timing has been slightly changed) which was agreed with the Ministry, and a month later she started her independent work with two stakeholder workshops in the NP Alps area, one for the Shkodra Region and one for the Kukes/Tropoja Region (July 2014). Both workshops defined values of the

NP Alps and existing and potential threats to the protected

in November: inception event aimed at high-level



area. Other two events were stakeholders (both regional

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and national), and situation analysis workshop. Its main aims were identification of problems and opportunities that the management plan should address, agreement on a vision with reference to the concrete values, decision on long-term (20 - 25 years) objectives for the NP and identification of data gaps.

On one hand, the task 2.7.4 has been facing many unexpected difficulties. The management plans for existing three protected areas in the region, completed (by coincidence) in July 2014, do not correspond to the requirements of both the Ministry and the stakeholders. Preparation of the new draft zoning promised by the Ministry during 2014 has not started yet; instead, Ministry have been negotiating with German foreign aid company that they would take over this partial task. Immense logistical difficulties have occurred due to the fact that the Alps region is that remote and road network that poor that some of the participants cannot get to the venue of the events. On the other, this ECRAN activity is the first opportunity for the local stakeholders and inhabitants to be taken seriously during conservation planning – it seems that the "participatory approach" fully meets its purpose in much wider extent than originally expected, as nicely described by one of the key stakeholders² (it is really worth reading!).

2.7.5 Establishment of Regional Network of Nature Protected Areas (NPA)

Options for establishment of Regional Network of Nature have been assessed during 2014 and resulted with the need to modify the task in order to avoid overlapping and duplication of efforts with the Association of Dinaric Parks (ADP), established in December 2014 under the cooperation of WWF and IUCN.

² <u>http://www.journeytovalbona.com/something-new-is-happening-the-albanian-national-park-of-the-alps/</u>









Annex 2 Proposed structure of country reports under 2.7.2C





Assessment of State of Implementation and Identification of Steps Towards SPA and pSCI Designation in

ECRAN (Environment and Climate Regional Accession Network) Subtask 2.7.2C



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ecutive Summary

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7.2.1. Reference list



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- 7.2.2. Roadmap of the pSCIs for species proposal
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