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## Workshop 2

### Title: Managing natural assets and protected areas

#### Background

The purpose of the AoI 2.3 is the cooperation and know-how transfer in managing natural assets (e.g. vulnerable ecosystems, natural/semi natural areas, protected areas) and support of transnational awareness building on the importance of natural assets as development factor.

The analysis of the results of the projects approved within the 1<sup>st</sup> call has shown a broad interest in the AoI 2.3 but the topic has not been correctly addressed in relation to the objectives and the transnational character of the Programme, as only 2 projects out of 54 have been approved.

The transnational cooperation should generate concrete projects, which will address the need for the implementation of EU legislation and will facilitate the coordinated management of the designated areas. The projects should also respect the demand for know-how transfer and the development of skills for the useful management of natural assets and protected areas.

#### Objectives

Achieve a better understanding of the AoI 2.3 through presentation of the objectives and expected type of projects and results of the AoI in SEE Programme and highlighting the differences between different Programmes (e.g. LIFE+), presentation of the current situation in the programme area and examples of best practices

The workshop will focus on issues related to the sustainable management of natural assets and on comprehensive solutions needed for the implementation of transnational strategies and plans for natural, semi-natural and protected areas.

#### Target groups

The workshop is intended for stakeholders active in the above mentioned fields and for the potential applicants:

- National, regional and local authorities;
- National, regional and local development and/or environmental agencies;
- National parks
- Universities, research centres, scientific institutions;
- Non governmental organisations;
- International organisations and bodies.

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## Draft Agenda

- Welcome; Introduction to the Workshop  
09:00 – 09:10  
*Alessandra Pala, SEE JTS; Luca Rosselli, Italian SCP*
- Situation in the SEE area, challenges and possible ideas to approach them  
09:10 – 09:30  
*Pier Carlo Sandei, UNEP*
- Avoiding duplication of EU financial instruments: LIFE+  
09:30 – 09:50  
*Joaquim Capitão, LIFE +, European Commission*
- Introduction to the SEE Programme and the Aol 2.3  
09:50 – 10:10  
*Alessandra Pala, SEE JTS*
- Transnational cooperation: added value in the management of natural assets and protected areas  
10:10 – 10:30  
*Margarita Jančič, Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Slovenia*
- Coffee break  
10:30 – 11:00
- Case study: From the Carpathian Project towards the Carpathian Space  
11:00 – 11:20  
*Pier Carlo Sandei, UNEP*
- Panel Discussion  
11:20 – 11:30  
*Moderator: Luca Rosselli, Italian SCP*
- Q&A  
11:30 – 12:00

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## The workshop

The actual situation of protected areas in the South Eastern European space, the threats and possibilities for improvement through the South East Europe Programme have been discussed in the Workshop 2 on *“Managing natural assets and protected areas”* as part of the SEE Annual conference *“Advancing development through transnational cooperation in South East Europe”*.

A thorough description of what has been done so far at national and international level to protect endangered species and natural assets has been presented by Mr. Pier Carlo Sandei from the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention – UNEP. The solution to the most urgent problems of these important areas which cross several national borders has been found in a joint management supported by a legal background. A first example has been the Alpine Convention, followed several years later by the Carpathian Convention. Alps and Carpathians are two of the three mountain chains that link the countries under the SEE area. The third mountain chain, relevant hotspot for biodiversity in the region is the Balkan and Dinaric Arc. This highlights the huge potential for expansion and improvement of protected areas, by exploiting links between conservation and development.

Since 1992, the European Commission provides funds to the natural, semi-natural and protected areas through a specific Programme: LIFE. The LIFE Unit manages for the period 2007-2013 the financial instrument LIFE+, with a total budget of € 2.143 billions. Mr. Joaquim Capitão, Deputy Head of the LIFE Nature Unit, presented the instruments and highlighted both differences and complementarities with the SEE Transnational Programme. LIFE+ is not a specific instrument for transnational projects, but it can be used to start pilots in a limited territory that could be a start-up for a transnational project under the SEE Programme. The allocation for projects action grants in 2009 reaches € 250 million, which will be further allocated to each country according to fixed criteria. The geographical scope of LIFE+ is limited to the 27 EU member states and it does not include candidate, potential candidates or neighbouring countries. Despite some differences, LIFE+ has also similarities with the SEE Programme regarding some eligible topics.

A highlight on the SEE Programme has been given by Ms. Alessandra Pala, SEE JTS Project Manger responsible for the priority on Environment. The results of the first Call for Proposal (CfP) under the SEE Programme has been analysed focusing on the Area of Intervention (Aoi) 2.3 *“Promote cooperation in management of natural assets and protected areas”*. Despite the very low percentage of approval compared to the received initial proposals, the funds allocated to the Aoi 2.3 have been properly committed. The most common causes for rejections have been thoroughly presented and explained and important suggestions on main programme expectations related to the transnational focus, partnership and content have been given. The second CfP under the SEE Programme foresees to close some Aoi (1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 4.1, 4.2) and to open some others with a more specific focus (2.2, 2.3, 2.4). As far as Aoi 2.3 is concerned, the focus is on the development and implementation of management plans for natural/semi-natural and protected areas of transnational interest, which have to be considered a resource, not a barrier for the comprehensive development of territories.

Ms. Margarita Jančič, from the Slovenian Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning and member of the SEE Monitoring Committee, stressed with her presentation the added value of the transnational cooperation in the management of natural assets and protected areas. Furthermore, a thorough explanation on how a partnership should be developed taking into consideration the peculiarities of the selected territory has been highlighted. Since a territory is not an empty space but a system composed of different structures and characteristics (physical, cultural and natural),

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they all have to be taken into consideration while forming a partnership. Specifically, protected areas should not be considered as “islands” but as part of and in continuous interrelation with a wider territory. This suggests having a comprehensive area approach while forming a partnership. Transnational cooperation gives an added value in all the phases of the development of the decisions-making processes, as it gives the chance to stakeholders to work together in addressing common problems, common challenges, development of skills, know-how transfer, access to information and awareness raising and understanding and tolerance.

A best practice of a successful project, the Carpathian Project financed under the CADSES programme, has been presented by Mr. Pier Carlo Sandei who focused on the importance of the Carpathians for the SEE area, listing the positive environmental and political achievements reached by the project. Due to its relevance, there is the need for the next programming period to explicitly address the comprehensive development of the Carpathian area, either through a dedicated Carpathian Space Programme (following the Alpine Space example) or by linking existing cooperation Programmes (namely Central and South East Europe programmes).

The first part of the panel discussion revolved around the need to strike a proper balance between socio-economic development of natural and protected areas and preservation of biodiversity and environmental features, as these are too often perceived as conflicting objectives. Speakers agreed that the conflict between development and environment arises from misleading concepts of both: protection of natural areas should be planned and implemented in such a way as to valorise their specific territorial capital and development potential. Conversely, economic and social development should be planned and implemented taking into account sustainability and the close interconnections existing between “core” and “peripheral” areas of the SEE area.

The second part of the panel discussion clarified the concept of added value from transnational cooperation: at present, the large majority of protected areas are designed on a national basis, and only a few of them acknowledge and promote their transnational dimension. Under this respect, speakers agreed that there is much to be done in order to overcome this situation and preventing the SEE area – which is indeed very much rich and diversified as to the territorial and environmental features of its regions – from remaining a “hot spot” of valuable but “unprotected” natural areas. It was also acknowledged that there are plenty of instruments and programmes to tackle this situation: what is missing is a proper coordination between different sectoral and governance levels. Through concrete cooperation examples the SEE Programme can start filling the gaps and demonstrate the benefits stemming from coordination and cooperation.

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