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Support Action in “Environment (including climate change)”

Nature and biodiversity:
opportunities for EU-Russia collaboration
Workshop Proceedings

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Project BIOSTRAT – EU experience on cooperation in scientific policy on strategy of biodiversity research and conservation

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1. Introduction

Biodiversity loss - one of the sides of modern ecological crisis on our planet today. It's well known that to hold homeostasis in ecosystems it needs some minimal degree of diversity on any of hierarchic level of biota. So we need effective mechanisms for biodiversity investigation, control, conservation, sustainable ecosystem service. Main priorities in this field needs to be encircled and seriously supported. These objectives can be achieved only on the way of international cooperation and wide involvement of decision-making people in this process. We have to accept as due that research plays an essential role in designing and implementing policies relevant to biodiversity issues.

2. Project description

The main objective of BIOSTRAT (www.biostrat.org) is to support the further development of a European Biodiversity Research Strategy. Such Research Strategy brings together ideas on research priorities in fundamental and applied sciences to address critical gaps in knowledge on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. This Strategy is intended to support the decision-making process regarding biodiversity-related research at both the European scale and in individual EU Member States by linking existing structures. Rather than developing new structures BIOSTRAT will provide specific support to EPBRS (European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy, www.epbrs.org), which provides a representative forum for researchers, science and environmental policy makers, and National Biodiversity Platforms. The EPBRS is a forum at which natural and social scientists, policy-makers and other stakeholders identify, structure and focus the strategically important research that is essential to conserve biodiversity, to use its components in a sustainable way, to make sure that the arising benefits are shared in an equitable way - and last but not least- to stop biodiversity loss. The EPBRS keeps close connections with relevant international bodies, national governments, EU institutions and EU projects in the field of biodiversity research. Since its inception in 1999 it has met twice a year under successive EU Presidencies to discuss and give recommendations on strategic research priorities for biodiversity. The agendas of the meetings of the EPBRS balance science and policy and the main tangible deliverable of each EPBRS meetings is a short written agreement on issues that are of high scientific and policy importance. The scientific flavor of the meeting ensures that all participants enjoy sufficient depth of understanding to discuss the substantive issues constructively. The themes addressed in the meetings are not only important to Europe, but of particular relevance to the organizing country and often to forthcoming CBD meetings, too. The group has so far dealt with many topics, including biodiversity and climate change, health, islands and archipelagos, invasive organisms, water and forest, the ecosystem approach, indicators, sustainable use, sustainable development, and sustaining livelihoods.

At the same time BIOSTRAT ensure that other European and international efforts to develop research strategies in different fields of biodiversity research are linked to the development of a European Research Strategy through the EPBRS forum. BIOSTRAT will, therefore, support other international initiatives to link their efforts to the European Biodiversity Research Strategy.

The overall objective achieved by:

- Supporting the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy (EPBRS) to develop and continually revise the EU Biodiversity Research Strategy
- Including the results of existing and ongoing biodiversity research projects in the development of the EU Biodiversity Research Strategy.

- Linking the EU Biodiversity Research Strategy to the national, European and international funding programs, especially the ERA-Nets related to biodiversity issues.
- Incorporating GEOSS objectives in the EU Biodiversity Research Strategy.
- Linking EU Biodiversity Research Strategy with international initiatives including the multi-stakeholder consultative process of the Paris Conference, the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment, the 2010 target, ESRI, GTI, GBIF, CBD, DIVERSITAS.

During the project realisation participants organised ten meetings connected with different aspects of research strategy, investigations, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. "Actions for the 2010 biodiversity target in Europe" - Hanasaari, Finland 17th - 19th November 2006; BIOTA workshop at EPBRS Meeting in Leipzig, Monday, 7th of May; "Life on the Blue Planet: Biodiversity Research and the new European Marine Policies", Porto, Portugal, 7th – 9th November 2007; Water for life: research priorities for sustaining freshwater biodiversity, Brdo, Slovenia, 15th -18th January 2008; " European contribution to GEO BON". Strategy to implement GEO-BON in Europe, Cegled, Hungary, 24-27 September 2008; "National Biodiversity Platforms Best Practice", Vilnius, Lietuva, 10th - 12th October 2007; "Economic dimension of biodiversity", Paris, France, 19–21 November, 2008; "World biodiversity and European taxonomy. Strategies in taxonomy: research in a changing world", Pruhonice, Czech Republic, 19th -22nd May 2009; "Targets for biodiversity beyond 2010 – research supporting policy", Visby, Sweden, 29 September–1 October 2009; "Evolution and biodiversity: the evolutionary basis of biodiversity and its potential for adaptation to global change", Palma de Mallorca, Spain, 13-15th of April, 2010. In every case there were developed recommendations for research, implementation and communication actions that must receive high priority and adequate financial support from decision-making people, science and environmental policy makers.

3. Case-studies and applications

In EU now existing national programmes and methods development; European research networks for monitoring (e.g.: LTER); European NGO networks for birds and other taxa; National, European and global land cover mapping. Platforms for sampling in the marine environment and co-ordination mechanism EuroGOOS. A variety of monitoring strategy research projects (e.g.: EBONE).

National monitoring databases. 20 European countries are publishing data to international standards through GBIF. GBIF as a means of discovering, and obtaining the data from the different in situ monitoring types; limited academic investment in model development; the planned 'LifeWatch' infrastructure to integrate the data and models and provide a service to assessment.

SEBI2010 linked to Eurostat European Headline Indicators, European Ecosystem Assessment, Directive e.g.: Natura 2000 reporting, national assessments.

4. Potential EU-Russia collaboration

Cooperation between EU and Russia can be very perspective in the field of development of GIS-technology global land cover mapping, joint data-bases, improvement mechanisms of interactions between networks and new cooperative efforts have to be considered and promoted, twin projects on modern taxonomy (modern and ancient DNA investigations) that actually is going on.

Organization of workshops and conferences between leading specialists on biodiversity and decision-making people from EU and Russia for development of joint mechanisms on the base of new intergovernmental agreements to improve the quality and policy relevant research on biodiversity. Development international legislation basement to integrate biodiversity maintenance into business practice and ethics. Russia needs development of legislation basement and involvement into international systems of ecological monitoring, nature protection laws and biodiversity control measures, as an instrument of restriction of bureaucracy and corruption. Exchange in the area of development and improvement science policy Interface, communication and public awareness. Involvement of Russian scientific biology resources and ideas for European tasks will be very useful for both sides and can improve situation with conservation of biodiversity as a whole promoting dissemination of this knowledge and its implications across Europe and globally.