

TODAY AND TOMORROW OF THE EU FUNDS

NGO Seminar on Structural and Cohesion Funds

Organised by Heinrich Boell Foundation, Friends of the Earth Europe, CEE Bankwatch, in cooperation with WWF, BirdLife International, Milieukontakt and EEB

Session 6: How to influence more effectively? – NGO coalitions
WWF Germany – Germany-Poland twinning and cooperation activities
Peter Torkler, WWF

WWF Germany, a short review of past activities - from maps – via projects – to policy

WWF Germany has a long track of cooperation activities in Poland. Over the past 8 years most of these activities were focussed along the German Polish border where hundreds of kilogram scientific work and maps have been edited in order to obtain an objective picture of the natural values of the Odra river on both sides of the Polish German border.

WWF developed a nature conservation concept for the Odra – Neisse region alongside the whole stretch of the German Polish border.

It was the very first time that Polish and German NGO representatives and scientists were sitting together in order to unify the data available on the most valuable biotopes and rare species of flora and fauna in the Odra region. By the end of the project about 100.000 ha of new protected areas were designated on the Polish side.

At this time in 2000 we first started to talk about the need to include the opportunities given by EU nature conservation law and EU agriculture policy in order to find mechanisms how to manage the most valuable areas in future. The reactions of our partners were very astonishing – none of them whether NGOs neither scientists wanted to deal with EU related issues on a local level.

This was a clear indication for WWF that firstly capacity building and secondly policy work needed to be pushed very much :

First as regards capacity building WWF Germany developed several activities concerning agriculture issues. Our aim was to give maximum support to Polish partners by building on existing experience from Germany and especially from the New Bundesländer.

For example a joint project was developed with IUCN Poland called “Integration of nature conservation into agriculture policy”. In order to emphasise the transboundary cooperation idea we secured funding from both sides: the German federal ministry for environment and the Polish national fund for environment.

A second project aimed at cooperation with six local NGOs along the Odra dealing with sustainable regional development.

Second the aim to enhance policy work was one of the reasons why we established in 2000 a project office in Warsaw which only two years later already had a strong policy staff working on agriculture, freshwater issues and other EU policies including NATURA 2000 and now is a fully operational national WWF programme office for Poland.

New challenge for policy work structural funds

WWF has been active in monitoring the use of EU funds for many years, playing an important role in the revision of the Structural Funds Regulation in 1999. WWF work on this issue resulted in the development of a network of experts and NGOs monitoring the

implementation of Structural Funds policy and being able to raise awareness on positive examples using these funds as well as negative examples of projects damaging the environment. In addition, WWF has worked to promote the EU linking the allocation of structural funds with the implementation of nature conservation legislation.

The WWF mission is to stop, and eventually reverse, the accelerating degradation of our planet's natural environment, and to help to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. Understanding regional planning processes and their impact as well as preparing a strong group of NGO partners participating in and monitoring the policy development is crucial for the achievement of this goal.

Looking under this angle towards the New Member states and the future of cohesion policy, it is obvious that EU funds will have a major impact on the future of nature conservation: Firstly concerning possibilities to manage protected areas as discussion on financing Natura 2000 shows, secondly concerning the need to avoid investments that are threatening the environment and thirdly to foster new approaches supporting sustainable development.

The WWF network across Europe is currently developing a structure to influence the future cohesion policy. We are putting together a team of WWF staff working in new and old member states dealing with structural funds.

Currently the focus of WWF Germany is to develop a proper working structure in Poland and to support WWF Poland in establishing enough capacity to work continuously on the structural funds.

Once established we hope to expand these activities jointly with all interested NGO partners across Europe.

Where we are at: WWF Germany work on structural funds

WWF as part of the European WWF network is strongly cooperating with all European WWF organisations.

Concerning our common target for the future of EU funds in accession countries we want that:

The Natura 2000 network of protected areas in EU accession countries, potentially covering an area of 18 mio ha, is successfully developed and it's implementation supported by EU funds

In order to meet this target WWF Germany has developed a set of activities aiming to meet the following objectives:

- SF regulations have to meet obligatory all environmental legislation
- Environmental partners are fully participating in evaluation and monitoring of SF programmes and projects
- Programming underlies an objective environmental assessment
- Pilots show best practise and solutions

Realizing these objectives will work only when the right activities are implemented within the next two years, just before the reform of the cohesion policy for the next financial agenda is decided. We have therefore 4 projects in the pipeline that are focussed on Poland in order to use the next years as effectively as possible to truly influence the cohesion policy in Europe:

1. Support and preparation of the woiwodships Lower Silesia and Podlasie for the use of EU Funds for environmental protection and sustainable development through the transfer of experience from Saxony.
 - WWF is partner in this DBU funded and by Sächsische Landesstiftung Natur und Umwelt realised project with the objectives:

- Support and prepare two model regions – Lower Silesia and Podlasie – for the use of EU funds in the environmental sector
 - Transfer the project results into other regions
2. Enhancing NGO capacities to participate in EU policies
 - EU proposal submitted 14.11.2003, to be decided on in 02.2004 with the objectives:
 - Promote awareness and understanding among civil society actors of the role of EU institutions and decision-making processes, particularly with regard to implementation of EU policies and programmes in the accession countries;
 - Promote awareness and understanding of the requirements and mechanisms for consultation of EU-financed projects and programmes with civil society actors in the accession countries, especially with an eye to promoting sustainable development;
 - Develop partnership between NGOs in accession countries and EU Member States, and establish a structure for them to learn from one another.
 3. Financial instruments for sustainable development in an enlarged EU – Transfer of experience between environmental ministries and NGO's in Poland and Germany
 - Proposal submitted to German ministry, polish proposal to be submitted to National Fund with the objectives:
 - Environmental organisations and ministries cooperate in programming, monitoring and evaluation of structural funds implementation and support the integration of environment into SF projects
 - Proposals for the integration of environment into SF regulations are actively supported by New Member States during the reform debate and become part of the new SF regulations for 2007-2013
 4. Sustainable regional development in the Oder catchment
 - Pilot project realized in 2003, model projects to be continued with focus on eco tourism, sustainable use of floodplains and local marketing and the following objectives:
 - Maintain and develop nature values on key areas in the Odra catchment
 - Create and promote models how to develop rural areas linking economic development with nature conservation needs in the first years of EU membership
 - Rise acceptance and gain civil societies support for sustainable development of rural areas

These projects are partly running, waiting for acceptance or in parts under development. Further information can be provided by:

Peter Torkler

Conservation,
 Agriculture and EU-Accession
 WWF Germany
 WWF Berlin Office
 Hackescher Markt
 Große Präsidentenstr. 10
 D-10178 Berlin
 Tel.: +49 30 30 87 42 15
 Fax: +49 30 30 87 42 50
<mailto:torkler@wwf.de>
<http://www.wwf.de>