

„TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATURE CONSERVATION – SELECTED BALKAN STATES ON THEIR WAY TO EUROPE“

Short title: **NatuRegio_Balkans**

ABSTRACT

NatuRegio_Balkans is a vocational training programme for young experts in the field of nature conservation and regional development linked with the implementation of small projects in the target countries. Target group are young professionals working in/for/related with protected areas, other nature conservation management schemes or sustainable regional development in six selected Balkan States (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia). The trainees will pass a vocational training programme in Germany and develop projects for their reference countries. These small projects will be implemented during the NatuRegio project period by the trainees, supported by an international project team.

The aim of the NatuRegio_Balkans project is to enhance sustainable nature conservation and regional development strategies in the target countries and to encourage cross-border collaboration and networking in the region.

PERIOD OF ENTIRE PROJECT: 1st Nov 2013 – 30th Apr 2015

LEADING ORGANISATIONS: Alfred Toepfer Foundation F.V.S.
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TARGET COUNTRIES: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia

TARGET GROUP: Young professionals working in protected area management, NGOs or Public Authorities, dealing with nature conservation and sustainable regional development in the target countries

FUNDING: DBU (German Federal Environmental Foundation)
www.dbu.de
Heidehof Foundation
www.heidehof-stiftung.de



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Large unchanged natural areas can still be found in the Balkan States. Parts of the Danube River with its natural floodplains, old-growth forests, natural mountainous areas and valuable open landscapes, due to traditional cultivation techniques contribute to a high biodiversity in the region. The target countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia) have registered UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Protected Areas, National Parks and other designated areas for nature conservation and sustainable regional development; some of the countries have bilateral cooperation agreements.

Due to many political, social and economic changes in the region there is a growing pressure on natural resources and landscapes. Especially the accession to the European Union of some of the Balkan States and the candidate status of others influence the status of nature conservation policies and strategies in the target countries.

Nature conservation on a worldwide, European and transnational scale combined with regional development are focal points within the EU Sustainable Development Strategy including the European Neighbourhood Policy or the South East Europe 2020 Strategy. International Organisations such as the European Green Belt or the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and others encourage transnational cooperation, recently demonstrated in the key agreement in south-Eastern Europe to put natural capital at the heart of economic development.

In order to ensure long term progress on the region's way to Europe it is necessary not only to enhance sustainable growth and socio-economic networks, but at the same time to create networks to efficiently protect biodiversity and conserve and develop unique landscapes in a sustainable way.

NatuRegio_ *Balkans* as a vocational training programme will support this by qualifying young professionals, building transnational networks of experts and implementing small nature conservation projects.

The programme aims at:

- giving experts from the six countries the chance to visit internationally acknowledged conservation sites, protected areas in floodplains, coastal areas and woodlands in Germany and
- exchange of experience in nature conservation management as well as sustainable tourism concepts
- establishing contacts with relevant institutions, organisations, experts and initiatives in the target countries and in Germany
- showing best-practice-examples
- enhancing cross-border collaboration with workshops in different countries
- implementing small projects to promote sustainable nature conservation and regional development in the target countries.

16 young professionals from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia will participate in the training programme. This



training programme will combine theoretical input given by experts with visits on-site and practical work as well as project implementation.

The programme consists of 4 parts:

1. **TRAINING PROGRAMME** of 4 weeks in Germany
2. **NETWORK & PROJECTS SEMINAR** for 5 days in one of the target countries
3. **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION** in trainees' reference countries
4. **FUTURE WORKSHOP** for 1 week in Germany

1. TRAINING PROGRAMME IN GERMANY

3rd May – 10th May 2014

Introductory Workshop at Gut Siggen in Ostholstein

Technical English language course for environmentalists, project management course, intercultural communication, ecosystem services, coastal management, field trips

11th May – 17th May 2014

Excursion Seminar and Workshop at NNA in Schneverdingen

European Union and nature conservation, biodiversity and species protection, financing conservation projects, sustainable tourism, capacity building, field trips

18th May – 31st May 2014

Excursion Seminar at various sites in Germany

Visiting best-practice examples for nature conservation related issues in Germany

The time in Germany offers a comprehensive training course combining theory and practice. The presented topics are listed below.

During these four weeks the trainees will review their own project ideas and develop their individual project proposals (in teams). Transnational projects by project teams will be encouraged.



Topics to be addressed in the training programme can be subdivided into four thematic groups:

1. Aquatic Ecology and Conservation

- Sustainable River Management
- Protection of floodplains and wetlands
- Threats (climate change, floods, etc.)
- Flood protection
- EU Water Framework Directive
- Sustainable utilization concepts

2. Nature Conservation Management

- Natura 2000
- Sustainable Regional Development
- Protected Areas
- Management of Protected Areas

3. Capacity Building and Sustainable Tourism

- International cooperation, transnational projects
- Sustainable tourism
- Education for Sustainable Development
- Stakeholder communication
- Communication skills for nature conservation and cross-cultural competencies

4. Further Topics

- Sustainable forestry
- Implementing the Biodiversity Strategy
- Management of 'open landscapes'
- Linking nature conservation and agriculture
- Species and habitat protection

2. NETWORK & PROJECTS SEMINAR

5th – 12th July 2014

The project proposals will be presented, discussed and reviewed during a workshop at a venue in one of the target countries.

It is planned to invite former NatuRegio trainees to share experiences, improve the project ideas and establish further networking.

Subsequently to the workshop the trainees may revise their project drafts and send the final application within 5 days to the NatuRegio_Balkans project panel in Germany which will assess the proposals and grant up to a maximum of 3000 € per trainee for successful applications.



3. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Subsequently to the Networks & Projects Seminar and following a successful project application the trainees will implement their projects within a six months period, commencing on 1st Aug 2014. The assigned budget has to be allocated directly to project costs. The salary/income of the trainee has to be provided by their employer throughout the entire time the trainee attends the NatuRegio_ *Balkans* project.

The NatuRegio_ *Balkans* project team will support the implementation of the trainee projects by online communication and will supervise timeframes and costs. Each trainee must complete the project and submit a full report including financial record within six months (deadline 31st Jan 2015).

4. FUTURE WORKSHOP

21st Feb – 28th Feb 2015 at Gut Siggen in Ostholstein

The Future Workshop rounds up the training programme. The implemented projects will be presented by the trainees, experiences shared and the concepts projected into the future.

Additional focus will be on further networking and implementing transnational cooperation and transnational projects as well as connecting to European partners.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

NatuRegio_ *Balkans* is based in the positive experiences of two former NatuRegio projects conducted by the Alfred Toepfer Academy for Nature Conservation (NNA):

“Nature Conservation and Regional Development in South East Europe Using the Example of Bulgaria and Romania” (2006 - 2010)

“Sustainable Nature Conservation and Regional Development in Floodplains and Wetlands in the Central and Lower Danube River Basin” (2010 - 2012)

In these two projects more than 60 small to medium sized nature conservation projects were implemented and a network between experts and trainees has been created. The project partners would like to build on this wealth of experience, documented in a comprehensive evaluation process. NatuRegio_ *Balkans* intends to actively contribute to sustainable nature conservation in the target countries with this initiative.



APPLICATION INFORMATION

All applications must include the completed application form, a letter of support by the applicant's employer and a Curriculum Vitae in English using the complete Europass form (<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/editors/en/#/cv/compose>).

Applications will be assessed by a NatuRegio_Balkans selection board and successful applicants will be invited for interview in cities in some of the target countries. Travel costs to attend the interview in March 2014 are not included and must be paid by the applicant.

After successful application all travel and subsistence costs of the trainees participating at the TRAINING PROGRAMME of 4 weeks in Germany, the NETWORK & PROJECTS SEMINAR for 5 days in one of the target countries and the FUTURE WORKSHOP for 1 week in Germany will be paid by the Leading Organisations.

Please send your application to:

naturegio@nna.niedersachsen.de

or by postal mail to:

NatuRegio_Balkans
Alfred Toepfer Academy for Nature
Conservation
Hof Moehr
D-29640 Schneverdingen
Germany

Deadline for application is 19th February 2014!

