**Stakeholder workshop**

**Hungary-Croatia Interreg Programme 2021-2027**

Date: 7 April 2021, 10:00

Thematic area: PO2 – ‘a greener, low-carbon Europe’

Participants:

* Alen Višnjić, Međimurje Energy Agency Ltd.
* Lóránt Deme, HBH Strategy and Development Ltd, Hungary
* Márton Szűcs, dr., Head of Joint Secretariat, Széchenyi Programme Office
* Emina Kovač, VIDRA Development Agency
* Krisztina Erdős, Széchenyi Programme Office, Horizontal Coordination
* Kinga Perge, senior advisor - EU Strategy for the Danube Region, Environmental Risks Priority Area
* Csilla Nezdei, dr., and Zoltán Tóth, Somogy County Government
* András Tálos, HU-HR JS
* Brigitta Noémi Bócz, West-Transdanubian Water Directorate, Hungary
* Matija Vajdić, Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar, Croatia
* Željka Fištrek, Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar, Croatia
* Borbála Bogán, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary
* András Guti, Ministry of Agriculture, Hungary, Department of Environmental Development and Strategy
* Tibor Parrag, Danube-Drava National Park Directorate, Hungary
* Zita Zombai, Duna-Drava National Park Directorate
* Nada Kožul, Unikom d.o.o.
* Jelena Kovač, Institute for Physical Planning of Koprivnica-Križevci County
* Andrijana Kasić, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Nature Protection Directorate (HR)
* Gabriella Jelinek, Hungarian Ministry of Interior, Dept. of River Basin Management and Water Protection
* Senada Ranilović, PORA Regional Development Agency of Koprivnica-Križevci County
* Luka Magdić, Development Agency of Osijek-Baranja County
* Marta Lenac, Public Institution for Management of Protected Natural Areas in Koprivnica-Krizevci County
* Sándor Sáry, Mecsek Forestry Plc.
* Željka Andrić, VIDRA Development Agency
* Nádor Annamária, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, EU Strategy for the Danube Region, Sustainable Energy PA
* Róbert Dudás, Pannon EGTC
* György Márton, Logframe Ltd.
* Zoltán Pámer, Logframe Ltd.

**Presentation is found in attachment.**

***Summary of discussion:***

**Parrag Tibor (Danube-Drava National Park Directorate)**: Large infrastructure projects need long permission procedures, 1-1,5 year long. Previously licences were needed already in the application phase. Most bodies don't have budget to develop it in advance. A solution could be to finance preparation projects. Then it would be applied to a LIFE project later. Biosphere Reserve would be too narrow.

**Nada Kožul (Unikom d.o.o.):** Energy saving is a wrong title for the priority. Renewable energies won’t generate saving. Efficiency and renewables are clear, but there is the issue of circular economy as well.

**Alen Višnjić (MENEA)**: They applied several energy projects, some of them are in progress. They would like to propose an energy-related strategic project. which refers to the EU climate objectives. Renovation Wave and Climate Pack have the approach that should be combined: buildings and citizens. Nearly zero energy neighbourhoods, villages should be promoted. Digitalisation of public and private sector: smart metering and smart controlling (consumption, air quality, light quality, automatization). E-mobility is also important (photovoltaic electric chargers). Shallow geothermal should be promoted, it is usable in public buildings, combined with solar and even biomass. Involvement of citizens is very important, capacity development and awareness raising. Some significant pilots should be involved as well. If strategic project is not an option, then open-call method should be applied, which is administratively more complicated. Projects should be longer than 18 months. Project with pilot actions can’t be implemented in 18 months, 36 months would be needed.

**Brigitta Noémi Bócz (NYDVIZIG)**: Agrees with the idea to finance preparation projects. The permission procedure is very time-consuming. Agreements made during the negotiations in the Mura river sub-committee should be incorporated. Joint aims are ecology data surveying, assessment, which are longer-term tasks. Surveying needs 24 months, then implementation starts. Duration of projects should be also extended to 24 months at least for preparation, implementation for 36 months. Already the preparatory phase is a large project in size.

**Annamária Nádor (EUSDR)**: the whole programme is considering the EUSDR, which is very positive. In the Danube region energy efficiency, renewables and energy poverty are all issues. Targeting energy saving is not realistic. Energy efficiency, poverty should focus on heating, cooling and buildings. Large investment projects are beyond the scope of Interreg. Really glad to give input from Danube Strategy side.

**Matija Vajdić (Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar)**: Most important topics were mentioned by Alen. Clear strategic projects would have added value. These projects should focus on either on rural or urban areas. Best would be one very clear strategic project. Experts, energy agencies should work together. Eastern part of Croatia does not have an energy agency, though. This is also missing on the Hungarian side. Croatian partners are very experienced. Strategic project should focus on buildings and efficiency, there is the worst situation. Project should last minimally 3 years projects, 300k EUR projects for preparation, then implementation. Mobility is missing, but should be integrated.

**Kinga Perge (EUSDR)**: EUSDR PA5 is focusing on disaster management. That is a flagship action, they have a separate working group, including Croatia. Firefighter associations are NGOs, happy to see them as possible beneficiaries. Harmonisation of trainings should be supported, in line with the action plan. Remote learning is an important element, train the trainer, exercises, capacity building. NGOs have also a great role in disaster management. Territorial focus: does not think the zone should be limited.

**Márton B. Szűcs (HU-HR JS)**: Project duration should be limited, as money should be spent as quick as possible. Due to n+3 rule they would prefer shorter projects. Planning and implementation, as separate projects, are only possible for strategic projects. Projects should start spending from the first day on, line it was with De-mine project that helped the programme to meet the spending target.

**András Guti (Ministry of Agriculture)**: Air quality is not everywhere satisfactory. In small villages air quality is very bad in winter periods. I would be good to tackle this issue as well.

**András Tálos (HU-HR JS)**: Indicators should be more carefully defined. Surface area indicator requires a longer time to prove. Current indicators (e.g. bird species) excluded some beneficiaries whose activities were not measurable with these indicators.

**Csaba Megyer (Zala county)**: Water management and forest management are big organisations, experienced in cooperation, they are also able to cooperate with nature conservators. Most of wetlands, water areas have lost, forests have increased. Also, orchards have been lost, also land users are missing, people who work on the field. Everywhere only monoculture, also in the river flood areas. This should be changed.

**Tibor Parrag**: In case of Natura 2000 areas habitat protection and bird protection areas are monitored. For these two territories two different indicators are used: surface of habitat and bird species, that are measurable.

***Comments through chat:***

**Sándor Sáry (Mecsek Forestry Plc.)**: Preparation of conservation projects exceed 24 months, which was the maximum the programme allowed. This is not only a problem due to implementation, but also the indicators are difficult to achieve. For territorial limitation an extended direct border zone (zone B) may be preferable. In the case of a narrower area, important nature conservation areas could be left out from the programme, which would have a negative impact on the status in these areas. Important that not only specific infrastructure investments and nature conservation interventions can be supported. Equally important is the assessment and monitoring of nature conservation statuses like installation of monitoring systems, purchasing monitoring devices. This is an extremely important and essential activity for the future, considering climate change and the associated problem of spreading invasive species. Indicators should be extended to activities aimed to maintain the current good or excellent conservation status of an area. Previous calls only included indicators aiming at creating better conservation status. The programme is too short to achieve improvement. Preservation of conservation status is also important – if not more important – than achieving better conservation status.

**Andrijana Kasić (Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Croatia)**: Concerning cooperation in green and blue land use focus should be on habitat connectivity. Maybe have some pilot projects/activities on closing gaps in ecological corridors of targeted wild animals, since ecological connectivity is important for reversing biodiversity loss and maintain on improve quality of the ecosystem. Also, land use and landscape change have impact on pollination of crops: the focus could be put on wild pollinators and improvement of their status. Concerning reduction of pollution, awareness should be raised on pesticide use reduction and importance to generally mitigate their use in agriculture.

**György Márton (Logframe Ltd.)**: For strategic projects hard to find partners. Other option would be to make a restricted call, with a limited number and type of beneficiaries. 300 000 EUR for pilot investments could be accepted, rather focusing on soft elements, awareness raising etc.

**Zoltán Pámer (Logframe Ltd.)**: In the programme development phase some of the participants will be contacted for more in-depth information, in form of telephone or online consultation. Thanks for the active participation.