

Report on Workshop

Sustainable Development in Lake Areas: Empowering Local Initiatives and Civil Society



15 – 18 June 2009

Lake Võrtsjärv, Estonia

Supported by



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Introduction

Four workshops are organised by Forum Synergies and Global Nature Fund in the framework of the project “Sustainable Development in Lake Areas” supported by Fondation de France.

The general objective of the project is to support initiatives in sustainable development by exchange of good practice of participatory implementation and local sustainable development. The exchange shall lead to capacity building of private actors, NGOs and local governments in environmentally sensitive areas. The thematic workshops will contribute to the development of local democracy and to a more participative management of environmental resources, in order to fill the gap between European citizens and their institutions, and also via feed-back to decision makers to contribute to environmental and rural policies that better meet peoples’ need for participation.

The project’s objectives are:

- to exchange experiences about different participatory implementation strategies of Nature 2000 and WFD in concerned rural areas
- to give local actors and authorities better access to practical knowledge about sustainable Nature 2000 and WFD implementation strategies via exchange with successful projects
- to develop political proposals to regional, state and EU governments to use the existing participatory options that are provided from EU-side in order to support sustainable development in rural areas.

The international Living Lakes Network forms a good platform for a wider dissemination of project results. The scientific partnership with University of Marburg / Germany assures that the project integrates political knowledge of integrated water body management.

The workshops are meant to empower civil society actors to contribute to participatory sustainable development, and shall yield recommendations to local and EU governments about more participatory ways to implement environmental policies. Lakes, river basins and coastal areas are good topics for exchange workshops about participatory implementation strategies because they fall usually under both Natura 2000 and water framework regulation, they give a common thematic focus, are of high public relevance and give room for integrated development approaches. Furthermore there tend to be serious conflicts of interest between different stakeholders, giving need for mediation and participatory conflict solution.

Workshop Report

The first workshop within the frame of the project took place at the Lake Võrtsjärv in Estonia on 15 – 18 June 2009 giving start to an active exchange between project partners and participants.

Location

Lake Võrtsjärv near Tartu in Estonia, the biggest inner-Estonian lake, is mainly used by fishermen from the five surrounding villages with some recently evolving soft tourism and recreational activities. Nutrient intakes from the last decades caused heavy mud deposits in the shallow lake, deteriorating the water quality especially in summers with a thread of oxygen crises, and causing a reed belt of more than 100 meters to grow on its shore, preventing inhabitants to access the lake as they used to. There is need for an ecologically adapted solution under participation of the different interest groups.



The workshop took place at the shore of the lake in Vehendi Guest House, Vehendi Village.

Participants

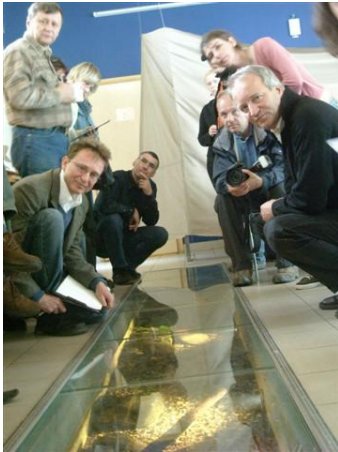
19 participants from different countries and even continents took part at the workshop: Estonia, Poland, Slovenia, Hungary, France, Germany, China and Botswana. During the first workshop day 12 representatives from Ukrainian and Moldovian NGOs and local governments joined the group to contribute their experiences and discuss the local situation.

Workshop concept

The concept of the workshop series is to proceed in three main steps. Firstly, the presentation of the local situation was held by the host organisation Lake Võrtsjärv Foundation and its partners; visits of project sites took place to enable a better understanding of the situation. Secondly, the foreign guests had the opportunity both to get in touch with local initiatives and civil society groups and to share their ideas, views and experiences with respect to the local situation. Finally, the moderators tried

to crystallise political conclusions in order to formulate a valuable feedback to EU decision makers on the basis of lessons learned.

Workshop realisation



On the first day the participants were taken to the Limnological Centre where scientist Ain Järvalt from the Estonian University of Life Sciences gave a detailed introduction into “Fishery Management at Lake Võrtsjärv”.¹ The foreign guests posed questions to better understand the situation and relate it to their own experiences.

A group of Ukrainian and Moldavian NGO representatives engaged in the protection of the river Dniester basin participated as guests in the first workshop day and introduced their common activities and the planned cooperation with two Estonian partners namely the Peipsi centre for Transboundary Cooperation (CTC) and the Lake Võrtsjärv Foundation. They explained that whereas during Soviet times the Dniestr river basin was managed as one catchment area without any public participation, the situation became more complex after Moldova and Ukraine became independent states with the need of explicit transboundary cooperation in surface and ground water management. State water agencies kept promoting agricultural development and “big solutions”, so in 1999 an transboundary association of “river keeper” NGOs was founded that claimed participation in management planning. In Moldova until now NGO participation is not provided although some “positive protocols” have been decided. In Ukraine participation is increasingly a formal part of governmental legislation but there is a “lack of procedures”. NGOs already play a role in preventing corruptive practices but are not yet “creating something new”. They find important inspirations in the ongoing exchange with Lake Peipsi CTC.

All participants were taken to the first field trip: a tour with a traditional Estonian fishing boat reconstructed according to the original medieval drafts. The boat forms a part of a project concerning development of sustainable tourism at the lake. During the trip the guests could communicate directly to the local fishermen getting their first practical feeling about the local situation and sketching first conflicts particu-



¹ the presentation is available for download at www.forum-synergies.eu .

larly regarding the perception of Natura 2000 by fishermen and the enormous “distance” between local people and the decision makers. The fishermen showed some frustration about top-down imposed EU regulation and felt that under Water Framework Directive and Natura2000 regulations “no change was allowed” anymore. On the other hand they proposed solutions like revoking the ban on drag nets from the 1970s and “cleaning up” the bottom of the lake from garbage and macrophytes which scientists are clearly opposed to.

During the afternoon session further explanation to the local situation were given by the representatives of the Estonian NGOs Peipsi centre for Transboundary Cooperation and Lake Võrtsjärv Foundation and questions arisen were answered. It became clear that external pollution loads had decreased significantly since the 1990s and that the main ecological concern nowadays were oxygen shortages due to nitrogen deposits from the past becoming mobilised in certain weather conditions due to the low and changing water level. Peipsi CTC has collected experiences with the “citizen jury method” in a pilot project.



To get the general image and vision of stakeholder participation five working groups were formed to reveal the main concepts and ideas of a successful involvement of different stakeholders and to connect them with the overall topic. The Ukrainian and Moldavian colleagues participated actively in the exercise.

Afterwards the opportunity to visit the traditional Estonian song festival was offered to the foreign guests to get to know Estonian customs and rites and to try delicious Estonian cuisine.

The second morning session allowed the international guests to summarise the conclusions of the previous working day and to contribute their views, ideas and experiences with respect to the local situation. Dr. Tilmann Stottele from Friedrichshafen local municipality introduced the day with a presentation about the situation on stakeholders participation and sustainable development at the lake Constance in Germany.² He illustrated the history, development and main problems of transboundary cooperation in the region as well as the means to motivate the stakeholders participation by local governments.

During the following discussion sometimes unexpected questions were raised: Which is the best way to get in touch with the local government? How to provide an ex-

² the presentation can be downloaded at www.forum-synergies.eu.

change of facts and figures between local people and decision makers and which could be the role of different NGOs in the process? How to get new actors e. g. enterprises involved? What is the role of media in revealing and solving the conflicts? Which is the best way to maintain the feeling of a deep involvement into processes by all stakeholders?

Three working groups analysed and presented related experiences with stakeholder participation in three different countries, namely Estonia (on the base of new information and with the contribution of the Estonian partners), Hungary and Botswana. Apart from common problems and difficulties faced some unexpected approaches for conflict solutions appeared as appropriate for regions seemed to be incomparable, e.g. Botswana and Poland or Hungary and China. The participants tried to apply the conclusions made to the situation in Estonia and to give some ideas and advices to the host organisation.

A second field trip in the afternoon of this day brought the participants to local initiatives and small rural enterprises to talk



with them about their vision, their practical experience and the specific local obstacles to their engagement. The trip was supposed to include four excursions to sites implementing innovative management methods: visits of an eel breeding

farm, a berry farm, an animal husbandry at Natura 2000 area and a waste water treatment system in the Rannu village. Due to lack of time the fourth visit was canceled and therefore it was replaced with a conversation with local authorities in charge of the water waste treatment facilities.



Among the workshop participants four groups were formed to conduct interviews on project sites with the intention to write short “newspaper articles” considering project issues and particularities. As the result of the exercise four working papers were produced comprising information about initiators and organizational form of the project, main objectives, focus activities and sustainability of the actions, main results and lessons learned, perspectives, relation with regional-, national- and EU-politics in means of support and restrictions. The entire articles can be found in the appendix to this report.

In the evening of the second workshop day a public event took place at the Rannu Cultural Centre. In order to enable the local public to participate in the meeting the

event was announced in the local press, and three ladies from town had followed the invitation. Rannu town mayor Uno Rootsmaa illustrated the main activities and objectives for and in the region. Following up his presentation and the introduction of the workshop, its structure and goals, an open discussion started giving the foreign guests the opportunity to clarify and deepen their experiences with the project implementation and stakeholder participation at the lake Võrtsjärv.

To summarise and to analyse the information gathered within previous workshop days the main statements were collected and controversial questions posed during the third morning session. In the form of an exercise the participants were asked to show their agreement/disagreement with statements related to the local situation on Natura 2000 implementation, stakeholder participation, elaboration of action plans, management of natural resources and sustainable development in the region. Towards the end of the session the attempt was made to collect the suggestions to be part of a list of political references for EU decision makers. The final evaluation of the workshop helped to make suggestions for improvement the structure and the frame of further workshops in Poland, Slovenia and France.

Conclusions

The workshop revealed the main difficulties and conflicts regarding participatory implementation and local sustainable development in Estonia. The encounters with civil society actors helped to contribute to understanding of the particularities of Natura 2000 implementation at the lake Võrtsjärv. The field trips, small working groups and varied exercises had a positive effect on the general efficiency of the workshop.

Some conclusions made about the overall frame of the workshop will help to implement the lessons learned during the prearrangements for the next workshop in Poland. Important improvements like involvement of a greater number of local participants, strengthening the element of supervision of case studies and providing more information about background of local stakeholders/actors and also groups in distance or in conflict with environmental issues have been suggested by the workshop participants and will be taken into account during the preparation phase of the second workshop.

The role of lakes as places of serious conflicts of interest between different stakeholders, giving need for mediation and participatory conflict solution, has been affirmed. The workshop shall now provide basis for further project activities and for drafting recommendations to local and EU governments about more participatory ways to implement environmental policies.





Outline October 2009 – the 2nd Workshop in Poland


The next international workshop is expected to take place on 21-24 October at the Milicz ponds near Wrocław in Poland. The Milicz ponds are a great lake area that has been created by medieval monks for aquaculture. Nowadays they create an almost natural environment with very large numbers of birds and also plant species on the surrounding wetlands. ProNatura, an ecological NGO, takes care for the ponds and has organized a number of successful projects. Some of them will be presented during the workshop.


The experiences gathered and questions raised in Estonia form a perfect foil to continuation of the common work. We hope to learn a lot about successful integration of social inclusion, renewable energy initiatives and ecological initiatives into an overall activity that preserves the lake environment, creates jobs and develops cultural, economical and social potential in Poland.


Speaking the “object language”: Feed back of the participants


Réka Belenta  The workshop was a sort of new “oxygen” consisting of new experiences for the “lamp” which you can take everywhere to spread the “light” of new ideas.


Erzsébet Székely  We need the “light” of the workshop to focus on important things; we must keep it alive to provide a successful collaboration.


Mara Kaminska  There was a lot of information to notice, a lot of new ideas, a lot of new people.


Ewa Zuber  The workshop like a mirror reflected new situations, ideas, information showing different ways of solving similar problems.


Piotr Kryszczak  This workshop is particular not only because of different foreign languages used, but because of thousands of words: every word has a deep meaning, looking at words opens new horizons. Everyone is different; everyone is a sort of imaginary “dictionary” explaining new meanings to the others.


Roman Guziak  we were an international group both in means of languages and general diversity.


Milan Vogrin  The workshop could be compared with the “forbidden fruit”: the symbol of spreading knowledge, information; at the same time giving “food” for further activities.


Mechthild A. Adameit  Like Estonian bread, the workshop combined the sense of something exotic and familiar; it gave everybody the possibility to share his knowledge like sharing the bread; it had several ingredients making possible to taste new things.

Jaanika Kaljuvee  Openness: open-minded people opened a lot of new possibilities opening the door of cooperation.

Katja Tolkachyova  The workshop provided us with consistent and nutritional “food” to be able to live and to improve the life.

Dr. Tillmann Stottele  We learned a lot and gathered different “tools” which will support our further work.

Dr. Titus Banner  Before the workshop started, it was like a closed box – you are expecting something new and interesting. Step by step it is opening up and revealing its content: there is a lot to be discovered.

Philippe Barret  The workshop served as tasty and pleasant “food” in different aspects: warm relations between participants; numerous opportunities to introduce new exercises; and the impression of growing energy encouraging to continue with building Europe.

Appendix: Articles on Field Trips

1 *A Berry Nice Berry Farm*

Twenty years ago Toomas Jaadla started a berry farm in the Estonian woods near Lake Võrtsjärv, because, he says “I am a little bit crazy!” His decision was in contradiction to the wishes of Soviet Union authorities, in the early days of the Estonian Republic. Nowadays he is a private entrepreneur growing his berries on 30 hectares on a total of 50 acres of the abandoned peat-land that he owns. He now provides Estonia and Sweden with fresh berries of high quality. The first berry farmers in Estonia grew cranberries, as did Toomas initially, but after 5 years Toomas decided to try blueberries, specifically the small wild berries of Canada called *Vaccinium angustifolium*. He decided to grow blueberries because they are easier to harvest than cranberries, which grow close to the ground and fruit later in September when the weather has become cold and wet.



Thus in the 1980's he left his career as a building engineer and moved to a small village 30 km from Tartu to found his dream, where he is also building a house and tends to his plants and trees, including rhododendrons and Korean cedars, which he also hopes to sell. Because of this extra work, he was only able to sell one ton of each type of berry last year, but hopes that this year he will greatly exceed this to sell an average of 10-12 tons blueberries and 20 tons cranberries. Although he works the farm himself, he hires casual workers, some of them teachers, to help with the harvest in the autumn, and buyers come directly to the farm to select and buy the fruit.

Toomas says that he grows the best berries – clean, tasty and fresh, which are hand-picked and not washed. Further he does not process them in anyway, preferring to sell them fresh. The farm has been developed as an experiment and without any help from the state – although he has tried to ask for financial assistance. Toomas says that his requests were denied because “1) it would be a loss of money 2) the state is not interested in supporting only one farmer 3) he wore the wrong suit and 4) he wore the wrong hat!”

To access new markets Toomas has appeared on Estonia TV on 5 half-hour talks, and furthermore has written several articles on his project. Unfortunately these did not help – but with time such activities may help with finding new markets. Meanwhile he considers this an experimental farm. Situated on very acid peat with PH 2.9, he assists production by mixing his own environmentally friendly fertilizer, which he adds

to the peat every second year at 100kg per hectare, with a ratio of 5% Nitrogen, slightly more Phosphorous, and about 25% Potassium. For re-cultivation, he can get additional fields quite inexpensively, as there are about 5,000 hectares of abandoned peat fields in Estonia.

The farm currently has about 30,000 different fruit bushes, and Toomas ensures sustainability by a clever program of propagation. Every July/August he selects some of the most productive plants, and makes new plants by propagating cutting which will produce fruits within 4 years. Every bush can produce about 100 new plants. He admitted that he is not concerned too much with diversifying into products other than fresh berries, saying that he wants to just harvest the fresh fruit, and use the rest of his time to consult with nature – tending his house, his flowers and his woods. This gives him more free time “I have a life” he assured us.

Karen Ross and Katja Tolkachyova

2 The biogas farmer - Why to breed cattle when you can produce energy?

With falling milk prices the business becomes heavy for companies like Ranna Farm Ltd. We meet the owner Aivo Arrak on his 1000 ha farm in Rannu where he keeps 600 milk cows. Having dealt 4 days on the topic of the impact of Natura 2000 in our workshop "Sustainable Development in Lake Areas: Empowering Local Initiatives and Civil society", 15-18 June 2009 at Lake Võrtsjärv, we are a little bit surprised to hear that Aivo does not feel affected this much by Natura 2000. He tells us that he



can get along with the regulations, and restrictions like when to mow his hayfields seem not to bother him at all.

His biggest concern lie beyond farming: renewable energy. He definitely wants to invest in this technique, but having already invested into a devastated kolkhoz farm, he cannot put money into his most favorite project – biogas installation.

Since milk production is not a profitable business anymore, at the moment he cannot afford to do any further investment. Production of one litre of milk costs him 1 Kroon (15 EEK ~1 EUR) more than he gets for it. If the milk price remains as it is today, with 8600 litres per cow his yearly loss would amount to 344000 Euro. In comparison, out of the thousand hectares that belong to his farm only ¼ is designated as Natura 2000 for which he gets 400 EEK per hectare totaling to a subsidy of 6600 EUR.



To install a biogas plant the total amount of 17 million EEK (ca. 1,13 Mio EUR) would have to be invested for a 250 kW generator. According to Aivo the available support (e.g. from the European Union) would cover only 4 million EEK (ca. 270 000 EUR) and that is not enough to make Aivo to built his biogas plant.

Asked what he would do if he could change the political situation he would vote for a 50% financial support from the government and/or EU which he would not have to pay back.

Aivo is very much fascinated by the German model of farms producing green energy. He already had the chance to visit Germany several times and he is very keen on adopting these models.

But he told us that his search for investors was not successful. On top, an alternative idea of him – to cooperate with two other dairy farmers faces another problem – what to do with excessive thermal energy? One possible solution would be to heat the houses of the Rannu village; but again the costs for building the necessary infrastructure were beyond their reach.

Is Aivo deemed to bankruptcy? What about his dream of having the first bio-energy plant on the Estonian mainland?

Mechthild Adameit, Roman Guziak, Piotr Kryszczak

Note: This short article is the product of the workshop "Sustainable Development in Lake Areas: Empowering Local Initiatives and Civil society", which took place at Lake Vörtsjärv, 15-18 June 2009. The objective of this short interview was to enquire about the impact of Natura 2000 to the local farmers. The authors only had a few minutes to question the owner of the farm about aspects of Natura 2000, but as this article shows Aivo Arrak does not feel impaired by Natura 2000. Although the authors tried hard they could not get more specific information about Aivos plans regarding the biogas plant and why he did not manage to find investors.

About the authors:

Mechthild Adameit works as international advisor for the Promotion Association for Mountain River Lake Regional Development (MRLSD). MRLSD's purpose is to promote activities to protect and develop Poyang Lake, China's largest freshwater lake, and its watershed (in short MRL region). Our objective is to mobilize the participation of local communities and the establishment of partnerships among different stakeholders (including farmers, local communities, government agencies, and enterprises) to help solve the issues of ecological degradation and poverty to achieve a sustainable regional development.

Roman Guziak – Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczne "Etna" (Ecological Association "Etna"). „Etna” is a small environmental NGO working for wildlife habitat improvements, responsible use of biomass as an energy source and environmental education. Roman is a deputy director of the Board.

Piotr Kryszczak – t LGD Partnerstwo dla Doliny Baryczy (Local Action Group Partnership for Barycz Valley). Piotr is the Board member of the LAG, where he represents the Borough Office in Przygodzice, his place of work as fundraising consultant.

3 *Eel Farm at Lake Vörtsjärv - Triton PR, Mr. Raivo Puurits*

Raivo Puurits was a fisherman on a freshwater lake where the renewed stocks of eel were the main source of income for fishermen during the 1980-90s. The glass eels were regularly re-stocked in the lake in the Soviet Union time.



Raivo was the first to realize that the catches would soon decline as the stocking almost ceased after the collapse of the Soviet regime. He saw an alternative in creating a rearing center to produce large stocking eels in a recirculation system. Learning a lot about eel farming from a first visit to a Swedish fish farm in 1997, he soon realized that instead of producing only young eel for stocking, market size eel could also be reared in the recirculation system, and could be sold to the European market. Since then he has built up two facilities - one for glass eels and another for market size eels - these together produce 80 tons of fish per annum. One of his future plans is to build a third farm house for eels of medium size, and so double production. But as eel farming is quite an unstable business this is only an idea so far and all sales are currently going through an Estonian export company to the Netherlands, where the eels are smoked and marketed. However, developing the eel farm has not been without problems.

The worst moment was in 2003 when all the stock was lost because of a momentary power cut. The fuses were switched off, an alarm system did not work, and four pumps out of five stopped for the whole night. This was a very expensive lesson as insurance cover has not been available at a realistic rate. After this mishap, Raivo has duplicated and improved the alarm system to ensure that this does not re-occur.

Regarding the future, Raivo has many more ideas for improving and expanding his eel rearing system. However, he is also consulting local trout producers to develop trout recycling farms using many of the lessons learned with the eel systems and he is even going to invest in such a farm, believing that it is possible to produce trout in Estonia at a price competitive with the European market.

*Jaanika Kaljuvee, Lake Vörtsjärv Fisheries Agency
(preparatory text for Eel farm field trip)*

4 *Two steps toward the achievement of Water Framework Directive in Rannu*

It is a story about how a local community could make steps toward the achievement of Water Framework Directive. Let us have a look back to the history with Maano Koemets who works for the local authority and told us about the restoration of two impounded lakes at Rannu village and the waste water treatment systems.

The two impounded lakes with their sizes of 1 and 2 ha were created during the Soviet times in the 1970's. These lakes were connected to the draining system of Rannu village and the surrounding agriculture area earlier. In the beginning, the lakes were also used for swimming and bathing by local people. During decades nobody took care of their water quality which was getting worse and worse. The original depth of both lakes were 3-4 meters but the beds of the lakes filled



up sediments by inflow water and the depth of the lakes was only 1 meter in 2004. The water quality of the lakes was not really toxic but it was full up with chemicals from the agriculture fields and silt which caused the very bad shape of both lakes. The local municipality decided to find supporters for the restoration of these lakes. In 2005, with the help from various EU and national programs both lakes were purified. Their sediments were removed and their water quality has been analyzed twice a year by a laboratory with license since then. It is important to take water tests in appropriate time otherwise we get false result of the test. It happened once in the last 4 years that test water was taken at inlet of the lake after a heavy rainy period of early spring and the water contained high level of nitrate.

The municipality of Rannu completed a development plan with regard to the lakes areas. Now local people can swim again in these lakes but it would be nice to offer more leisure activities for locals and visitors here. They gained support for only purifying the water but they want to find support for creating a recreation area around the lakes and forming a green filter to the inflow water because the impounded lakes are also connected to the local melioration system.

The other step was the development of waste water treatment system. Before 2000, the waste water treatment system consisted of only three little ponds on which the waste water flowed through. The purification of the waste water wasn't really effective in that time. In 2001, the new waste water treatment system was finished with the



help of a national government program. It still consists of those three ponds but they got a new filtering and settling system. In 2001, the new system purified 120 m³/day for 500 residents but this amount decreased to 80 m³/day for 500 residents in 2009 as a result of the increasing price of water. On the good side people learned how to save and use the water economically. The purified waste water is used in the local melioration system.

The purposes of both projects were to improve the water condition which can improve the living standards of local people. Their results can show to everybody how a local community could work together for protecting environment and making a better, healthier life conditions. We wish them steadiness and strength for continuing this work in the future!

*Erzsébet Székely and Réka Belenta
Association of Civil Organizations of Lake Balaton*

Workshop

Sustainable Development in Lake Areas: Empowering Local Initiatives and Civil Society



15 - 18 June 2009
Lake Võrtsjärv, Estonia

Supported by



Welcome!

Forum Synergies and Global Nature Fund cordially invite you to a series of four workshops on participatory implementation strategies of environmental policies in lake areas, taking place in Estonia, Poland, Slovenia and France.

The workshops are meant to empower civil society actors to contribute to participatory sustainable development, and shall yield recommendations to local and EU governments about more participatory ways to implement environmental policies.

Goals and Objectives

The workshops are organised in the framework of the project “Sustainable Development in Lake Areas”, which is supported by Fondation de France.

The general objective of the project is to support initiatives in sustainable development by exchange on good practice of participatory implementation and local sustainable development. The exchange shall lead to capacity building of private actors, NGOs and local governments in environmentally sensitive areas.

The thematic workshops will contribute to the development of local democracy and to a more participative management of environmental resources, in order to fill the gap between European citizens and their institutions, and also via feed-back to decision makers to contribute to environmental and rural policies that better meet peoples’ need for participation.

The project’s objectives are

- ☞ to exchange experiences about different participatory implementation strategies of Nature 2000 and WFD in concerned rural areas
- ☞ to give local actors and authorities better access to practical knowledge about sustainable Nature 2000 and WFD implementation strategies via exchange with successful projects
- ☞ to develop political proposals to regional, state and EU governments to use the existing participatory options that are provided from EU-side in order to support sustainable development in rural areas.

The scientific partnership with University of Marburg / Germany assures that the project integrates political knowledge of integrated water body management

Background

Empowerment of Local Actors

Sustainable development depends on actors – actors that are willing to persistently strive for sustainable ways of life in their daily behaviour and take initiative to generate renewable energy, consume locally grown & organic food, use tourism services that save energy and look for ways of a sustainable life style. Since economic regional development is one crucial pillar of sustainability, governments depend on local initiatives of people and civil society organizations to turn the chances of regulative frameworks and accompanying funding policies into practical action. Therefore an exchange about best practice in motivation and integration of local actors is an important contribution to sustainable rural development and the empowerment of civil society. An exchange between old and new EU member state participants seems particularly useful in this respect since it combines long-term knowledge about EU regulation practices with newly emerging civil society movements.

Participatory Processes

The Aarhus convention, signed in 1998 by most European countries, invites authorities to enhance the public participation in decision-making related with environmental issues. The Natura 2000 network (based on the 'Habitat' and the 'Birds' directives) is requesting from national governments to protect species and habitats of common interest by preserving their current existence. It does not specify by which measures and thereby leaves room for participatory implementation. The European Water Framework Directive is requesting from national states to achieve a "good ecological state" for all surface water bodies until 2015. It expects explicitly the implementation of an active public participation. The three directives – and especially the Habitat Directive – are in many cases seen as very critical by farming organisations and local governments who fear economical constraints. On the other hand, at the local level the participatory implementation options frequently are unknown to the relevant actors because of lack of good examples.

Lake Areas

Lakes, river basins and coastal areas are good topics for exchange workshops about participatory implementation strategies because they fall usually under both Natura 2000 and water framework regulation, they give a common thematic focus, are of high public relevance and give room for integrated development approaches. Furthermore there tend to be serious conflicts of interest between different stakeholders, giving need for mediation and participatory conflict solution. More specifically, a common problem of European lakes is eutrophication from agricultural sources. EU regulation (Nitrogen directive) requests farmers since 2000 to restrict fertilization in order to prevent nutrient runoff to ground and surface waters. But there are implementation deficits, and big leftovers from former times pose a question of acceptable cleanup strategies. All this gives reason to look for more participatory implementation.

The Workshop Sites

The map shows the partners, the workshop sites and the site of the co-ordinating project office.

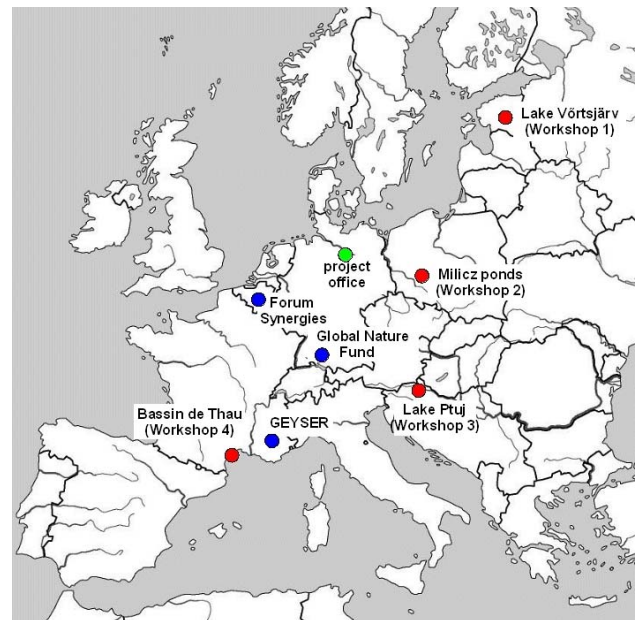
The project's four partner sites, of which Lake Võrtsjärv and Milicz ponds are members of Global Nature Fund's Living Lakes network, show the context of the project in different ways.

Lake Võrtsjärv near Tartu in Estonia, the biggest inner-Estonian lake, is mainly used by fishermen from the five surrounding villages with some recently evolving soft tourism and recreational activities. Nutrient intakes from the last decades caused heavy mud deposits in the shallow lake, deteriorating the water quality especially in summers with a thread of oxygen crises, and causing a reed belt of more than 100 meters to grow on its shore, preventing inhabitants to access the lake as they used to. There is need for an ecologically adapted solution under participation of the different interest groups.

The Milicz ponds near Wrocław in Poland are a great lake area that has been created by medieval monks for aquaculture. Nowadays they create an almost natural environment with very large numbers of birds and also plant species on the surrounding wetlands. ProNatura, an ecological NGO, takes care for the ponds and has organized a number of successful projects. We hope to learn a lot about successful integration of social inclusion, renewable energy initiatives and ecological initiatives into an overall activity that preserves the lake environment, creates jobs and develops cultural, economical and social potential.

Lake Ptuj near Rače, Slovenia's biggest lake, is an artificial water body behind a dam on Drava river. The reservoir suffers from eutrophication from agricultural land use in its catchment area and from heavy metal loads. Initiatives to enhance its quality of water and to develop local tourism are about to begin. Our partner organisation is currently developing a couple of activities around the lake and looks forward to hear from other sites' experiences about ways to mobilize local actors and come to terms with interest conflicts concerning land use in the catchment area.

Thau basin (Bassin de Thau) near Montpellier is the largest lagoon on the Mediterranean coast of France and one of the largest French lakes. The shallow lagoon experiences a high pressure of uses from fishery, mussel cultivation, agricultural land use and nutrient intakes from its catchment area, but also recreational use from its densely populated surroundings. Oxygen crises due to phosphorus loads occurred repeatedly during the hot summer months and, besides their environmental impacts, have caused heavy losses to the fishing industry. Needs for better water quality and for preservation of its ecological value for breeding and migratory birds are obvious. There are conflicts of interest around Thau lagoon – but also significant possible coalitions of interest e.g. between environmentalists and fish and mussel farmers.



Structure of the Workshops

After arrival of the participants and a welcoming evening, the workshops proceed in three steps.

On the first day the host organisation presents their situation and the foreign guests pose questions to better understand the situation and relate it to their own experiences. The participants are taken to a first field trip to get a more practical feeling about the local situation.

The second morning session allows the international guests to contribute their views, ideas and experiences with respect to the local situation. A second field trip in the afternoon of this day brings the participants to local initiatives and civil society groups to talk with them about their vision, their practical options and the specific local obstacles to their engagement.

The third morning session is dedicated to politics. Local politicians, national and EU governmental officials are invited to explain their view on possible support for sustainable development initiatives. Towards the end of the session the moderators try to crystallise political conclusions in order to formulate a valuable feedback to EU decision makers.

In order to enable the local public to participate in the meeting there is a cultural evening with presentation of local arts and culture and room for talk and drinking, and a political evening with a public presentation of the foreign guests and with latest information about EU political tendencies.

Conference Venue

The conference takes place at the shore of lake Võrtsjärv in Vehendi Guest House, Vehendi village, Rannu parish, Tartu County, Estonia. For more information see www.vehendi.ee (different languages available).

Participation Fee

Due to the support by the Fondation de France, no conference fee for participation will arise, and invited participants may be granted a 50% reimbursement on their travel costs.

Since the number of possible participants is limited to about 25, please consider your early registration at titus.bahner@lebendigesland.de.

Hosting Organisations, Supporters and Partners

Forum Synergies

Forum Synergies is a European network of practical pioneers in many aspects of sustainable rural development that has gathered rich and varied practical experiences since 1994. Forum Synergies holds contacts to different rural organisations as well as to policy makers on EU level, turning practical experiences into an input for the evolution of EU sustainability policies.

Global Nature Fund (GNF) and Living Lakes Network

GNF was founded in 1998 with the objective to foster the protection of nature and environment as well as animals. GNF's work consists mainly of initiating and implementing nature and environment protection projects to preserve the animal world, the protection of migrating species, their habitat and their migratory routes.

In 1998 the Living Lakes network has been launched by Global Nature Fund. At the moment there are 45 partner lakes represented by more than 55 member organisations. Our vision is that all lakes, wetlands and freshwater bodies of the world should be healthy ecosystems and being used in a sustainable way.

Lake Võrtsjärv Fisheries Development Agency and Lake Võrtsjärv Foundation (LVF)

Lake Võrtsjärv Fisheries Development Agency (FDA) is an independent, non-profit organisation, voluntarily founded by different juristic and physical persons around Lake Võrtsjärv in Tartu and Viljandi counties, which operates in purpose to support local initiative and local life in order to develop the whole Lake Võrtsjärv fishing area.

The Lake Võrtsjärv Foundation was established in 2000. Aims of the foundation are: raising the environmental awareness of the public, promoting the balanced development of the Lake Võrtsjärv region, protecting the lake as a sensitive water body, and promoting Lake Võrtsjärv as a rapidly developing recreational region both in Estonia and beyond.

Fondation de France

Fondation de France was established in 1969 to encourage the growth of private philanthropy as an intermediary partner. The foundation sets up action programs in many fields: solidarity, the elderly or disabled, and for the benefit of children. Fondation de France also promotes professionalism in the management of the voluntary sector in France and Europe.

GEYSER

Since 1983, the French non-profit association Geyser is strengthening innovative social practices in rural areas in France and abroad. Its members and staff coordinate networks and working groups, implement training sessions for local actors and build bridges between practitioners, researchers and policy makers. Currently, Geyser is working mainly in the fields of environmental mediation, participatory democracy and ethnoecology.

Programme

Monday, 15. June 2009	
Welcome	
	Arrival of participants at Tallinn Airport Bus shuttle from Tallinn to Lake Vörtsjärv (ca. 2,5 hours) Check-in and dinner at Vehendi Guesthouse
20:00	Welcome from our hosts Introduction of programme and participants
Tuesday, 16. June 2009	
Workshop Day I: The Local Situation (joint day with guests from Dnestr river, Moldova / Ukraine)	
8:00	Breakfast at Vehendi Guesthouse
9:00	Introduction of guest participants from Dnestr river Field trips: participants are divided in two groups. <i>Agenda group 1 (Agenda of group 2 will be in opposite order):</i> 1. Kale-boat tour on the lake Introduction to Lake Vörtsjärv and its surroundings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Natural and political history - Land use and economic activities - Social situation around the lake 2. Presentations in the Limnological Centre & Lake Museum <i>Margit Säre, Jaanika Kaljuvee, Representative of the Limnological Centre</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environmental situation and problems at Peipsi and Vörtsjärv - Natura 2000 - Requirements of the Water Framework Directive - Water management plans - Living Lakes network and local NGOs
12:30	Lunch at Vehendi Guesthouse
14:00	Afternoon session: Participation of local stakeholders in lake area development <i>Local guests. Moderators: Titus Bahner and Philippe Barret</i> NGOs and other interest groups around the lake present their situations

	<p>and positions: Situation of participatory development Mapping of possible conflicts of interest Role game: mediation exercise</p>
16:30	Bus transfer
17:00	<p>Fish and Craft Fair at mouth of river Emajõgi Tasting of local eel soup and home-made food Pre-event of National Song Festival Arrival at the festival fire on the waterway. Local cultural programme.</p>
20:30	<p>Farwell to guests from Dnestr River Bus transfer to Vehendi Guesthouse Evening buffet and open talks</p>
<p>Wednesday, 17. June 2009 Workshop Day II: The View from Outside</p>	
8:00	Breakfast at Vehendi Guesthouse
9:00	<p>Morning session: the view from outside Moderators Titus Bahner and Philippe Barret</p> <p>Summarising Day I</p> <p>Individual experiences about participatory or sustainable development – Guests contributions! Personal reflections Proposals for thematic groups Small group work: exchanging comments and propositions (coffee will be provided)</p> <p>Plenary meeting: short presentations from group work</p>
12:30	Lunch at Vehendi Guesthouse
14:00	<p>Field trips (bus transfer) to local actors, groups or projects Participants are divided into groups – each group visits one project <i>Presentations by local actors (English interpretation provided)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding the local initiatives - Understanding reasons for limitations - The challenge of sustainability - Restrictions and options from EU policies

17:00	<p>Plenary session <i>Moderators Titus Bahner and Philippe Barret</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Groups report from field trips - Exchange on impressions - View on the policy dimension
18:30	<p>Dinner at Vehendi Guesthouse Bus transfer (15 min.)</p>
20:00	<p>Public evening event at Rannu Center: Sustainable rural development at Lake Vörtsjärv region <i>Panel discussion (English/Estonian interpretation) with participation of national and EU governmental officials (to be named)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explaining the local situation to the politicians - What does sustainable development mean for this region? - How can national and EU policies support it?
<p>Thursday, 18. June 2009 Workshop Day III: The Political Dimension</p>	
8:00	<p>Breakfast at Vehendi Guesthouse</p>
9:00	<p>Morning session: policy conclusions <i>Moderators Titus Bahner and Philippe Barret</i></p> <p>Summarizing Day II Group work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do we see political limitations for sustainable development at Lake Vörtsjärv? - Should participatory implementation options be improved? - What recommendations can we draw for policies? <p>Plenary meeting: summaries from group work</p>
11:30	<p>Coffee Break</p>
12:00	<p>Workshop evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feedback from participants - Summarizing essential findings - Conclusions for next workshop
13:00	<p>Lunch at Vehendi Guesthouse</p>
14:00	<p>Departure of participants</p>

General Information

Time Zone	Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) plus 2 hours
Weather	In June the weather in Estonia can be warm. The average temperatures range from 15°C to 25°C. You may find some helpful weather forecast at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/5day.shtml?world=4981 or http://www.weather.ee/ .
Workshop Language	The workshop language will be English.
Currency	Estonian Kronas EEK (Exchange rate approx. 1 Euro = 15,6 EEK)
Communication	The international code for Estonia is +372. Mobile phone networks cover most areas
Electricity	Various electrical sockets can be found. Voltage is 230V. Information on adapters and plugs is available under http://kropla.com/electric2.htm

Address of Conference Venue

Vehendi Guesthouse
 adress: Vehendi, Rannu parish, Tartumaa 61117, Estonia
 phone +372 7460 580, email vehendi@hot.ee
www.vehendi.ee

Hosts and Conference Team

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