

E&P Information Bulletin March 2000

NATIONAL STRATEGY ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY IN PROGRESS

Besides determining the foundations for the new organisation of nature protection, the last year's Nature Protection Act also encompassed the obligations from the so far ratified international conventions in the area of nature protection. Among them is also the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), an extremely important international agreement (Ur. I. RS, No 30/1996), which, according to approximate estimates, regulates more than one half of all future nature protection activities. Article 6 of the Convention obliges each contracting party, "in accordance with its own special conditions and capacities:

a) to develop national strategies, plans and programs for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity (...) that also display the measures, regulated by the Convention and referring to the particular contracting party; and

b) to connect, when possible and appropriate, conservation with sustainable use of biological diversity in relevant departmental or inter-departmental plans, programs and policies."

The Nature Protection Act in Article 94 provides on the other hand that "the national nature protection program, which encompasses the conservation of biological diversity and protection of natural assets, shall be adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia."

Those were the starting points for the decision made last Autumn by the Nature Protection Bureau of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning and the Nature Protection Authority of RS that the preparation of the national strategy on biological diversity was to be accelerated. Although the preparation had started already in 1997, it could not progress because of legal and financial lacks and - last but not least - also because the competent official had been overburdened with work.

The first step, i. e. the preparation of the report on the condition of biological diversity in Slovenia has mostly been accomplished. 17 working groups - in which 21 experts participated -, which were appointed in compliance with the obligations in the Convention and the action themes from the Pan-European Strategy on Biological Diversity and Landscape Variety (Sofia, 1995), prepared a high quality material that is now being arranged and edited for the publication.

The real efforts for the preparation of the strategy and the action plan started at the beginning of the year. The Secretariat for the Implementation of the Convention prepared a draft framework strategy, which is going to be discussed at an expert workshop on March 17 and 18 this year. To the workshop we have invited all the participating experts, group co-ordinators from the expert service for nature protection and the representatives of all concerned governmental departments, meaning not less than ten ministries. From here on the discussion will flow in the open, also attracting potential contractors, non-governmental organisations, local communities and other stakeholders. Such a plan requires a lot of organisational work and some bottlenecks have already been noticed within the State administration. That is why one of our tasks is that, running parallel with the implementation of the project, we train as many collaborators as possible from expert organisations and public services who will then act, each in his/her particular area, as co-ordinators and accelerators.

Since last October the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has provided financial support for the preparation of the strategy and the action plan. Unless some unexpected obstacles

appear, it is foreseen that by the end of this year the governmental bodies and the National Assembly shall discuss the draft National Strategy on Biological Diversity with the joint action plan.

Stane Peterlin, Counsellor to the Government

NEW RULES ON WASTE DISPOSAL CAME INTO FORCE

With the adoption of the Rules on Waste Disposal (Ur. l. RS, No 5/2000) Slovenia has made a great step ahead towards EU accession in the area of waste. The Rules, which are co-ordinated with the 1999 EU Directive on Waste Disposal, regulate the compulsory treatments and other conditions for waste disposal as well as the conditions and measures in regard to the planning, construction, functioning and closure of dumping-grounds. The requirements for planning of new dumping-grounds are strict and the existing dumping-grounds will have to comply with them. The functioning of smaller dumping-grounds in particular will in many places appear as economically unjustified. For the issues related to waste, which are to be disposed, and the general conditions of waste removal that are not regulated by these rules, the Rules on Waste Management shall be used (Ur. l. RS, No 84/98).

With the date of arrival of the Rules into force (February 5 2000) the existing dumping-grounds in Slovenia have been divided into dumping-grounds for hazardous waste (if only hazardous waste had been dumped there to that date), the dumping-grounds for non-hazardous waste (if only urban waste or only non-hazardous waste had been dumped there to that date) and the dumping-grounds for inert waste (if only inert or construction waste had been dumped there to that date).

Among more important regulations of the Rules that managers of the existing dumping-grounds have to comply with by July 1 are the identification of waste by means of weighing and the surveillance of the documentation on waste and the identification of waste by a visual check.

From January 1 2002 on only treated waste or waste that comply with the requirements concerning non-hazardous or inert waste from Annexes 1 and 2 of the Rules will be allowed dumping at the dumping-grounds for non-hazardous or inert waste. Also from January 1 2002 on only treated hazardous waste will be allowed dumping at the dumping-grounds for hazardous waste and from January 1 2003 on hazardous waste will have to comply with the requirements for hazardous waste from Annex 1 of the Rules. Without prior treatment inert waste will be allowed dumping only when the treatment is not technically feasible, the same going for other sorts of waste, if the treatment does not reduce their quantity or the characteristics, which cause harmful nuisance to the environment or human health.

The Rules also introduce several novelties in the area of planning and construction of dumping-grounds, their functioning, closure and the post-closure measures. In the course of planning of a dumping-ground it has to be assured that the dumping-ground is at an appropriate distance from areas intended for settlement and recreation, public parks, health and convalescent centres, agricultural farming land, water streams and other water forms. The underground of the dumping-ground has to be, at least in the very area of the dumping-ground, geologically and hydro-geologically unified and of such a geological structure that the soil and the underground and surface waters can be protected from pollution.

Regarding the functioning of dumping-grounds the Rules require a dumping permit (replacing the Removal permit from the 1998 Regulation on Waste Management), that determines the sort of dumping-ground, the sort of waste that can be dumped there and the total quantity of waste dumped. The permit also states the quantity of biodegradable waste that can be disposed per year, the manner of taking over the waste and checking their identity as well as

other conditions of functioning, the implementation of monitoring and other forms of surveillance of environmental nuisance. The limiting modifications of indicative parameters for underground water in compliance with the regulation on the monitoring of underground water pollution with hazardous substances also appear in the permit. Finally, the permit defines the requirements concerning the closure of the dumping-ground and the measures for prevention of harmful nuisance to the environment after its closure, as well as the period in which the manager of the dumping-ground shall continue to implement the required obligations after the closure (at least for 10 years in case of dumping-grounds for hazardous or non-hazardous waste).

Considering the EU Directive we also need to mention the measures for progressive reduction of biodegradable urban waste at the dumping-grounds until 2016. They should be reduced by 35% in regard to the quantity of dumped biodegradable urban waste in 1995. To that respect the Rules in Annex 3 define the total quantity of biodegradable waste that can be disposed at all dumping-grounds per year. Meaning that in one year the manager of the dumping-ground can let dispose urban waste treated in such a way that the proportion of biodegradable waste is equal to the proportion determined in his permit by the ministry competent for the environmental matters.

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PRESENT AND FUTURE OF WASTE MANAGEMENT IN HUNGARY AND SLOVENIA

On February 14 and 15 in Radenci a conference took place entitled "Present and Future of Waste Management in Hungary and Slovenia - national, regional and local obligations in the EU accession". It was organised by the European Commission and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC).

The purpose of the conference, which was attended by 130 representatives of Slovenia and Hungary, was to overview the currently enforced legislation and practice in the area of waste management in Hungary and Slovenia, the impact of the EU accession process in both countries and to identify legal, technological, economic and financial issues and find the possible ways of solving them. The economic transformation brings important changes in the area of waste management in both countries. The EU accession process requires harmonisation of legislation also in the area of waste management. Firm legal foundations, efficient implementation and enforcement of regulations as well as the preparation of strategies and plans are needed in order to direct the development. The mentioned process requires an active participation at all levels, the national and regional as well as local, and that of the local population, the environmental and other concerned groups.

More information is available at the REC home page: <http://www.rec-lj.si>. Soon an extended conference report and a proposal for further activities in this context will also be published there.

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FEBRUARY 2 - THE WORLD WETLANDS DAY

The Permanent commission of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands chose February 2 as the world wetlands day. On that day in 1971 in Iranian town of Ramsar 18 state representatives signed the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, better known as the Ramsar Convention, which came into force in 1975.

The Convention is aimed at the conservation and acceptable use of wetlands at the national level and the implementation of principles of sustainable development by means of international co-operation.

Until January this year 118 states have ratified the convention, Slovenia among them. There are currently more than 1000 wetlands in the world that are listed on the list of wetlands of international importance. Wetlands are among the most productive environments in the world and represent the cradle of biotic diversity, provide water and primary production, on which depends the survival of countless species of plants and animals.

The human interference with water sources, such as the impacts of agriculture, industry and household pollution can appear far from the wetland areas, sometimes across the border from the concerned countries. In such cases a devaluation and even destruction of wetland habitats may occur. Thus we need to prevent the progressive interference with wetlands and their disappearance and assure the conservation and a balanced use of wetland sources.

Slovenia notified the Ramsar Convention in 1992. A year later the Sečovlje salt pans were listed on the list of wetlands of international importance as our first locality.

Last year the salt-grounds were joined by the Škocjanske caves. By the enlistment on the list of Ramsar localities the caves acquired the status of the first European locality listed among the wetlands of international importance in accordance with the directives for the proclamation of underground wetlands.

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THE PROJECT OF MODERNISATION OF REAL ESTATE REGISTRATION

The project ran by four ministries and the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia and co-financed from the state budget, the World Bank and a Phare donation has this year continued with operative activities. An important milestone of the project was February 16 2000 when the Agreement on the project loan between the Republic of Slovenia and the World Bank formally came into force. For this important event the project participants had to fulfil the following conditions:

- establish a technical assistance office for the project management;
- appoint the project management;
- establish a special financial management system for the project;
- sign the Protocol on activities concerning the spending of the project loan (the financial and the technical part);
- choose and appoint the financial reviser for the entire duration of project realisation;
- assure sufficient funds in the 2000 State budget, in accordance with the annual financial plan of the project;

- the Program council for modernisation of real estate registration had to become the main project co-ordinator;

Besides the activities concerning the necessary administrative set-up of this difficult project we have continued the preparation of public calls for activities and tasks related to the project realisation and the counselling services, in accordance with the relevant rules of the World Bank.

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150th ANNIVERSARY OF METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS AND MEASUREMENTS IN SLOVENIA

On March 23 1850 in Ljubljana started regular meteorological observations and measurements. The measurements and observations were simple at first, but they have lasted almost without interruption until the present day. Although in the first hundred years the observation point changed and moved several times, the measurements always took place in Ljubljana. The current observatory, which has been on the same spot since 1948, does not offer precisely equal conditions for measurements, since the close and more distant surroundings have greatly changed. At the beginning the Bežigrad area was the suburb and nowadays there are constructions everywhere around the station.

The first meteorological measurements contained only data on temperature, humidity of air, atmospheric pressure and weather phenomena and since 1852 also on the direction and speed of wind and the precipitation.

The importance of the anniversary is all the more significant at present, when experts all over the world collect data on climate change. Only a multi-annual series of data can provide material of a sufficient quality for the estimation of change, taking into consideration the change of locality and the closer surroundings of the measurement station. A 150-year pattern of data on meteorological phenomena also shows that the Slovenian meteorological service has always been at the top level of the European development in this area. The extremely trustworthy meteorological forecasts, which basis is certainly a quality observation and measurements, also point to that.

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THE 6th EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN

On February 7 and 8 in Lisbon took place a meeting on the preparation of the 6th European environmental program, upon an initiative of the European Commission (DG Environment) and in co-operation with the Portuguese Ministry of the Environment. Besides the representatives of the European Commission and the ministries of the environment of the EU member countries the representatives of all the candidate countries also participated at the meeting.

The recent Decision issued by the European Commission requires an overview of the implementation and the preparation of a report on the enforcement of the 5th action program towards Sustainability, which was prepared for the period until year 2000. The main topic of discussion at the meeting was the overview of enforcement and efficiency of the 5th action program on the basis of a report made by the EU-DG for the Environment and the European

Environmental Agency. The participants also discussed the preparation of a new program with a special accent on activities concerning the EU enlargement. It was agreed that the current program was good, since there has been a notable progress in introduction of new instruments of environmental protection. Yet, considering the latest data of the European Environmental Agency, the situation is still preoccupying, and above all, the pressure of certain departments on the environment is growing. The participants concluded that in the course of the preparation of the new program the asserted lacks were to be taken into account, and the additional measures for a wholesome implementation of the program were to be designed.

Additional information in regard to the preparation and contents of the 6th environmental protection program is available at the home page of the European commission - DG for the Environment (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg11/newprg/index.htm>).

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THE NATIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

By the signature of the Aarhus Convention Slovenia adopted the principles of public participation in environmental decision-making. As a part of accepted obligations we will also have to search for the social consensus in the area of waters and water management. How to deal with waters in the future, complete or acquire knowledge and technologies necessary for making right decisions of public interest regarding interventions on waters and their acceptability and feasibility (for example the construction of water management infrastructure)? How to assure a balanced use of water resources in households, industry, agriculture and elsewhere, to determine and progressively enforce the full price of water (considering all the accompanying expenses)? All this requires a better understanding of the condition and development of the (natural) water system and (human) interventions, arrangements and systems, introduction of an appropriate monitoring in order to follow up the enforcement of users' obligations, an appropriate follow up of the condition and trends regarding waters, as well as planning, programming and decision-making on the extent of use of water potentials and the water activities.

Other international conventions (the Helsinki Convention, the Danube Convention and the Barcelona Convention) as well as the framework EU Directive on waters, which was adopted on February 16 this year in the second reading and will most probably come into force in June, also bring similar goals, obligations and tasks for Slovenia. The international obligations progressively enforce a balanced water management, which allows for human interventions under certain conditions, by a compensation of negative impacts, by a reduction of possibility of their occurrence and by an introduction of substitute and enrichment measures. The Slovenian legislation on waters already provides for that, when it determines conditions and ways of managing the waters in the context of natural entities (river basins and water basins). Thus the Ministry of the Environment and spatial Planning has started with the preparation of the national water management program, also foreseen by the Nature Protection Act, which in Article 53 refers to departmental management plans for natural goods (i. e. waters).

The goal of the national program is to prepare and progressively enforce concrete measures, programs and projects of reforming and developmental nature, as well as progressively develop necessary institutional, professional, technological and other capacities, which can assure sustainable development in Slovenia at an increased level of international co-operation. The national water management program shall concentrate on solving the most

important water management problems. It is an important step towards long-term solving of relations between waters and society.

Thus we invite all the target groups concerned by the issue of waters to participate in the preparation of such an important document - the State departments, as well as local communities, the water users' associations and the civil society. The preparation of the document will run in public, with regular up-dates at the home page of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial planning and with workshops for particular target groups. That way we believe that we will reach our common goal - a sustainable development with a healthy (water) environment.

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THE TRIGLAV VIWS

The administration of the Triglav National Park published the fourth and the fifth issue of the science-educational journal TNP Triglav Views. Both issues cover the area of limnology.

The fourth issue entitled "Aquatic Macrophytes in the Lakes of the Triglav National Park" by Olga Urbanc-Berčič, MA, presents superior water plants and water macro-phytes that can be found in the Alpine lakes of the Triglav National Park. We find out which vegetal groups make part of this ecological category and learn about the species, which grow in nine of all together sixteen researched lakes, and their importance for these mountain ecosystems. In the 5th issue Tone Brancelj, Ph.D. describes some "Special Features of Lower Shrimps (Branchiopoda) in the Triglav National Park".

The Triglav Views are now bilingual and are being exchanged as an expert publication with numerous national parks in Europe and elsewhere. You are welcome to order and participate.

Additional information at <http://www.sigov.si/tnp> and jurij.dobracec@tnp.gov.si.