Promoting the Protection of Nature and Biodiversity in Urban Areas: European Capital of Nature and Biodiversity - Award for Cities and Municipalities in Europe 2009-2011

Project summary

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The principal objective of the project is to increase nature and biodiversity protection in urban areas by local authorities. The project will help to fulfil the objectives of the European Biodiversity Strategy and the Fauna-Flora-Habitat Directive (and all related Directives).

Specific objectives of the project are:

- To support and motivate initiatives of local authorities regarding nature protection and conservation of biodiversity in Europe through the organization of a competition for local communities
- To improve the successful German competition model and to transfer the experience to 4 other European countries (Spain, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland) as a pilot phase for a European Award
- To elaborate a concept for a European wide competition "European Capital of nature and Biodiversity"
- To support local authorities to fulfil legal compliance regarding nature and biodiversity protection
- To inform local authorities about their possibilities regarding nature and biodiversity protection
- To promote the extension and accessibility of green areas. Natural and anthropogenic green areas and their protection will have an immense importance in relation to the mitigation of negative impacts of climate change in the cities (microclimatic function of green areas)
- **To establish a common monitoring system on biodiversity and to monitor biodiversity development in communities participating in the awards**
- To inform and sensitise citizens regarding nature protection and conservation of biodiversity and the importance of their collaboration

Actions and means involved:

All project actions will take place within the territory of the EU27 Member States – especially within Germany, Spain, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary.

- Elaboration of a Train- the Trainer concept and realization of two workshops to enable the project partners to organize the competition in their respective countries (structure, procedure, competition material, external communication etc.).
- Elaboration of a Capacity Building programme for communities on the importance of biodiversity, relevant policies, possible activities on local level, positive examples, management instruments, monitoring, funding sources
- Elaboration of national competition concept (Capital of Nature and Biodiversity) for Spain, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland.
- **Elaboration of a common monitoring system (key set) for the presented initiatives.**
- Organisation of a national workshop in each participating country to present the competition concept to potential partners in order to request their collaboration.
- Elaboration of competition material in the respective language of the country.
- Establishment of national websites and establishment of a European website (European Forum)
- Presentation of the competition in Germany, Spain, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland and activation of a "Hot Line" in each country to assist municipalities. Local authorities will be invited to present their applications during six months.
- Realization of capacity building workshops for communities in each participating country based on the capacity building programme elaborated by ICLEI
- Evaluation of received applications en each participating country by a national jury (European expert included) and selection of the winners. Documentation of positive examples.
- Award ceremonies in Germany (2010) and Spain, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland (2010 and 2011) and publication of positive examples.

- Elaboration of a draft concept (structure, criteria, evaluation mechanism, communication) for the European wide Award. Evaluation of possible interrelation /synergies with sustainability awards for municipalities
- **Elaboration of monitoring reports on development of nature and biodiversity in urban areas.**

Under action 9 (coordinated by IUCN), the project will undertake monitoring and evaluation of the initiatives taken by local authorities. Local authorities will have to apply a basic biodiversity monitoring system, with few common key indicators, with the support from IUCN's Countdown 2010 initiative. Monitoring results will be communicated every year. This information will be published in the European Forum.

The objective of the monitoring will be to assess the effectiveness of the biodiversity conservation approach adopted by local authorities. The biodiversity monitoring will also provide an indication on how the ecosystems of these cities are being affected by a multitude of stress factors on the environment.

The monitoring programme will be implemented in the following manner:

- A set of biodiversity indicators will be identified for the purpose of monitoring. The indicators will be status, trend and response indicators. Examples of indicators include: Habitat diversity (number and relative proportion of different types of habitats present), proportion of area under green spaces, species diversity index, abundance invasive species, population of common bird and butterfly species, environmental legislation. This would be defined in year 1 along with the definition of a baseline.
- In order to involve the local community in the monitoring work, meetings and training will be organized to enhance their awareness, enthusiasm and skill-set to monitor biodiversity.
- A network will be established to collect data from different monitoring stations, in which the municipality will act as the nodal agency and an annual assessment will be carried out to monitor progress in relation to the baseline.
- Periodical compilation and analysis of the monitoring data.
- Consultation meetings with the local community and experts to discuss the results of the biodiversity monitoring, and to frame strategies for future implementation.
- Communication of the monitoring results to the project management agency.
- A regular trend analysis of the biodiversity components in each site, clearly exhibiting the changes in biodiversity components over time.
- A Monitoring Report on the basis of the first monitoring results of participating municipalities in Germany, Spain, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.
- Monitoring system for the European Award "European Capital of Nature and Biodiversity" tested in pilot awards and ready for further implementation