

REGIONAL ASSESSMENT OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS FROM NATURE CONSERVATION POINT OF VIEW

Rationale of the assessment

The preparation process for joining the EU enjoys priority in Central and Eastern European candidate countries, especially in those likely to access the Community in the first round. The preparation is taking place in several fields from legal harmonisation through institutional development to awareness raising. Undoubtedly one main concern during the preparation process and communication towards the public is the possibilities and amount of EU financial support after the accession.

Member states are obliged to draw up a national (regional) development plan if they wish to apply for EU Structural Funds, which includes a precise description of the current situation, a strategy for achieving the stated objectives as well as indication on how the support drawn from the Structural Funds will be used. Besides the member states also have to submit programming documents, which are generally Community Support Frameworks (CSFs) translated into Operational Programs within the framework of regional Objective 1 (for areas with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) lower than 75% of the Community average). However, they can also draw up Single Programming Documents (SPDs) containing the data included both in the CSFs and in the operational programs. The operational programs (or SPDs) comprise more concrete measures and schedule for implementation.

Thus the national development plans (OPs) / Single Programming Documents (hereinafter the documents evaluated will be referred to as National Development Plans (NDPs) for the sake of simplicity) are crucial for setting out development objectives for the first planning period of 2003-2006, for which substantial foreign contribution can be utilised. These development courses are also adjusted to EU requirements and more or less to the standards of the Community and envisage large-scale developments in several cases. In the light of all this it is beyond any doubt that these plans are particularly important for the future of the country, while taking into account the interconnectedness of sectors and the fields of environment, economy and society, they have major implications for the protection of environment and biodiversity.

Most countries have committed themselves to the integration of environmental considerations into other sectors, as it is required by the Convention of Biological Diversity and the EU Biodiversity Strategy as well as in other agreements and national legislation. Still it seems that this idea has not been put into practice appropriately in any case. The network of NGOs, the Central and East European Working Group for the Enhancement of Biodiversity (CEEWEB) decided to scrutinise this problem with special regard to the implications for nature conservation in the case of such a horizontal document as the NDP. The evaluations have been carried out in nine countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) by nature conservation NGOs. From these countries seven will join the EU in 2004, while Bulgaria and Romania are still in an earlier phase of the negotiations. However close the date of accession is for most of these countries, not every NDPs were finalised and endorsed by the European Commission at the time of the assessment, in these cases the latest draft versions were regarded. In spite of some possible changes to be made after, some general conclusions can be already drawn from these documents before their endorsement.

Preparation of the NDPs, public participation

The Council Regulation (EC) 1260/99 contains provisions for wide consultations during the preparation of the NDPs, nevertheless it was mostly ineffective in terms of watchdogging the incorporation of environmental and more particularly nature conservation concerns into the documents. The preparation of the NDPs for 2004-2006 started rather late, about early 2002 in most countries (though for instance the Czech Republic launched the process in 1999 and sent the first draft to the European Commission in 2001 June). The expedited procedure was also partly the cause of the ineffective public participation in some cases. In Poland for instance the public was only consulted when the NDP was nearly finished, and apart from the involvement of two environmental NGOs the nature conservation organisations were ignored. The preparation of the document started as the drafting of the Polish NDP for 2002-2004, however in the meantime probably also due to the unexpectedly lengthy drafting process the project title changed for 'National Development Plan 2004-2006'.

In Slovakia the consultations were also organised nation-wide, however it proved to be rather formal and insufficient especially in the field of nature conservation. Apart from public participation it can be also pointed out that when the draft Slovakian NDP was sent out to 29 institutions for comments, seven of them (including the umbrella NGO involved in the consultation process) did not react at all, while another seven with the Ministry of Environment among them indicated that they did not have any comments on it.

The example of Poland and Slovakia seems to be rather general in the region: the elaboration of the plan took place under a great time pressure and the public consultations very largely insufficient and ineffective. When we regard the poor results of the nine assessments, it seems particularly necessary that these mistakes are avoided in future planning periods, for which clear timelines and measures have to be set up.

Methodology of the assessment and interpretation of the results

The evaluators involved in the project were provided with a strategic assessment methodology elaborated by Dr Iván Gyulai (Director of the Ecological Institute for Sustainable Development, Miskolc, Hungary) specifically for evaluating NDPs from nature conservation point of view. The methodology builds upon a questionnaire embracing about 100 points within different topics (situation analysis, the effect of NDP on the environmental awareness of people, nature conservation, agriculture, mining, forestry, etc.), for which scores are to be given.

Despite this uniform methodology it could not be avoided that some degree of subjectivity affects the results, consequently they cannot be regarded as precise, indisputable evaluation of the different issues. For more precise picture the questionnaire should not be considered alone but only together with the narrative evaluations. Naturally more objective results could be achieved if either the same experts had carried out the assessments of the different national documents or several national independent experts had completed the questionnaires and the average of them could have been taken. Unfortunately however this international project did not allow these methods due to time and financial constraints.

Nevertheless as the outcomes typically show that the documents do not meet biodiversity expectations, we do think that the general picture is very much revealing and provides information on the expected tendencies, threats or just the opposite, opportunities resulting from the NDPs.

Evaluation of the NDPs

Even though transition towards sustainability is (also) required by the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, this is not realised in practice in the present member states, let alone secured in NDPs of candidate countries. On the whole it can be stated that the main focus of NDPs is on increasing competitiveness. In the Hungarian NDP the major goal has been identified as increasing the quality of life, however its interpretation has degraded to be the synonym of economic well-being. In Hungary (at least) the aim during the preparation of the NDP was first of all to gain access to EU Funds, and this attitude can be also perceived from the document.

The principle of prevention is not taken as a basis, rather the end-of-pipe solutions are favoured in problem tackling in almost every case. The cross-sectoral cooperation is not ensured sufficiently either (as it can be seen for instance in the case of Hungary).

Situation analysis, on which the NDP relies

<i>Has the situation analysis...</i>
examined the level of environmental awareness of the affected people?
explored the availability of environmental information?
explored the possibilities for access to environmental information?
explored the situation of public participation in decision making on environmental issues?
explored the situation and efficiency of the institutional system of environmental education?
explored and assessed the relation of people to their environment?
examined the traditional knowledge and its environmental relations?
examined the state of each environmental element?
completed a natural capital / resources accounts system?
completed an environmental problem map?
examined the environmental effects of present production and consumption patterns?
examined the integration of environmental considerations into other sectoral policies?
examined the environmental effects of the sectors?
explored the agro-ecological potential?
examined the spatial distribution of the existing habitats?
assessed the conflicts of nature conservation with human activities?
explored the ratio of natural / not natural habitats?
explored the factors threatening the coherence of the habitats?
explored the diversity of the starting point (biological, product, cultural diversity)?

Table 1. Questionnaire –Situation analysis

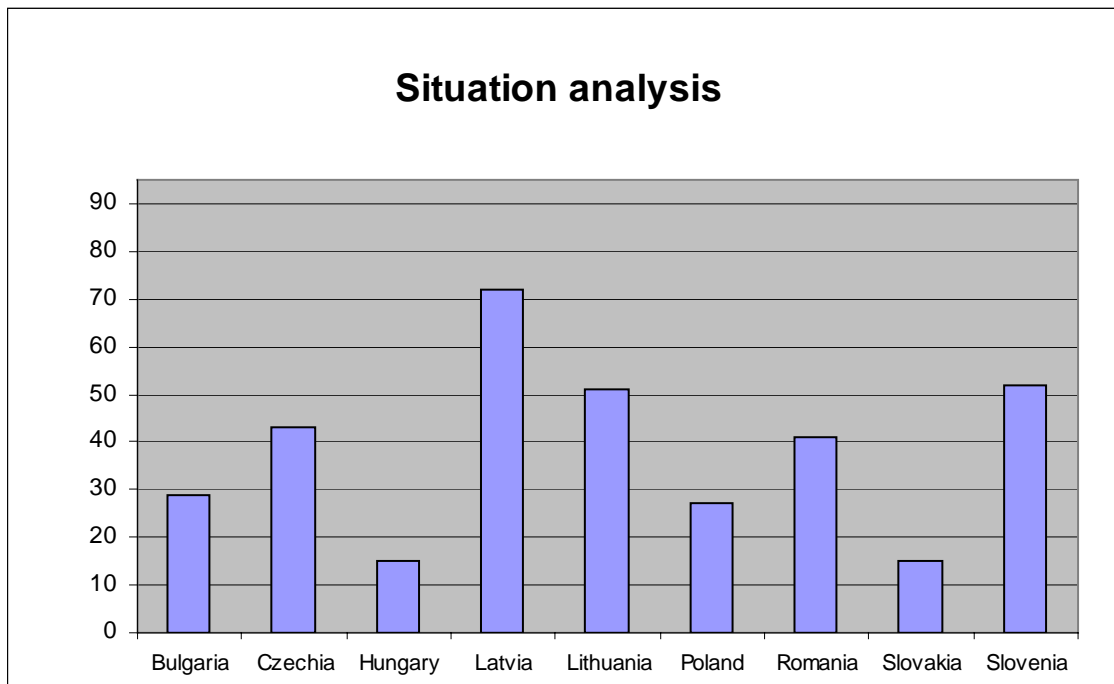


Figure 1. Situation analysis

According to the methodology the NDP is established environmentally if the scores are above the 50% of the maximum (half of 95 scores). Thus it can be stated that only three NDPs (from Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia) are acceptable from this respect, while they are still far from providing solid environmental basis for such a comprehensive document and may lead to severe environmental and nature conservation consequences through the implementation of the developments. (To give an example, the main threats on biodiversity (intensive agriculture, habitat fragmentation, large-scale drainage schemes, unregulated tourism, etc.) were not considered by the Slovakian document at all.) At the same time the Strategic Environmental Assessments completed for the NDPs proved to be largely insufficient in numerous cases.

Effect of the NDPs on the environmental awareness of the people

<i>Environmental awareness</i>
Does the plan integrate the environmental aspects into other sectors, is environmental protection emphasised sufficiently?
Is there institutional development connected to expanding the environmental knowledge?
Does the plan contain elements, e.g. training, publicity, etc., that target the raising of environmental awareness of the affected people?
To what extent does the plan rely on local cultures, traditional knowledge?
Does the plan provide public participation on decision-making on environmental issues?
Was strategic environmental assessment completed for the plan?
Is there a system measuring and assessing the environmental affects of the plan, which could provide feedback for the affected people?
Does the plan rely on the immaterial services provided by the environment, the local community?
Does the plan deal with cross-border environmental issues?
Does the plan deal with the preservation of the coherence of habitats?
Does the plan comply with the environmental legislation?

Has an environmental risk assessment connected to the plan been completed?
Has the plan elements targeting the aversion of environmental risks?
Do the beneficiaries of developments have to pay for the use of natural resources, do they participate in the preservation of natural resources, tourist attractions and natural values?

Table 2. Questionnaire – Effect of the NDPs on the environmental awareness of the people

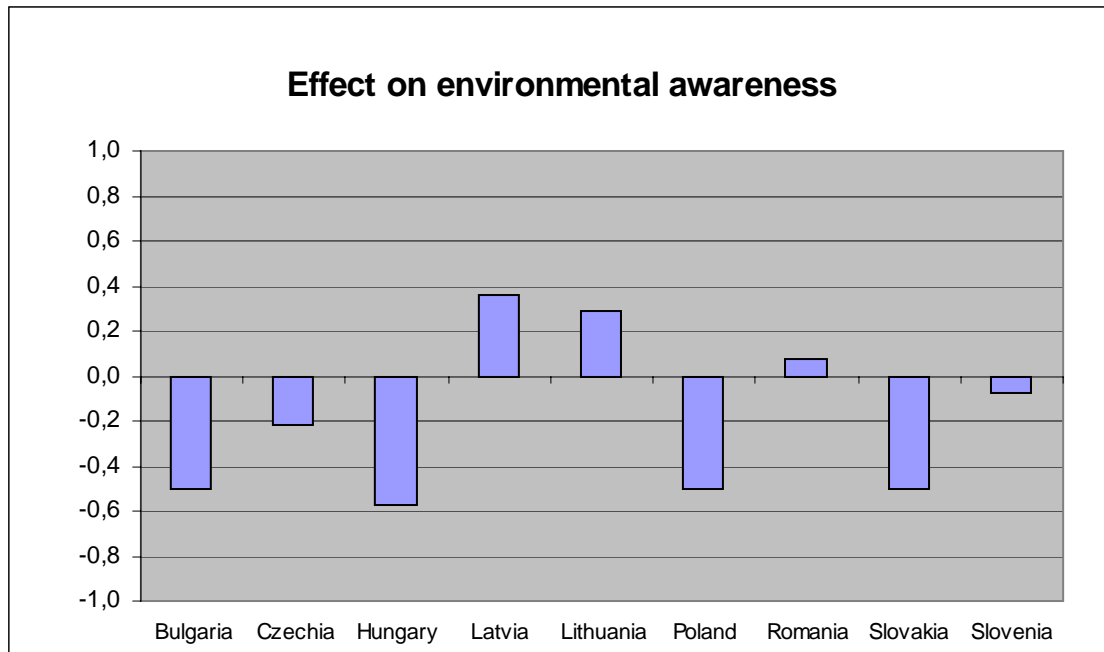


Figure 2. Effect of the NDPs on the environmental awareness of people

In our approach the plan is unacceptable if its implementation has an adverse affect on the environmental awareness of people. Though officials often point out the importance of environmental consciousness, apart from direct-targeted campaigns the implementation of such horizontal documents is outstandingly important due to its large influence in several fields and the great attention paid to it. Consequently its role as an awareness-raising tool through environmental integration, public participation in environmental issues etc. should not be underestimated, but dealt with according to its actual significance.

However as it can be anticipated on the basis of our results, in about two-third of the countries the plan conveys false attitude from the side of decision-makers, which does not help transition towards sustainable development in this respect.

However there are also good examples from some countries, which are worth considering by others as well. For instance the Lithuanian plan includes the strong principle of ensuring active partnership on national, regional and local levels and seeks consensus on key issues in the process of planning and implementation among social, economic and governmental partners and other competent institutions (academic institutions, etc.). As another incentive for sustainable development, the Romanian plan greatly relies on local cultures and traditional knowledge.

Effect of NDPs on biodiversity

When assessing the anticipated level of fulfilling nature conservation expectations in general and in the specific sectors, the scores should be given according to following system:

A measure opposite to the expected is anticipated	-1 score
Entire lack of meeting the expectation	0 score
Meeting the expectation is far too general	1 score
Partial operational realisation of the expectation is anticipated	2 scores
Full operational realisation of the expectation is anticipated	3 scores

In each sector the plan is regarded as acceptable, only if the average of the scores exceeds half of the maximum (i.e. 1,5 points).

Especially if the environmental consciousness of the society is at a lower level, the potential threat on biodiversity is great if there are no specific measures securing its protection, as in this case other interests can more easily overwrite those of biodiversity. Hence our expectation is that there should be concrete objectives or measures in the specific issues enlisted in the questionnaire.

General expectations from the plan

<i>General expectations</i>
The plan should deal with the possibilities provided by the carrying capacity and with its rate in the cases of the different resources and ecological systems.
In the plan there should be research and development aims incorporated in favour of the development of the sustainable use of the natural resources.
The plan should take the local ecological fundamentals into account when developing each economic activity.

Table 3. Questionnaire – General expectations from the plan

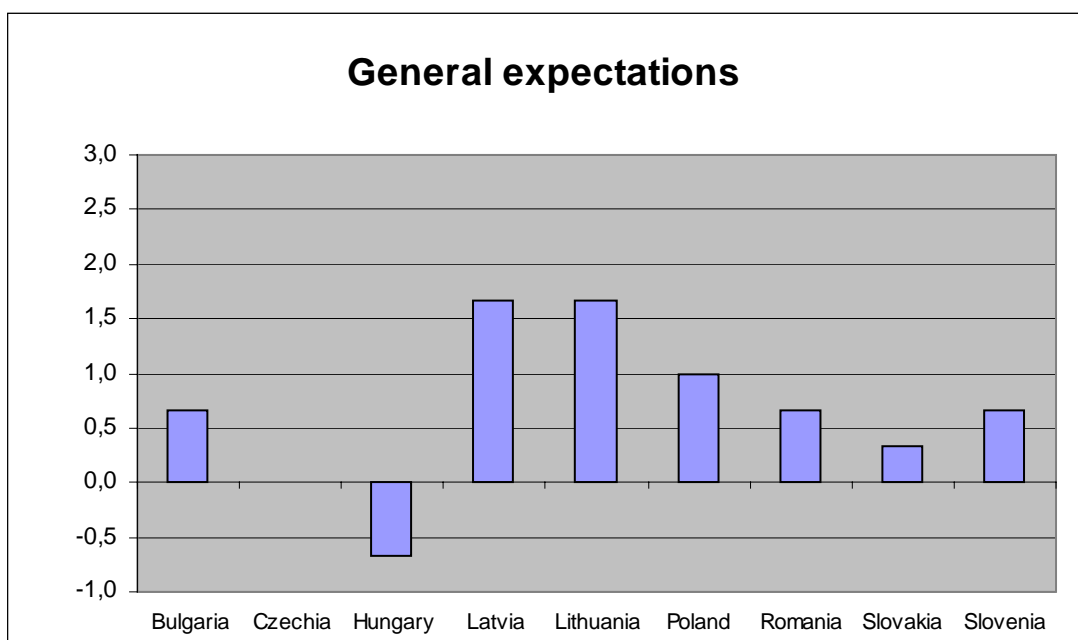


Figure 3. General expectations from the plan

The great majority of the countries did not consider local ecological conditions and carrying capacity when planning future developments, even though their ignorance can easily lead to unsustainable use and overexploitation of natural resources having serious, even irreversible impact on biodiversity. Realising these principles of using natural resources within their carrying capacity and adequately for the local ecological conditions is inevitable for sustainable development. Thus they should be regarded according to their outmost significance in every planning document and took as a basis for every future development.

As knowledge on sustainable resource use is however limited, further research and development plays a crucial role in this field and should be targeted at national level (much more than it can be seen from the NDPs).

Nature conservation

<i>Nature conservation</i>
In the plan the rehabilitation of the damaged ecological systems should be incorporated.
In the plan there should be provisions for establishing the coherence of habitats, for decreasing the impacts of isolation and for the conservation of the ecological network.
The provisions of the plan shouldn't threaten the ecological conditions of the natural habitats.
The provisions of the plan shouldn't endanger: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> –the Ramsar areas–the World Heritage areas –the biosphere reserves –the habitats designated by the Habitats Directive of the EU –the species designated by the Birds Directive of the EU together with their habitats –the nature reserves under national or local protection that have been already established
In the plan there should be provisions for the prevention of the invading species from further spread.

Table 4. Questionnaire – Nature conservation

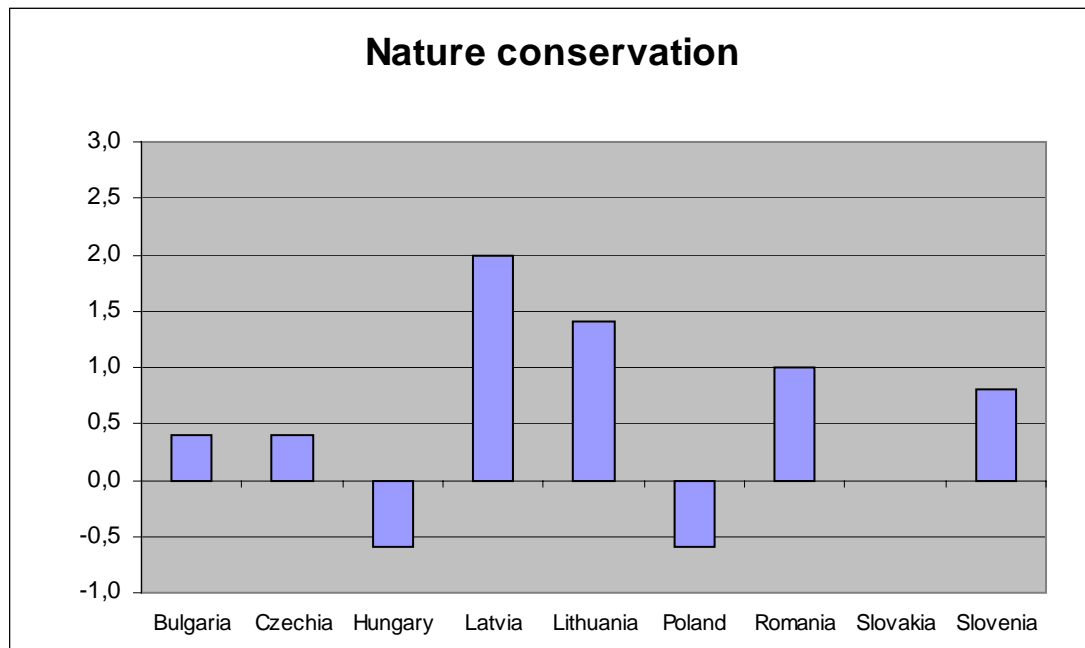


Figure 4. Nature conservation

Nature conservation is largely ignored in NDPs (only one plan out of nine is acceptable from this respect according to the scoring system, which exception is still also very far from the required level). Moreover in countries, such as Hungary and Poland its objectives are almost non-existent, they do not appear in the identification of measures and targets.

In most cases the plans recognise the necessity of the rehabilitation of damaged ecosystems better than they provide provisions to avoid possible threats on them. This shows a regrettably short-sighted attitude, which leads to the consumption of disproportionately more energy and natural resources during the handling of these problems than would the approach to prevent them.

The plans apparently do not consider the fact that nature conservation is only possible practically in network of interconnected habitats. The NDPs do not target to establish the coherence of habitats to any extent, or only satisfy this requirement to an unacceptably low degree. On the basis of the Hungarian and Polish NDPs the further fragmentation of habitats and growing impacts of habitat isolation can be clearly expected from future developments.

Worryingly, in numerous cases there are measures likely to threaten protected habitats and future Natura 2000 sites (only the Latvian document includes sufficient provisions against it). In Slovakia the new waterway development on the Vah river (with new dams, weirs, river bed regulation schemes, etc.) endangers habitats including Ramsar areas and future sites and species designated by the EU Habitats and Birds Directives. The monumental plan of establishing the shipping canal Danube-Odra-Elbe, which is part of the Czech NDP, would ecologically damage these rivers and their floodplains, and endanger many precious habitats under protection at national and international level (for instance Ramsar areas) in the Czech Republic as well as in the neighbouring countries.

The spreading of invasive species is hardly considered (in Latvia alone to some extent) in the documents, though it can be only tackled at higher level, with international cooperation and complex and long-term measures.

However, there are also good initiatives in this field, as is the measure Prevention of Environmental Damage included in the Lithuanian plan, which has a special emphasis on Natura 2000 sites and their preservation, monitoring and management. The supported activities would be among others the preparation and implementation of nature management plans of NATURA 2000 sites and creation of a compensation mechanism for purchasing land plots from private owners to be included into the network.

Agriculture

<i>Agriculture</i>
The plan should consider the agro-ecological potential when planning the land usage and the branches of cultivation.
The plan should care for the preservation of the traditional extensive farming and the establishment of agri-environmental programmes for the ecologically sensitive areas.
The plan should exclude those provisions which aim at the creation of large agricultural fields or / and monoculture farming.
The plan should make provisions for propagating the biological (poor in or free of chemicals) farming.
The plan should provide the reuse of the organic matters through the balance between the plant-cultivation and stock-raising.
The plan should make provisions in favour of producing healthy, full-value food.
The plan should incorporate measures for providing the optimal circumstances for the bred species.
The plan should prefer to draw the adapted, characteristic species of the certain region in the cultivation and breeding which provide a greater agro-biodiversity.
The plan should make measures in favour of the ex situ conservation of the agro-biodiversity.
The plan should contain inspiring factors that increase the multi-aim, multifunctional use of the natural bases.
The plan should establish a system of institutions to develop the complex ecological land use.
The plan should provide the integrated cooperation and conciliation of the interests of the stakeholders of the certain area.

Table 5. Questionnaire – Agriculture

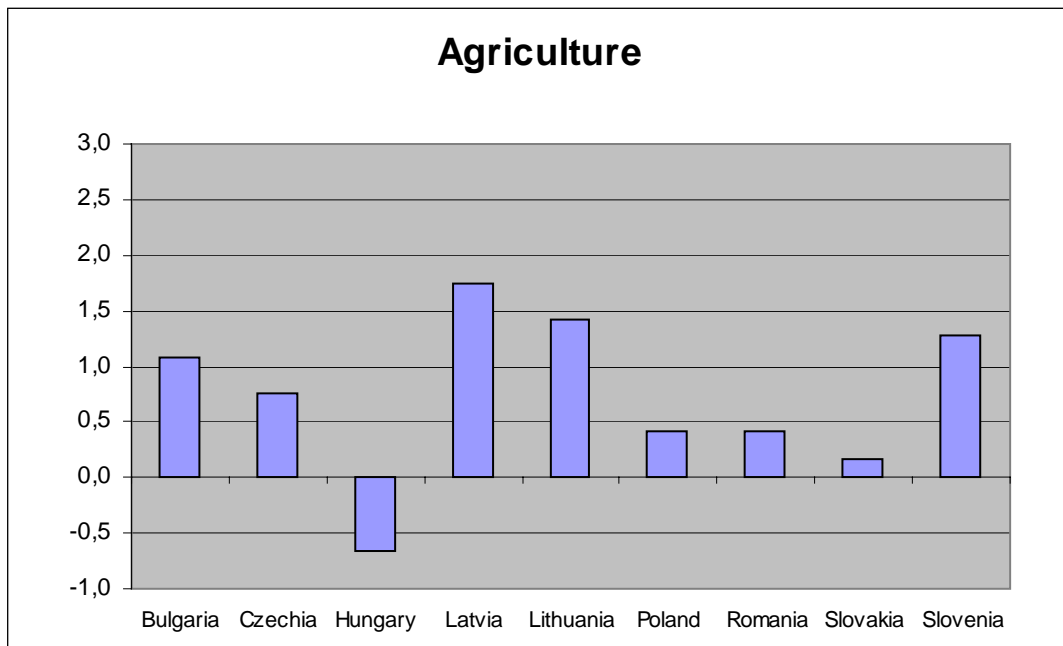


Figure 5. Agriculture

Even though this sector has a considerable impact on biodiversity tendencies and the condition of natural ecosystems, and these connections are widely accepted and studied, biodiversity integration is still not satisfactory even in this field. Even though future changes should target among others biological farming (as it is mentioned in more plans, and most thoroughly dealt with in the Lithuanian one) and multifunctional use of landscapes, preservation of traditional, extensive farming and expanding agro-environmental programs in ecologically sensitive areas (as it is present to some degree in the plans except for the Hungarian, Polish and Slovakian ones) as well the breeding and growing traditional varieties. Producing healthy and full-value food could be regarded as contributing to increasing competitiveness in the market while also a possibility for preserving biodiversity through biological, extensive methods. However its opportunity is generally not sufficiently recognised in the plans. Naturally at every development the agro-ecological potential has to be considered and taken as a starting point, which is not satisfactory almost in any case either.

Counteracting these required desirable tendencies the plans (also) encourage large-scale, mono-cultural farming in some countries (in Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania), and sufficient guarantee is not provided to avoid it anywhere. With regards to seeking cooperation and the conciliation of interests among stakeholders in the certain area, only the Lithuanian plan seems to ensure this appropriately, while this requirement does not or not properly appear in other national documents.

Forestry

Forestry
The plan should favour the conservation and the rehabilitation (if needed) of the forests that have a species composition characteristic of the landscape.
The plan should provide the increase in the forest cover (semi-natural forests) where the potential larger cover is reasonable.
The plan should urge the rehabilitation of the forests with damaged species composition and structure.
The plan should promote the development of the network of the forest reserves.
The plan should prohibit the management of natural or semi-natural forests with not appropriate technologies (e.g. clear cutting).
The plan should promote the multifunctional use of forests, with special respect of the immaterial value of the forests.
The plan should provide that the continuous forests remain untouched and also their rehabilitation if needed.

Table 6. Questionnaire – Forestry

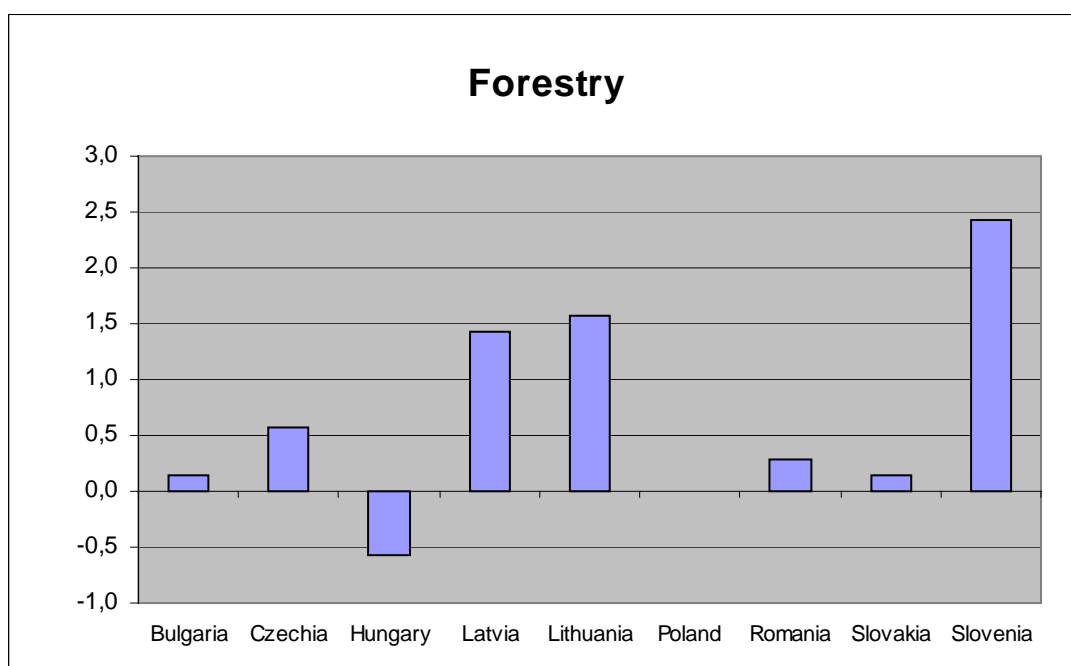


Figure 6. Forestry

The application of unsustainable forestry practices is typical for every country and their replacement is not fully and explicitly targeted in NDPs. In this respect Slovenia is an exception with strikingly positive outlook in the sector for the future compared to other countries and other sectors. Here for instance clear-cutting is not in practice and the plan also proposes developments in line with the existing good technologies, while forests with damaged species composition and structure are not typical for the country either. The only considerable shortcoming also for this country (however a bit better tackled in Lithuania) is the lack of objective to develop a network of forest reserves.

The multifunctional use of the landscape is generally better recognised in the forestry sector than in agriculture, but still not promoted and supported sufficiently. Similarly the nature conservation objective of conserving, rehabilitating or even enlarging the coverage of forests with natural species composition adapted to local conditions and with healthy forest structure is not sufficiently taken into account and aimed in the plans (however better outcomes are expected in Slovenia, Latvia and Lithuania). It can be pointed out, that the Polish NDP does not deal with forestry issues at all.

Water regulation, water management

<i>Water regulation, water management</i>
The plan should adopt the catchment-centric approach of the EU Water Framework Directive and provide the preservation of the water quality as well as the sustainable water supply management in the whole area of catchment.
The plan should connect the activities proceeding in the catchment area to the water quality and quantity management and the flood control.
The plan shouldn't lay down such a water supply use that exceeds the ecological optimum.
The plan should provide a flood-plain of an appropriate size together with the rehabilitation of the plant communities along the rivers to avoid floods.
The plan should make arrangements for the rehabilitation of fresh and still waters to preserve the natural self-cleaning capability of waters.
The plan shouldn't envisage activities that could threaten wetlands.
The plan should deal with the prevention of the potential havarias and the elimination of their occurrence.

Table 7. Questionnaire – Water regulation, water management

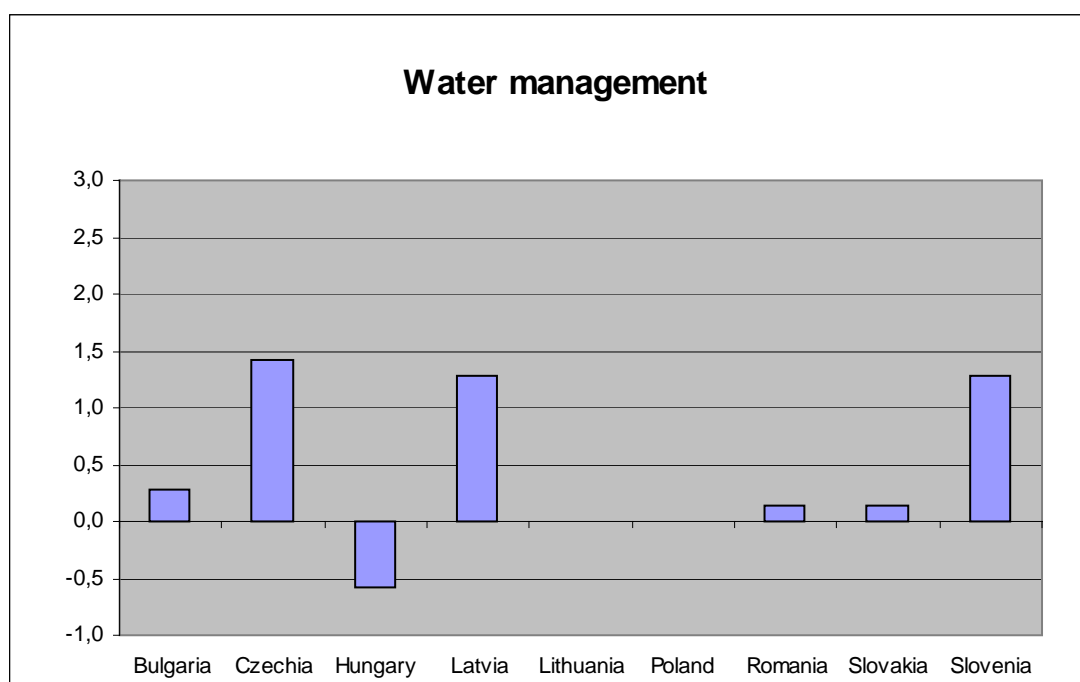


Figure 7. Water regulation, water management

While the Polish and Lithuanian documents ignore this sector, in other countries the adoption of catchment centric approach (also part of the EU Water Framework Directive) is not shown explicitly in the documents. In general the activities taking place in the catchment

area are not connected to water quality and quantity management as well as to flood control either, which however is required by the principle of integration and prevention and necessary for effective and efficient environmental management. Providing appropriately sized floodplains, which would mean an efficient alternative for flood control and at the same time would contribute to preserve biodiversity, is not regarded seriously in the plans, the Czech document deals with this issue still the most sufficiently (but still not provides enough provisions).

In this sector the good example within the Czech plan is worth mentioning, namely the measure “Improvement of the retention capacity of the landscape and revitalisation of small water streams with special emphasise on biodiversity”, which is extremely needed, though unfortunately not only this country. On the other hand the Polish and Lithuanian plans do not deal with this sector at all.

Fishery

<i>Fishery</i>
The plan should envisage the fishery activities suitable for the carrying capacity.
The plan should ensure the rehabilitation of the overused waters.
The plan should make provisions for eliminating the non-indigenous species from the natural water.

Table 8. Questionnaire – Fishery

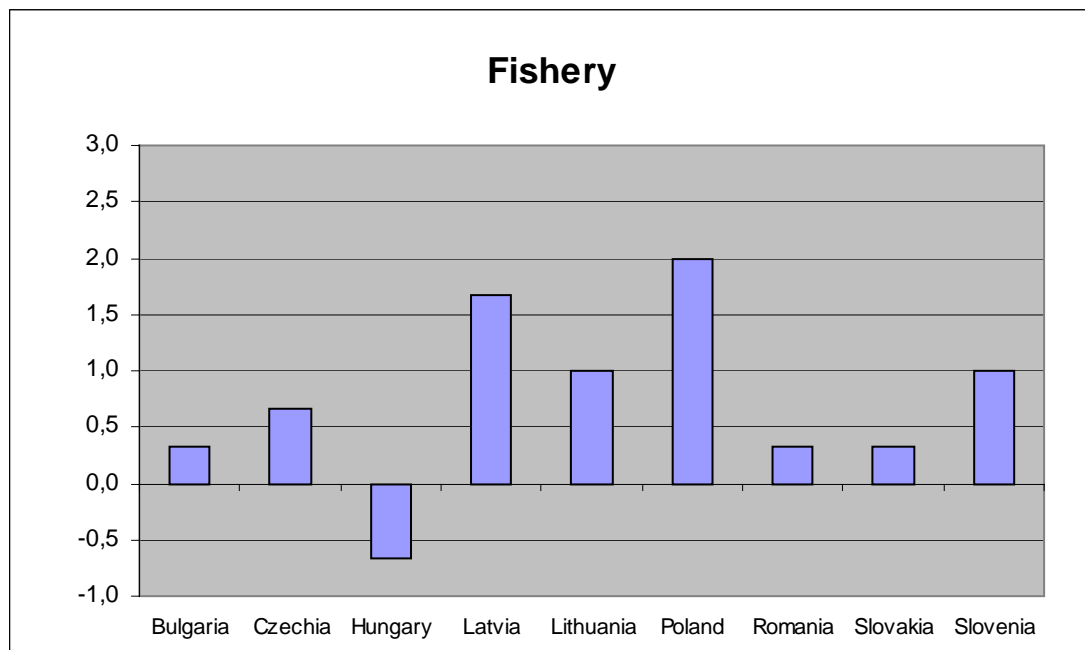


Figure 8. Fishery

The carrying capacity of fishing resources is much more acknowledged in this sector (at least in the countries with marine coast as Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and to a less extent Bulgaria, as well as in the Czech Republic) than in the case of other natural resources, which could be probably connected with the sudden, dramatic and clear drop in the catches experienced in the past century and their awareness raising role. However in most cases the plan still does not alone provide a solid basis for ensuring use within the carrying capacity.

Presenting a good example, the Lithuanian measure on fisheries strongly builds on nature conservation objectives with respect to the restoration of fishing resources and reduction of pollution of waters. To ensure the implementation of the fishing fleet management plan as well as to balance fishing fleet capacities to fishing resources, owners of fishing vessels and fishermen will be encouraged to terminate their fishing activities by allocating respective compensations to them. Nevertheless, modernisation and renewal of the fleet could have a negative effect on fish, their feeding and spawning grounds. The Latvian objectives similarly stress the importance of the sustainable development of fishery. The plan foresees Structural Funds assistance for the adjustment of fishing activities, which means scrapping of vessels in order to decrease fishing effort.

In addition to the carrying capacity, the rehabilitation of overused waters and the elimination of non-indigenous fish species from natural ecosystems cannot be ignored either, however especially with regards to the latter, there are considerable gaps in the documents.

For instance even though the Slovakian plan properly identifies the key factors threatening the fish populations (water pollution, physical deterioration of habitats), there are not specific measures to tackle these problems. There are no provisions to eliminate non-indigenous species from natural waters either, although in some cases this is hardly feasible or not feasible at all.

Tourism

<i>Tourism</i>
The plan should consider the touristical carrying capacity of the areas and avoid the novel environmental touristical load of those areas that have already reached or exceeded it.
The plan should promote provisions for the elimination of the overuse.
The plan should implement touristical development in the buffer-zones of the protected areas.

Table 9. Questionnaire – Tourism

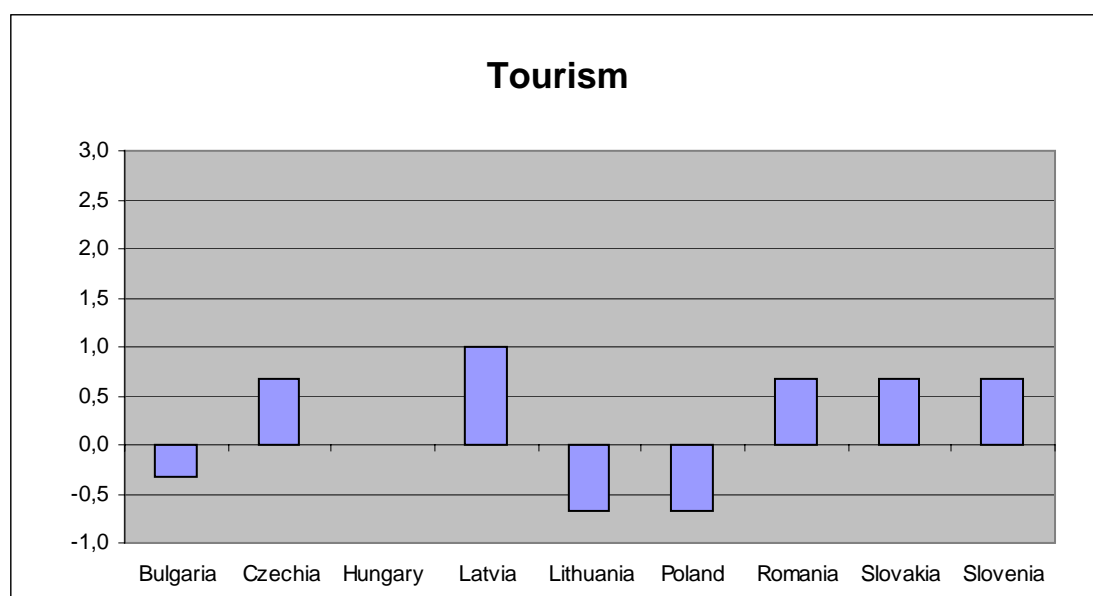


Figure 9. Tourism

While the possibilities lying in sustainable tourism are often not examined at all, the planned tourism infrastructural developments may seriously affect natural landscapes in many countries. The carrying capacity of areas and the concern that the overload of territories where this limit is already exceeded should be prevented are hardly ever considered to any extent. Just on the contrary in more cases the overuse of territories due to the excessive tourism pressure can be anticipated (e.g. Lithuania, Poland). That is also not ensured properly that tourism development should take place in the buffer zones of protected areas.

Mining

Mining
The plan shouldn't support such development that confronts with the current level of protection.
The plan shouldn't effectuate such development in mining that generates ecological changes at the regional or local level (e.g. changes in the water balance).
The plan shouldn't establish such investments in mining, which directly or indirectly endangers the life conditions of species (e.g. toxic materials).
The plan shouldn't lay down such a mining-area rehabilitation in which the natural process of the rehabilitation is damaged or which leads to environmental load.

Table 10. Questionnaire – Mining

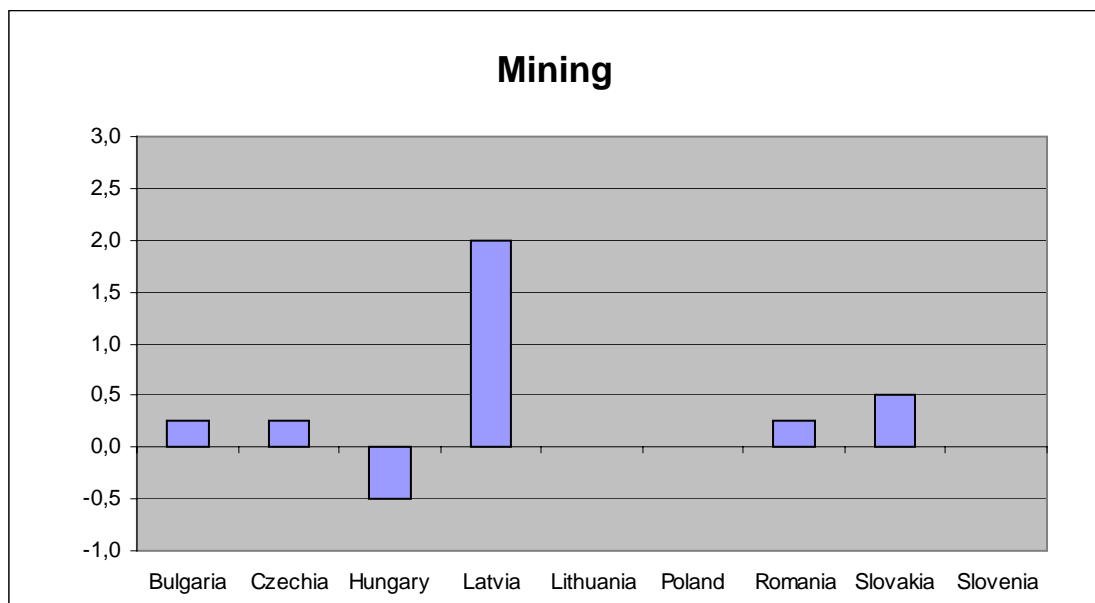


Figure 10. Mining

Though not to the required extent, but the plans generally avoid support that confronts the current level of protection of areas (except for Hungary and Slovakia), while in Bulgaria just the contrary is likely to derive from the implementation of the plan. Similarly the Romanian plan may even cause ecological changes at local or regional level, while in other countries there are no provisions or only some general ones included in order to avoid it.

What is more, the Polish NDP does not deal with the issue of mining (while in Lithuania and Slovenia there are no mining activities planned).

Industry and energy sector

<i>Industry and energy sector</i>
The plan shouldn't envisage such development of biomass-energy aim which leads to plant monocultures (e.g. energy forest, energy grass, etc)
The plan should avoid and prohibit the green field investments.
The plan should inspire the purification of the brown fields from the pollutants and their reuse after the purification.
The plan shouldn't intend to implement such industrial settlement whose manufacturing process or product significantly endangers nature.

Table 11. Questionnaire – Industry and energy sector

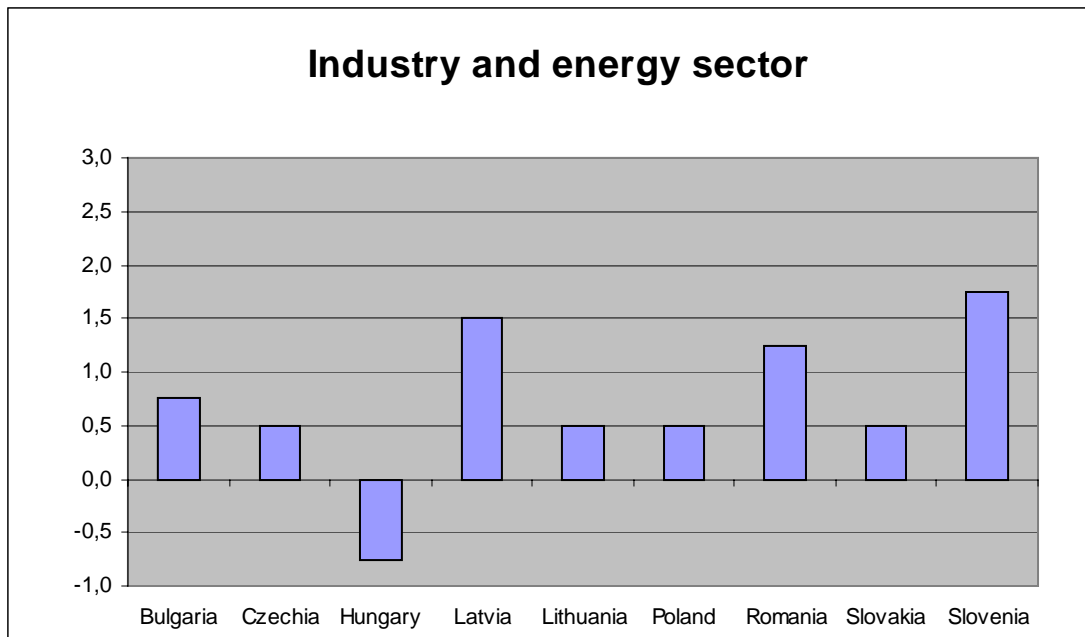


Figure 11. Industry and energy sector

Though the diversification of the energy market with the growing share of renewable energy resources is favourable, if it is achieved through growing plant monocultures and reducing biodiversity, this way is strongly disputable from nature conservation point of view. However this is anticipated from the Hungarian plan, while only the Romanian one provides sufficient provisions for its prevention.

In the majority of the assessed countries the promotion of the revitalisation of brown-fields is more emphasised than the prevention of green-field investments, but even this is still far from the desirable target. The insufficient utilisation of the potential of brown-fields is very much regrettable, as it could ease the pressure on nature and biodiversity while contribute to healthy and friendly urban environment.

Generally more attention should be also devoted to such industrial investments, of which manufacturing process or product does not endanger the environment.

Waste management

Waste management
The plan implements structural changes in production and consumption that minimize the creation of waste.
The plan makes provisions that decrease the production of non-biodegradable and / or toxic matters and for their elimination.
The plan inspires the use of natural, biodegradable materials in natural processes.
The plan promotes the waste dumping with the minimum environmental load and risk.
The plan favours the reuse of wastes.

Table 12. Questionnaire – Waste management

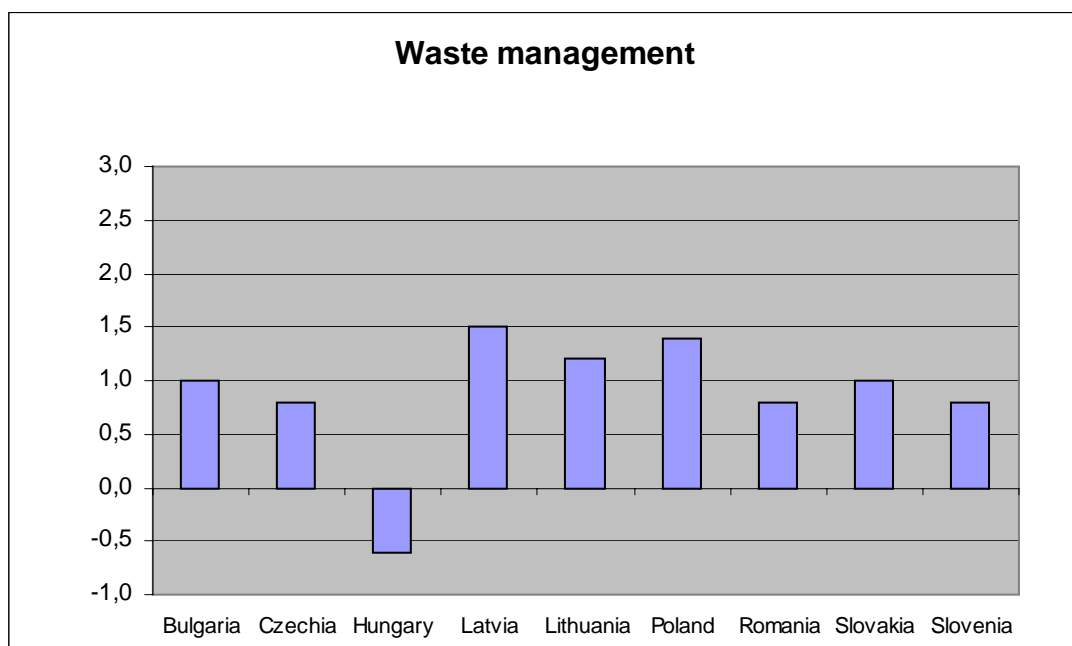


Figure 12. Waste management

Besides that thorough study of the present production and consumption patterns is needed (see above), waste management should more focus on the prevention of waste production instead of applying end-of-pipe solutions. Some plans foresee some advance in this respect (Bulgaria, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia), however they are rather far from the desirable and in some countries even the continuation or the acceleration of the trend can be anticipated (in Hungary or Romania).

The reduction of producing toxic waste and the promotion of using biodegradable materials can be hardly anticipated from the plans, however the reuse of waste is strongly encouraged for instance in Latvia and Slovakia (while smaller progresses can be foreseen on the basis of the other plans except for the Hungarian one).

Development of linear infrastructure

<i>Development of linear infrastructure</i>
The plan avoids the establishment of power lines (first of all in the air) needed for regional power supply through developing local power supply potentials.
The plan includes economic structural measures to decrease transport, thus avoids the necessity of increasing transport capacities.
The plan aims to rationalise and upgrade the existing road infrastructure instead of to establish new infrastructure.
During the rationalisation the plan considers the cease of habitats' isolation and the functioning of ecological network.

Table 13. Questionnaire – Development of linear infrastructure

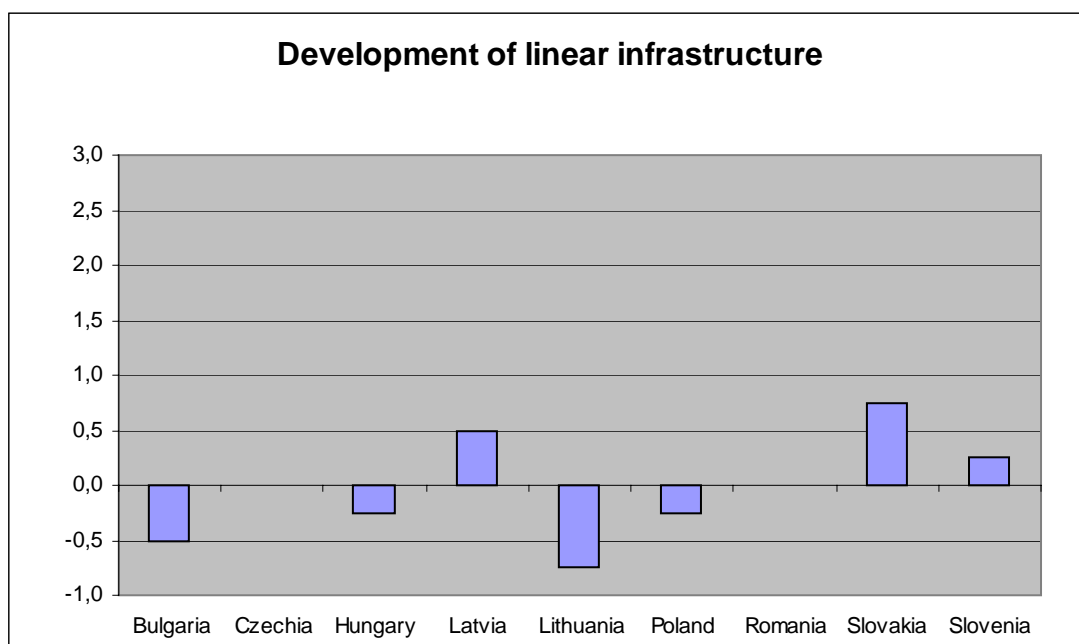


Figure 13. Development of linear infrastructure

The unsustainable transport patterns and the development of linear, especially road infrastructure strongly interferes with nature conservation through the fragmentation of habitats, disturbing of populations or damaging ecosystems. This proves to be a general problem in the various countries and in some cases such plans even endanger protected areas or future Natura 2000 sites (e.g. the Via Baltica international motorway in Poland and the new water transport infrastructure on the Vah River in Slovakia). The emphasis is generally not on rationalising and upgrading existing infrastructure, but establishing new one. During this the fragmentation habitats is considered in a few cases but only to a limited extent (Latvia, Slovakia), while all in the other seven countries not at all.

Tackling the problem at its root causes, i.e. structural changes in economy in order to decrease transport capacity needs is not targeted anywhere at all, or on the contrary just economic incentives for transport intensification can be seen from the plans (as identified in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania).

Urbanisation

Urbanisation
The plan does not boost urbanisation, the decrease of population in regions.
The plan prevents the expansion of big agglomerations on the expense of green fields.
The plan takes into account the coherence and functionality of the system of green areas in settlements during the course of urban planning.

Table 14. Questionnaire – Urbanisation

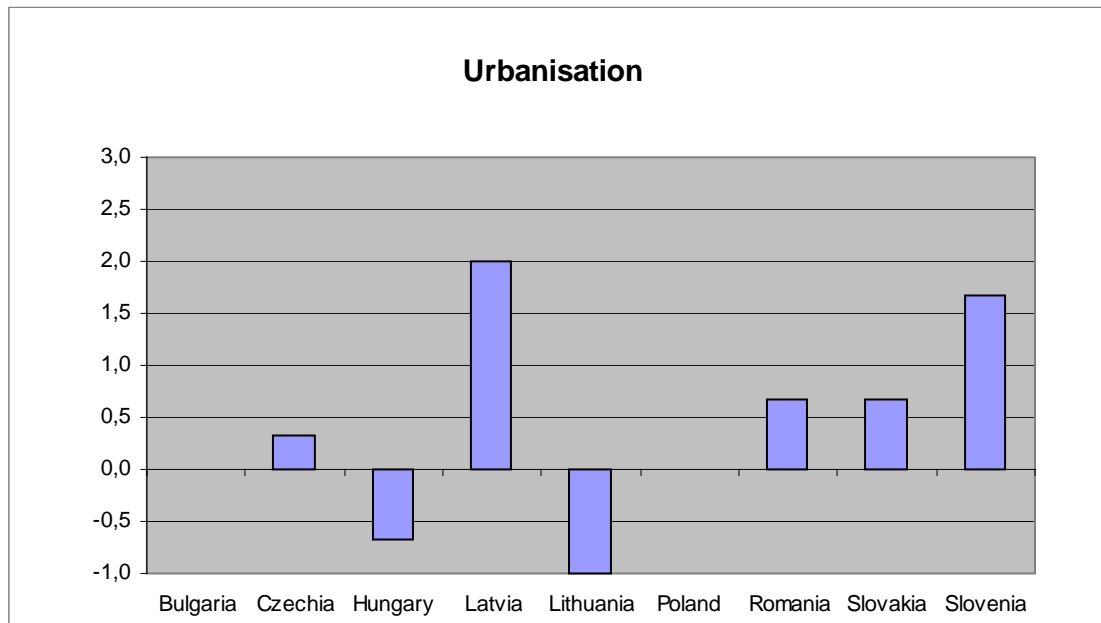


Figure 14. Urbanisation

The unfavourable trend of urbanisation is not tackled properly in most plans (what is more, on the basis of the Lithuanian document the implementation of measures falling in line with this trend can be anticipated), though some partial advance can be predicted in a few cases (especially in Latvia, Romania and Slovenia).

In spite of urban sprawl and unsustainable urban planning, biodiversity is not integrated in the process of planning urban environments. There are no specific measures for the further prevention of green-field investments (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania) or just partial prevention is targeted, while in Hungary and Lithuania its further spreading is most likely. The Polish plan does not even deal with the issue of urbanisation.

Conclusions and recommendations

The national assessments of National Development Plans clearly show that nature conservation played only a marginal role in planning future developments. Despite some differences of the results in various countries, we can draw some general conclusions.

The European Union frequently stresses that accession countries will enrich the Union with their natural assets, thus special emphasis has to be placed upon their protection. In order to ensure this the EU guidelines given in its Biodiversity Strategy requires the integration of biodiversity into sectoral policies. Unfortunately it must be pointed out that the NDPs of these future member states do not adopt this kind of approach of nature conservation sufficiently. Developments first of all target economic and social objectives and the planned investments follow the regular EU patterns, which is understandable regarding that all these countries are planning a smooth integration into the EU.

It can be stated however that the development of EU is not in harmony with its Sustainable Development Strategy, let alone the NDPs of the accession countries. In many countries no or only improper Strategic Environmental Assessments were carried out with special regard to carrying capacity analysis, which should be the basis for sustainable development.

We can conclude from the studies that with the EU financial assistance the economic activities of these countries will increase, however this increase will also mean a greater pressure on natural resources and consequently could result in further fragmentation of habitats and decline of biodiversity. Unfortunately the existing legal provisions of EU (Habitats and Birds Directives) have not proved to be sufficient to halt biodiversity decline in member states. Thus it can be also assumed that they will not be powerful enough either in accession countries.

However as the National Development Plans only provide a framework for future developments, the supplementing documents, programmes and resolutions will have a major impact on the actual implementation. Thus we urge governments to give better consideration of nature conservation concerns during their preparation process and enable effective public consultations in it. Appropriate public participation would not only assist in elaborating environmentally, socially and economically well-balanced programmes and measures, but it would also help their public acceptance and success as well as avoid several potential conflicts.

Based on the findings of the study and consultations with CEEWEB member organisations in Plovdiv, Bulgaria on the 12 of April the following recommendations have been adopted by the Assembly:

STATEMENT
of the NGO meeting convened by CEEWEB,
Organized by Green Balkans in preparation for the
Ministerial Meeting “Environment for Europe”
in Kyiv, Ukraine, May, 2003

Considering the vital contribution of NGOs to the protection of biological diversity;

Acknowledging the legislation reform completed in most of the CEE countries, but requiring further institutional reforms for enhancing the capacity of governments to fulfil their responsibilities;

Recognizing the role of NGOs to engage in critical analysis of governmental activities with regard to complying with their commitments in the field of biodiversity protection and to applying pressure on the Convention Secretariats to evaluate national reports;

Stating that the Secretariats should employ more stringent criterion in the evaluation of national reports and provide public access to these evaluations;

Taking note of the lack of intersectoral integration at the highest state level mandated by Article 6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

Requesting governments to give biological diversity and its value a higher priority at all levels of their activities;

Our recommendations concerning the preparation and implementation of National Development Plans:

1. It is imperative to involve representatives of civil society in the formulation and development of National and Regional Development Plans from the inception phase, and to ensure a mechanism, which enables all members of civil society to effectively interact with the agencies developing such plans.
2. National Development Plans should be subjected to Strategic Environmental Assessment prior to approval.
3. NATURA 2000 sites and landscapes considered by PEBLDS should be excluded from any harmful development, especially in those pre-accession countries, where these sites are not yet legally protected.
4. Planning and development of the Pan European Ecological Network has to be recognized as an important integrative tool with respect to different biodiversity issues, and for the incorporation of biodiversity considerations into economics and land use planning.
5. Sustainable use of biodiversity within the carrying capacity of ecosystems should be an integral part of all development strategies, considering the plans of implementation and guidelines of Conventions.
6. National Development Plans should be subjected and fully contribute to the implementation of National Sustainable Development Plans/Strategies.
7. A set of indicators should be developed to form the basis of monitoring the effects of the National Development Plans on biodiversity, and an action plan should be in place together with an emergency fund to mitigate any negative impact of implementation on environment.
8. Compile and analyse existing best practices and lessons learnt from other plans and projects to draw recommendations for the elaboration and realization of National Development Plans.