



European Capital of Nature and Biodiversity – Award for Cities and Municipalities in Europe

It is estimated in UNEP's Global Biodiversity Assessment that, on a global level, biodiversity is decreasing at a faster rate now than at any other time in the past. The situation in Europe is also a cause for concern. The rich biodiversity of the European Union has been subject to slow changes over the centuries, due to the impact of human activities. The scale of this impact has accelerated dramatically in the last few decades. The Assessment by UNEP confirms that in some European countries up to 24% of species of certain groups such as butterflies, birds and mammals are now nationally extinct.

The importance of urban biodiversity increases constantly given that 2007 is the first year where more people live in urban than in rural areas. Cities occupy just 2% of the surface area of the planet, but absorb a staggering 75% of the World's natural resources. Local authorities can play an important role in nature and biodiversity protection, because of their variety of possibilities to be active.

Through the instrument of national competitions, local authorities have the possibility to present their activities in nature and biodiversity conservation in field of activities such as:

- Planning (instruments and processes)
- Creation and management of community green areas and protected areas
- Protection of species and biotopes
- Conservation and improvement of water bodies
- Planning and management of rural areas (agricultural land, forests)
- Information and education
- Cooperation with neighbouring municipalities, regional administrations, stakeholders
- Green purchasing
- Climate change: adaptation and climate protection

The award "European Capital of Biodiversity" will motivate local authorities to increase their efforts regarding the protection of biodiversity and will recognize the efforts of the most engaged cities and municipalities. During a first phase, the award will be established in Spain, France, Hungary, Slovakia and Germany - the first round of the competition will start in 2010. The participation of minimum 450 communities is expected. Final objective of the project is to implement the award in all member states of the European Union.

A training programme will be realized in all five countries in order to raise awareness and to increase the knowledge of local authorities regarding national and European legislation, concrete measures for the protection of biodiversity, financing sources, monitoring of biodiversity development and communication towards stakeholders and citizens.

Monitoring is important for good governance. Doing monitoring – even if it is only at the beginning – is therefore an "indicator" for biodiversity protection by itself. Being able to provide indicator values also shows good cooperation, since it is often NGOs etc who collect the relevant data. The project includes the development and implementation of a simple but meaningful monitoring system for all EU countries. The Singapore Index has been chosen as the key set of indicators and the awards questionnaire will include minimum 16 indicators of the Singapore Index. On the basis of the feedback from the local authorities, IUCN will elaborate the first monitoring report and provide feedback to the CBD regarding the practicability of the Index.

Contact

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