

### Protection of the environment and biodiversity for sustainable future of rural areas: the case of planned regional park Trnovski Gozd, Slovenia

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**Protection of Environment and Biodiversity  
for Sustainable Future of Rural Areas: The  
Case of Planned Regional Park of Trnovski  
Gozd, Slovenia**

ANDREJ UDOVC AND ANA BARBIC

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**ABSTRACT**

The first part of the paper examines Slovenian agricultural and environmental policy related to nature protection and sustainable rural development in the period of the country's transition. This period has been characterised by creation a new independent state, introduction of a multi-party democratic political system, transformation of planned-market economy to market economy as well as by the coming accession to the EU. The analysis of relevant laws reveals that environment and nature protection legislation is more advanced and more effective in practice than agricultural and forestry legislation, both, however, displaying a top-down approach. In the second part of the paper, empirical studies are made into the impact of the different laws on agriculture, forestry and environment protection practices as well as into the proposed foundation of Trnovski Gozd Regional Park as a protected area. The empirical studies were based on interviews made with 20 members of local and 7 members of state elite. Local and state elite respondents believe that, despite some limitations, the park will offer good opportunities for local development (promotion of the area, new jobs, eco-tourism), and by the same token guarantee protection of nature/biodiversity and the environment. The local elite respondents, furthermore, agree that local authorities and local residents (NGOs) should participate at all stages of the foundation of the regional park.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CAP – Common agricultural policy

CRPOV - Integrated rural development and village renovation

IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

LEADER - Links between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy

LFA - Less favoured areas

MAFF - Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food

MESP - Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning

NEAP - National Environmental Action Programme

NPAA - National Programme for the Adoption of the *Acquis*

PHARE CBC - PHARE Cross-Border Co-operation

SAEP - Slovenian Agri-Environment Programme

SAPARD - Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development

## 1. Introduction

One of the most pronounced characteristics of Slovenia is its relatively high quality of the environment, rich biodiversity and the diversity of landscape types on a relatively small area due to the transitional position of the country placed among the Alps, Dinaridic mountain range, Panonian lowland and the Mediterranean basin. Being aware of its national as well as international value, the Republic of Slovenia has protected its natural heritage by adopting relevant laws, e.g. Law on Environment (1993) and Law on Conservation of Nature (1999), and formulating adequate programmes and strategies, such as NEAP (National Environmental Action Programme, 1999), SAEP (Slovenian Agri-Environment Programme, 2001) and Biodiversity Conservation Strategy of Slovenia (2001). All environmental and nature protection documents implement relevant international conventions and European Union (EU) regulations 43/92 and 409/79 (Birds and Habitats Directives).

The enlargement of the size of protected areas (in accordance with IUCN definition of protected areas categories) from eight up to thirty percent (Odlok o spremembah in dopolnitvah prostorskih sestavin dolgoročnega in srednjeročnega družbenega plana Republike Slovenije, 1999) of the country's territory will not only facilitate the protection of the environment and prevent its future degradation but also contribute to the conservation of biodiversity (NEAP, 1999: Minister's foreword) and hopefully stimulate local development. Slovenia plans to add 6 regional and some 30 landscape parks to the existing number of one national park, two regional and 60 landscape parks. Establishment of a regional park requires a specific law/decreed, which defines natural and cultural heritage and specifies limitations for human activities including agriculture, forestry and hunting. In the process of establishing a regional park it is, thus, necessary to coordinate interests of protection of the environment/nature with the interests of agriculture and forestry as typical economic activities in protected area.

Although some 60 percent of the country's surface is covered by forests, the production of timber does not belong to the most profitable economic activities in rural areas. Yet it is an important supplement to farm families' income.

Agricultural production in Slovenia is very diversified due to heterogeneous natural conditions. In areas where natural conditions allow the usage of modern technologies, intensive agricultural production is predominant. In less favourable areas (approx. 75% of the agricultural land), traditional production systems are applied, though often using modern equipment. Crop rotation is relatively widespread, soil humus content is not decreasing, but soil fertility level is low. Mainly organic fertilisers from livestock farms are applied, and the usage of pesticides is very low. Unfortunately, the agricultural land in less favourable areas is threatened by overgrowing with forest. A significant proportion of the Slovenian agriculture could, thus, be characterised as environmentally friendly and as being in line with sustainable agricultural production. This situation can be a good starting point for further development towards sustainable agriculture even if the intensity level of agricultural production will increase. Currently, the majority of farms situated in less favoured areas produce only for self-consumption but different policies targeting the development of these areas might encourage market production in the future, at least to a certain extent.

Ecological farming as a type of agricultural production started in the end of 1980s when the first ecological farms and their associations were established. However, the real development started after 1997, when the first association of market oriented ecological farmers was set up. Today, there are about 300 certified ecological farms and approximately 150 applicant farms, which will acquire a certificate within the next two years. The highest growth rates were observed in 1998 and 1999 when the subsidies for ecological farming were introduced. About 50 percent of all ecological farms are engaged in dairy and meat production.

Sustainable forestry and ecological farming are least in conflict with the protection of environment and nature, and can make important contributions to preserve cultural landscape and biodiversity. Protecting environment and biodiversity within the framework of regional and landscape parks - that seems to be the optimum option for sustainable development of areas with rich natural and cultural heritage.

This article is composed of two parts. The first part describes pre-accession policy and accession process and anticipates its impact on agri-environmental policy formation in Slovenia with special attention being paid to protected areas. In particular, the authors discuss the impact of the EU law harmonisation process on the formulation and implementation of relevant nature/biodiversity conservation and agri-environmental legislation. They assess the impact of the EU pre-accession funds (PHARE, SAPARD) on the formation of the agri-environmental policy and evaluate the effectiveness of the administrative/local institutions in compliance with the existing EU standards and requirements.

The second part of the article deals with the situation of a specific area of the country to be protected, i.e. Trnovski gozd regional park. The specific problem of the case study area is to find solutions for revitalising traditional agriculture/forestry in the area while, at the same time, ensuring environment, nature and biodiversity protection. The following aspects of the problem are discussed: coordination between the interests of agriculture and environment/nature protection, vertical and horizontal cooperation of governmental and non-governmental bodies, and participation of local residents in relevant decision-making processes.

## **2. Pre-accession policies (PHARE, SAPARD)**

Accession to the European Union has been Slovenia's fundamental aim since its independence in 1991. The country submitted its membership application in July 1996. Slovenia formally became an associate country, which is preparing for full EU membership. Officially, the accession process started on 30 March 1998 based on the Accession Partnership document, including assistance to the candidate country in its preparations for full membership by the end of 2003.

The National Programme for the Adoption of the *Acquis* of the Republic of Slovenia (NPAA, 1999) sets out short- and mid-term priority areas for the adjustment of the country's legislation, the time schedule, responsible institutions for its implementation, and financing resources. The NPAA has a dual role: 1) the definition of country's developmental and strategic objectives; and 2) the definition of policies, mechanisms and

institutions needed for the realisation of these objectives during pre-accession period (NPAA, 1999: 1, 2, 3).

The variety of natural and structural conditions requires a broad range of structural adjustments necessary for both the agricultural sector and the rural sector. Therefore, the Slovenian government adopted a strategic document on the reform of agricultural policy, i.e. the "Programme of Agricultural Policy Reform" (Program reforme kmetijske politike 1999-2002) (1998) and a corresponding mid-term implementation plan. The programme objectives are: 1) promotion of less market-distorting support, 2) enhancement of mechanisms of structural policy, and 3) a greater synergy with regional policy measures in ensuring an integrated approach of rural development activities.

The key characteristics of the national agricultural and rural development policy are:

- (a) *Liberalisation of agricultural trade*: A considerable reduction of market support followed by extended introduction of direct income payments. The only measures considered are those that are CAP compatible or could be maintained after accession.
- (b) *Introduction of environmental and landscape payments*: Two CAP-like programmes of direct payments are introduced. Slovenia will hence earmark a great deal of its budget for subsidising agriculture in less-favoured areas (LFA programme) and for boosting environmentally and landscape-friendly farming (SAEP - Slovenian Agricultural and Environmental Programme, 2001). The new approach to agriculture and rural development seeks to mitigate the negative pressure on the environment, depopulation of rural areas and the deterioration of the traditional landscapes. Farmers will get paid for services they provide which are not recognised by the market, but are socially justified and necessary.
- (c) *Agricultural and rural development programme*: The programme has three main sub-programmes: the agricultural structures sub-programme; the food processing industry sub-programme; and the integrated rural development sub-programme.

Measures foreseen in the agricultural structures sub-programme (on-farm investment support, support for young farmers, producer groups support and other forms of agricultural and structural assistance) should lead towards establishment of economically viable production units in agriculture.

## 2.1 PHARE

During the pre-accession period, PHARE programme financed first operations undertaken in Slovenia to close the development gap between Slovenia and EU. Hence, between 1992 and 1999, Slovenia received 240 million EUR from PHARE programme. More recently, in accordance with the latest guidelines of PHARE programmes, a major part is intended for the so-called "twinning".



The PHARE Cross-Border Co-operation (PHARE CBC) Programmes are an integral part of the overall PHARE programme and, therefore, of the pre-accession strategy. They have had stronger influence on Slovenian agriculture than other PHARE programmes. There has been a strong coherence between PHARE CBC and PHARE INTERREG programmes with Austria and Italy. Special emphasis has been laid in these Programmes on "people-to-people" activities and transfer of knowledge and experiences, since natural conditions for farming are very similar on either side of the Slovenian-Italian and the Slovenian-Austrian border regions.

The PHARE CBC projects targeted rural communities in general in order to strengthen them and create local capacity for identifying and implementing rural development projects. This includes, in particular, the development of alternative farm enterprises, new forms of marketing, supplementary on-farm activities (i.e. farm tourism) and development of brand names for local products. However, none of such CBC projects was specifically designed for protected areas, although some of them were carried out in protected areas. The Cross-Border Co-operation projects in the field of agriculture have gained a growing importance within the framework of overall CBC programmes. They are prepared upon the initiative of local institutions and the agricultural advisory service, and are co-ordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food (MAFF) as well as by the inter-Ministerial coordination bodies.

The priorities identified in Accession Partnership and National Plan for the Adoption of the *Acquis* are key references for future cross-border cooperation projects, which should be considered complementary to SAPARD activities in border regions.

## 2.2 SAPARD

Slovenian agricultural policy follows its long-term strategic objectives as set out in 1992 (MAFF, 1993). In principle, they do not differ from those of the EU CAP. They target food security, preservation of population density in the countryside, preservation of production potentials, increase of agricultural competitiveness and guaranteed parity income for farmers. Slovenian agricultural policy is based on the concept of multifunctionality of agriculture considering agriculture as an economic activity serving the range of environmental, spatial and social functions. In this respect, the objectives of SAPARD largely correspond to the broad agricultural policy objectives of Slovenia. The specific goals to be addressed with SAPARD in Slovenia are:

- Improvement of production and marketing structures in agriculture and the food-processing industry: increased competitiveness of the farming and food processing sectors, improvement of farm incomes, and compliance with EU standards;
- Economic diversification and improvement of rural infrastructure;
- Creation of additional employment on farms and improvement of quality of life in rural areas.

Eligible measures under the Slovenian SAPARD programme consist of 1) Investments in agricultural holdings, 2) Support for capital investments in processing and marketing of agricultural and fishery products, 3) Investments in food processing industry, and 4) Support for improvement of rural infrastructure and economic diversification of farm activities. The expansion of CRPOV programmes is supported by including them into SAPARD framework operating at inter-municipality or intra-municipality levels. Thus, the financial contribution of CRPOV programmes to sustainable rural development will be doubled.

On-farm investment support is one of the key measures for improvement of agricultural production structures and, thus, contributes to the increase of the competitiveness of farm holdings in Slovenia. It is primarily aimed at improving hygienic, animal welfare and environmental protection standards on farm holdings. Investment support from SAPARD is planned for three categories: investment support for young farmers, support for renewable energy sources and support for alpine dairies.

The food-processing industry sub-programme of SAPARD comprises various forms of support measures aiming at the improvement of food commodity competitiveness, the creation of new jobs and the coverage of expenses emerging from adoption of legislation (chiefly veterinary legislation).

The integrated rural development sub-programme outlines measures that shall stimulate economic diversification and support innovative rural development programmes. It clearly defines the role of agriculture and that of the MAFF in the development of rural areas and in the context of regional policy. The European Council Regulation 1268/99 strongly encourages the accession countries to promote integrated rural development (MAFF, 1999).

### 2.3 OPERATIONS UNDERTAKEN WITHOUT EU ASSISTANCE

Until 2000, there was no clear separation between market policies and rural development policies within the national agricultural policy. Slovenia's structural policies implemented in agriculture were predominantly production-oriented and short-term framed for their implementation. Market policies were much more inter-twinned with structural policies than within the CAP. This applies in particular to structural measures in less favoured areas (LFA), where income and investment measures were at the same time the backbone of income support. However, the impact of the support measures on agricultural development in Slovenia has so far been small. By contrast, the investment policy for agricultural holdings has had a significant effect on rural development.

Owing to the political and agricultural significance of *Less Favoured Areas* having less favourable conditions for agriculture as well, a mechanism of support was already developed in 1975 in Slovenia. The goals to be attained in the LFAs are largely compatible with those of the EU. They encompass the following economic, social and environmental principles: 1) compensation of higher production costs due to unfavourable natural conditions, 2) combating the abandonment of farming and out-migration from the remote rural areas, 3) preservation of the cultural landscape, and 4) integrated rural development.

The Decree on the Designation of LFAs (Uredba o kriterijih za določitev območij z omejenimi možnostmi za kmetijsko dejavnost, 2000) defines the LFAs according the EU typology (Council Regulations 950/97 and 1257/99) and lays down criteria for designation of lessfavoured areas. It set the basis for support measures and mechanisms which started in 2001. The European Council Regulations 950/97 and 1257/99 brought changes into Slovenia's support system to LFAs. The former criteria of LFAs in Slovenia ranged from the peculiarity of geographic conditions (height and slope), and demographic trends (average population age and out-migration trends) to the general economic situation (generally, a low economic development of the area). As the result of dropping the latter criterion, some areas, which were formerly considered LFAs, found themselves are excluded with the new legislation. In order to remain entitled to support for their development, some of those areas have been declared as protected areas as they meet the Habitat Directive requirements.

The total share of LFAs accounts for 84.3 percent in Slovenia's territory and for 78.4 percent in its agricultural land. Hilly and mountain areas represent 70.1 percent in the total area of Slovenia, other LFAs for agricultural production amount to 13.9 percent, and areas with specific natural handicaps come up to 1.3 percent.

In comparison with other regions, the investment aid share in total capital investments is by ten to fifteen percent higher in LFAs.

### **Agri-Environmental Measures**

Until 2001, the agri-environmental programmes did not comply with European Council Regulation 1257/99. However, some measures encompassing the gene bank programme, investment support to integrated production in fruit-growing, support to pasture grazing and mowing of meadows on steep slopes could be deemed as agri-environmental measures. Measures promoting organic farming were formally initiated in 2000 with the introduction of 'Rules for Organic Farming'.

The mayor environmental problems in association to agriculture in Slovenia are: 1) the abandonment of farming and the subsequent out-migration from rural areas, deterioration of cultural landscape and economic, cultural and social decline of these areas, and 2) intensive farming in lowland areas leading to groundwater and soil pollution. However, it has been a common impression, that the agricultural production and agricultural policy measures have not had an adverse impact on the environment in general.

### **SAEP - Slovenian Agri-Environmental Programme**

SAEP was adopted by Slovenian government in May 2001 as an integral part of agriculture policy implemented in 2001. SAEP draw largely on the EU experiences in formulating the agri-environmental programmes following especially the Austrian approach due to the similarity of natural conditions between the two countries. The corresponding measures are intended to reduce the negative impacts of agriculture on the environment, preservation of cultural landscape and biodiversity, reduction of forest overgrowing, protection of environment, and support to protected areas.

The agri-environmental programme supports agriculture in its environmental functions and defines an action plan fostering reform of Slovenian agriculture, while, at the same time, adjusting it to EU requirements for the protection of the environment. The programme, hence, refers to preservation of specific qualities of Slovenian countryside, such as traditional farming in connection to preservation of cultural heritage and typical Slovenian landscapes. In the past, many biotopes were preserved due to their remote locations from urban centres or due to environmentally friendly farming practices. Thus, it is still possible to meet some unique animal and plant species in the countryside, which exist only in special extensively cultivated environments.

The government expects that the present agri-environmental programme will be attractive to farmers and that 20 to 40 percent of all agricultural land will gradually be included into it. According to the Law on Agriculture (2000), the agri-environmental programme will be financed from national budget and agricultural development fund until the EU membership of Slovenia. Local communities can also finance certain measures from their budgets, but only as a supplement to existing measures.

### **SAEP Agri-environmental Measures**

The measures of Slovenian agri-environment programme were designed to preserve the existing positive attitude towards environment and additionally stimulate potential polluters to use more environmentally friendly practices. In this light, special attention is paid to education and promotion of SAEP, which are not set as special measures but as an integral part of all other measures. In this sense, all farmers included in SAEP are obliged to participate in the corresponding education programmes, free of charge. SAEP implementation is carried out at national scale and all measures are horizontal and nation-wide eligible.

Within the frame of agri-environmental measures, the preservation of cultivated land and settlements in protected areas is supported as well. A farmer, who operates in a protected area and decides to carry out at least one of the measures from group I (Reduction of negative agricultural externalities on environment) or group II (Preservation of natural heritage, biodiversity and cultural landscape), is eligible to 10% higher payments per ha of his agricultural land. For the case study area this means that farmers can choose any measure proposed by SAEP. However, since the regional park is not declared yet, they are not eligible to higher premiums.

### **Rural Development**

Slovenia's regional policy is based on the Law on Promotion of Balanced Regional Development (1999). Regional policy of Slovenia is carried out primarily through investments in infrastructure and industrial development, with limited funds available also for the preparation of projects of Integrated Rural Development and Village Renovation (CRPOV). Measures in this area are also carried out within the activities of the Fund for Regional Development and Preservation of Rural Areas. With the implementation of the CRPOV programme, Slovenia has acquired substantial experience in promoting sustainable rural development over the last decade. The CRPOV programme is administered by the Department of Rural Development at MAFF.

The CRPOV approach is similar to the approach of LEADER programmes but not comparable in terms of scope and timeframe. The scope ranges from one village to a maximum of one municipality. CRPOV projects cover three phases: preparation for CRPOV (formulating of local initiative, location selection and assertion of local community for financial participation), introduction of project (the development vision of the village) and realisation of project (realisation of selected activities for reaching corresponding development).

CRPOV projects represent an important institutional instrument, linking the role of agriculture with the integrated development of rural areas. The villages included in the case study area of Trnovski Gozd have been involved in several CRPOV projects, initiated and carried out by local NGOs and other local actors (municipality, developmental firm, enterprise).

### **3. The Accession process**

#### *3.1 BIRDS AND HABITATS DIRECTIVES*

##### **Legislation situation - Acquis**

The legal status of both directives does not imply that they have to be directly adopted by the Member States. They are only obliged to transpose them into the national legislative system by the date set forth in the respective directive. The legal transposition of Birds and Habitats Directives is already taking place in Slovenia and all obligations related to them will come into force after accession without any transitional period. The Birds and Habitats Directives will be transposed by the Law on Conservation of Nature (1999) and by the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy of Slovenia (2001). Parts of both Directives have already been transposed within existing legislation and applied in nature conservation practise (protected areas, protected species).

##### **Birds**

In Slovenia, all bird species are protected except the following five: *Anas platyrhynchos* – raca mlakarica, *Garullus glandarius s-* šoja, *Corvus cornix* - siva vrana, *Pica pica* - sraka, *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis* - veliki kormoran. Slovenia suggested to add *Chararadrius alexandrinus* - beločeli deževnik into Appednix I of Birds Directive on the basis of information from orintological societies that the existence of this bird species is menaced especially in the accession countries. In Slovenia, *Chararadrius alexandrinus* is already protected. There is also a very limited number of huntable birds. Thus, the protection status of birds in Slovenia is *de facto* higher than in the EU Member States. Relevant studies on this issue suggest that important bird areas in Slovenia are still to be defined and approved by Brussels by the end of 2002.

##### **Habitats**

General conservation measures are defined for some habitat types in the existing legislation. They will be operationalised in special bylaws, which will be adopted by the government. Some habitats are already protected within the existing system of protected areas. In addition, the habitat types have been defined for all state territory and the directions for their conservation are in preparation. At present, the situation of Europe protected species and habitat types is favourable in Slovenia. However, the preservation

of the richness of species and habitat types may still be a challenging issue for Slovenia in the future.

In Slovenia, the existing legislation on birds and habitats protection is practised over the whole territory regardless of the protection status of an area. However, the protected areas have a protection status due to rich flora and fauna in addition to other natural and environmental heritage (Barbic and Udovc, 2001:179-224).

### **Conservation/re-naturation of habitat types**

Though in the field of the conservation/re-naturation of habitat types Slovenia possesses knowledge and substantive studies, the country has limited possibilities to implement the existing programmes due to the lack of financial resources. There are some examples of forming new habitats types (e.g. depressions after gravel extraction). A good/successful example of re-naturation is the project of Rehabilitation and Restoration of Škocjanski zatok (detailed below):

Škocjanski zatok and its surroundings are characterised by an outstanding diversity; the area provides home for 41% of all Slovene amphibians, 41% of all Slovene reptiles, 55% of all species of birds observed in Slovenia, and 36% of all mammals living in Slovenia. This diversity of animal and plant species is facilitated by different depths of the lagoon, a high diversity of habitats, marshy meadows, shoals, embankments, pools, rivers etc. Due to the immediate vicinity of the sea, the Mediterranean climate, the sub Mediterranean vegetation and some other factors, Škocjanski Zatok is unique among Slovenian ecosystems. The large area is covered by brackish water that unlike most stagnant waters in Slovenia and central Europe does not freeze, unless the winter is particularly hard.

By changing the flow of Badaševica river into the Koper Bay in the 1980s, and by closing the left discharge of Rizana river, Škocjanski zatok was left without sources of fresh water that were supplying it, among other things, with oxygen. Later on, the Port of Koper started to dry the lagoon with 286 thousand cubic meters of sludge which spread over the entire lagoon and destroyed the original bottom, rich with nutrients. The number of bird species and of individual birds fell drastically. In 1999, the Government issued a decree on the authorised body for the natural reserve. The ten-year-long authorisation for the management of Škocjanski Zatok natural reserve was awarded to the Bird Watching and Bird Study Association of Slovenia (interview with Vesna Kolar Planinšič).

According to relevant Tables of Harmonization (Kremsec-Jerovšek and Bedjanič, 2000; Kremsec-Jerovšek and Skoberne, 2000), harmonization of both directives with Slovenian legislation is, in general, completed. The corresponding body of by-laws defining the systems of implementation and monitoring of specific chapters/measures is planned to be realized by the end of 2002. The main problems relate not to the adjustment of the legislation but to operational aspects including the definition of Special Protection Areas, of Potential Area of Community Interest and of Special Areas of Conservation mainly because of its tight timeframe.

Three action programmes are the most relevant for the realization of both directives as well as for the definition of NATURA 2000 sites. They are: the National Environmental Action Programme (NEAP, 1999), the Slovenian Agricultural Environmental Pro-

gramme (SAEP, 2000), and the National Action Programme for Conserving Biodiversity and Landscape (in preparation).

### **Administrative provisions**

Existing administration structures are responsible for transposition and implementation of both directives. On the basis of the Law on the Conservation of Nature (1999), the Agency for the Environment was established in May 2001 at the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. The Agency is a national professional institution responsible for performing managerial and professional tasks related to the integrated protection of the environment.

### **The managerial arrangements in protected areas**

The establishment and management of protected areas is regulated by the corresponding act passed by the Parliament in 1995 (*Ustanavljanje in upravljanje naravnih parkov v Sloveniji*, 1995:56-64). So far, three parks (Triglav National Park, Kozjansko Regional Park and Škocjanske Caves Regional Park) have been set up in Slovenia on the basis of park-specific laws, respectively, regulating the establishment of the parks and specifying all relevant measures of their management.

The latest relevant law is the Law on Škocjanske Caves Regional Park (1996). Besides defining the boundaries, specific protected items and the regime of protection, the law includes a chapter on protection and development and a chapter on the public management agency called Public Institute of Škocjanske Caves. According to this law, the Parliament passes the 5-year programmes of protection and development, which, among other topics, specifies ways of taxation and other supportive policies, subsidies and loan policy adopted to support the park development. To some extent, attention is given to socio-economic aspects of the protected areas, in general, but it was felt that it might not be enough as one of the respondents stated. The law foresees the presence of the local residents' representative in the council of the Public Institute but he/she cannot outvote local residents' interests if not supported at least by three out of seven members of the council.

Within the four-year development research project (1994-1998), the attention was paid to rising awareness of local residents about the value of natural and cultural heritage of the area as well as about its development potential in spite/because of the protection. As final result of the project, the economic product of the local community was formulated on the bases of the potentials (interests, knowledge/qualifications, material and at least some financial resources) of individual households (Barbic, 1999). In spite of the very active local tourist society and the support of the professionals employed at the Public Institute, there has been little economic development observed in Škocjanske Caves Regional Park, which might at least partly be ascribed to the fall of initiative of local tourist society as well as of individual households.

The implementation of both Directives would require a complete system of nature conservation. There has been a long tradition in this field in Slovenia. The nature and biodiversity are relatively rich and well preserved. However, there is still shortage of finances and human resources in terms of administration and research capacities as well as awareness of general public. Therefore, it is difficult to expect a rapid move towards implementation of all aspects of both directives, particularly in those areas, which require important resources in terms of time and staff (e.g. public participation, information and education).

Diversity of landscapes and rich biodiversity - that are definitely most distinctive features of Slovenia. In no other parts of Europe one can find as many landscape types and as many different species within the distance of 260 km (the distance between Hodoš at North-East and Piran at South-West of Slovenia) as in Slovenia. According to Peterlin (2001:11), there are some 21 thousand species living in Slovenia: 17,500 animal and 3,500 plant species - a treasure that Slovenia can offer to the European ecosystem.

The legal protection of Slovenia's treasure dates back to the Second World War. In January 1945, the Presidency of the Slovenian Nation Liberation Council issued a Decree on Protection of Cultural Monuments and Distinguished Natural Features. This Decree was turned into a temporary law in June 1945 (Official Gazette of People's Republic of Slovenia, 2/45) and transposed into a general law in October 1946 by the Federal Assembly of Federal Peoples of the Republic of Yugoslavia. With the improvement of professional knowledge, the need to separate the protection of cultural and natural heritage was acknowledged by *Zakon o varovanju narave* (the Law on Protection of Nature in 1970) which defines the concept of integrated nature protection as opposed to the protection of singular nature features. According to this law, the responsibilities for protection of nature were divided between two levels: state and municipality level. In spite of the fact that this law had not been fully applied, it sets the frame for the development of a system of nature conservation in Slovenia (Peterlin, 2001:11).

### *1.3.1* PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

#### **Legislation**

In Slovenia, the Law on local Self-Management (1993) was enforced in the beginning of 1994 after having been passed by the Parliament in December 1993. In accordance with that law, the total of 65 Slovenian municipalities were transformed into 199. Article 21 outlines that protection of air, soil, water resources, protection against noise, collection and depositing of garbage and other environmental matters as well as the promotion of education, information, documentation, and the support of various interests of the society on its territory - all these duties lie in the responsibility of the municipalities. The law also specifies forms/channels for citizens participation: citizens meetings, referenda and citizens initiatives (Article 44). This law had been formulated with respect of the European charter on local self-government (1985), ratified by National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia in 1996.



## **Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention, 1998)**

Even though the Aarhus Convention does not belong to the *Acquis communautaire*, it is discussed here because of its relevance to the research problem. Slovenia signed The Aarhus Convention in 1998 in Aarhus, Denmark and plans to ratify it by the Slovenian Parliament in 2002. The Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MESP) is responsible for coordination of activities related to Aarhus Convention. During the process of preparing its ratification, two meetings took place of the ad-hoc group composed of the representatives of various ministries and governmental offices responsible for drafting different parts of Aarhus Convention. In 2001, the promotion of the Aarhus Convention is planned to be intensified by MESP as well as by relevant NGOs.

At present, MESP is working on the formulation of amendments to the Law on the Environment (1993). The Law already meets the majority of the Convention's terms but most of them have not been put into practice due to the lack of the execution acts which would operationalise the rules of actions/behaviour.

### **NGOs**

The NGOs have expressed their interest for the Aarhus Convention by several actions to support its ratification. In June 2000, the Coalition of non-governmental organisations for the ratification and realization of Aarhus Convention was founded with the aim to speed up the ratification process and to promote its implementation. Environmental NGOs have a long-standing tradition in Slovenia. The first societies for the protection of the environment were founded in the 1970s. In the early 1980s, the Socialist Alliance proclaimed itself as "an umbrella" for all interest groups and NGOs, it supported them financially and provided basic professional help.

### *3.2 THE LIKELY IMPACT OF LEGISLATION HARMONISATION*

With the EU membership, the economic situation and economic conditions in Slovenia will change. The changes will most likely effect landscape and biodiversity of the country. The existing small-scale agricultural structures will be endangered due to either intensification of agriculture or abandonment of agricultural production. The existing nature-protection measures are at present (financially) weaker than the agricultural ones.

A small-scale interview-based research (4 respondents) on the advantages and risks of harmonisation of Birds and Habitats Directives and of the ratification of the Aarhus Convention revealed several topics to be important for Slovenia. They were evaluated on a 1-to-5-point scale. The summary results are listed below:

#### **Advantages of harmonisation**

- access to environmental information is improved 5
- public participation in environmental decision-making gets possible 5
- role of NGOs is strengthened 5
- pressure on the government/parliament is increased to make environmental decisions more transparent and in coordinated way 5

- formulation of relevant legislation related to the conservation of nature/public participation is accelerated 5/4
- access to various funds 5
- opportunities to participate in various programmes of international cooperation 5
- access to justice 5
- cooperation between MESP and MAFF is improved 4
- support to general democratisation of Slovenian society - increased cooperation among various actors and legitimisation of interests of environmental NGOs 4
- political weight of nature conservation themes is increased 3

### **Risks of harmonisation**

- loss of small-scale agricultural structures and related rich variety of plant and animal species 5
- increased demand for financial support/subsidies 5
- neglect of biodiversity-rich areas that are not covered by Birds and Habitats Directives 4
- difficulties in application of EU legislation due to shortcomings of public administration, lack of financial resources as well as poor cooperation with non-governmental sectors (science, NGOs) 3
- low qualification for acquiring and managing EU-sponsored projects 3
- lack of tradition in establishing private teams which would effectively compete for EU projects 3

## **4. The case of planned Trnovski Gozd Regional Park**

### *4.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE STUDY AREA*

The area of the proposed Trnovski Gozd Regional Park (Figure) is composed of four carasic plateaus (Banjsce plateau, Hrušica, Nanos, Trnovski Gozd) and the Trebušica valley, which is already a protected area (landscape park). The park area is surrounded by the Idrija hills in the North, the Soča valley in the West, Notranjsko and Pivško podolje in the East and by precipitous rocky slopes (30° of average incline) of Vipava valley in the South (Slovenija-pokrajine in ljudje, 1998).

Nearly 65 percent of the park area lies between 500 and 1,000 metres above sea-level (Prem, 1999), which makes this region a mountain barrier between the Mediterranean and continental part of the Slovenian countryside. The highest area is Golaki at 1,100-1,300 metres above sea level, showing distinctive mountain climate conditions. In the North, there is an evident tectonic configuration along the Dinaric Idrija's rupture, while the results of a tectonic grubbing of Mesozoic limestone, the younger Eocene flysch is shown in the South (Prem, 1999) Many natural particularities and rarities have developed due to these characteristics. The climate conditions are influenced by the specific

geographic location of the area. They show an intensive interference between the Mediterranean and Continental climate, with 1,881 millimetres of average precipitations per year. Precipitation reaches a maximum (293 mm) in November, while it is lowest (135 mm) in February and March.

The specific climate and geological structures have resulted in special geomorphological surface structures. The most important ones are: carsic depths (Smrekova draga, Smrečje), where the inversion of temperature and flora is noticeable; icy spots, such as Mala Lazna where ice occurs even in summer; and the famous dry valley of Čepovanski dol.

The forest and waters of the park show a high level of natural preservation and represent vital biotopes for many rare animals and plant species. Representatives of Sub-Mediterranean mountain species and other Alpine species can be found in the region. Big mammals, such as bears, wolves and lynx migrate through the park, which is an important corridor between Dinarids and the Alps.

In the history of the park, there is a strong relation between the local population and the management of natural heritage, especially through agriculture and forestry. In the second half of the 17th century, the first permanent settlements (Predmeja, Lokve) were populated by foresters, hunters and shepherds (Kozorog, 1996). The growing exploitation of forest resulted in increased population in the 18th century. This influenced the development of many specific economic activities and manufactures, such as “glazutarstvo” (glass production), carving, joinery, bobbin-work, manufacture of wooden skis and the transportation of ice to the cities (Prem, 1999). In addition, pasture farming, especially cattle, goats and sheep grazing, were the most typical agricultural activities in the park area. Besides the permanent settlements, there were many solitary farms and temporary refuges for shepherds.

Radical change in the population density was noticed in the 20th century. The mechanisation of forestry led to the loss of employment for many foresters (Kozorog, 1996). Additionally, industrialisation in nearby urban regions (Vipavska dolina, Nova Gorica) stimulated migration from villages to cities. Between 1936 to 1991, the population density in the park area declined from 16 to only 9 persons/km<sup>2</sup> (Slovenija-pokrajine in ljudje, 1998). Due to the poor natural conditions for farming, many people left their farms. However, within the proposed park area, the share of the rural population was still 14% in 1991 (Prem, 1999) which was roughly double the national average (7.2 %). While in 1931 some 8,000 people had lived in the area, their number diminished to 4,500 in 1991.

The majority of local residents have been employed in industry, farming and forestry. In 1991, 16 % of the population of the Čepovanski dol area was employed in forestry and farming, while in the area of Banjščice tableland plateau this percentage came up to 24.5 % (Prem, 1999). These data indicate that most local residents commute from the villages to the nearby cities (Nova Gorica, Ajdovščina) for work.

The total area of the proposed park is 59,500 ha 40,833 ha of which are covered by forests (almost 70% of the area). The main part of the proposed Trnovski Gozd Regional Park is a mountainous area with severe climate conditions and poor soil quality, which makes it less suitable for farming. In Trnovski Gozd, there are no surface water sources, except man-made reservoirs used for watering animals. Nevertheless, agriculture and forestry are still the prevailing economic activities in this area, but they are losing in importance. Agricultural land is under strong pressure of overgrowing with forest and the majority of agricultural production is subsistence farming. Some bigger farms are scattered across the area producing milk and meat for the market.

#### *4.2 LOCAL AND STATE ELITE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE FUTURE REGIONAL PARK*

In Slovenia, a protected area cannot be declared without the approval of local self-governments, even though the area to be protected is defined by relevant state authorities/agencies. In order to examine the attitudes of local and state elites towards territorial and legal specification of the regional park Trnovski Gozd, a research project was set up. The following relevant state officials and professionals were interviewed: 1) Head of the Administration for Nature Conservation, 2) an officer responsible for Protected Areas at Nature Protection Authority, 3) the state undersecretaries responsible for agricultural markets and rural development, 4) the head of an NGO, 5) a university professor for landscape architecture, and 6) a Ph.D. agronomist working at Triglav National Park. Representatives of local elites were mayors or municipality officials responsible for environment and spatial planning, employees in regional state offices/organisations (agricultural extension service, Forest Institute, Governmental units, regional administration for nature conservation, and NGO representatives (four out of six were farmers/farm women), and respected local professionals.

In total, 27 individuals (20 at local and 7 at state level) were interviewed on the basis of two compatible questionnaires: one for the local and one for the state elite, both with approximately one third of open questions related to relevant topics (Figure).

#### **Opportunities and limitations for local residents in planned regional park**

Both local (90%) and state elite respondents (100%) believed that the park will offer opportunities to local residents. Both elites emphasised the possibility for future development (in terms of new jobs, eco-tourism, promotion of the area, market for local products, entrepreneurship support), including investments in infrastructure and financial support from the state. Opportunities for the protection of nature, landscape, water and the environment were perceived by one third of the local elite but not by the state representatives who probably take nature and environment protection for granted.

Sixty percent of local and 100 percent of state elite respondents specified also some limitations, such as limited interventions in the area and restrictions in economic activities as well as restrictions for visitors including the prohibition of extreme sports (such as mountain biking).

Perceptions on the situation in the park area	Local reactions to the proposal for designating the area as a regional park
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities/limitations for local residents (L, S)</li> <li>• Problems in the proposed park area (L)</li> <li>• Out-migration from the area and reasons for it (L)</li> <li>• Will the foundation of the park diminish the problem of depopulation of the case study area? (S)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquaintance with the proposal (if yes)</li> <li>• The source of information (L)</li> <li>• Personal support/rejection (L)</li> <li>• Respondent's opinion on possible support/refusal of the park by local residents (L)</li> </ul>
Perceptions of the possibilities for sustainable agriculture/forestry	State officials' explanation of top-down approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of agriculture suitable for the park area (L, S)</li> <li>• Feasibility for ecological agriculture from the viewpoint of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• natural conditions for farming, animal husbandry, sheep breeding (L)</li> <li>• readiness/qualification/available workforce/income of local residents (L)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The fields of nature protection what are actively supported by the respondent's office (S)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local elite was not (well) informed about the proposal and perceived it in most of the cases as limitation to local development (S)</li> <li>• Local elite felt excluded from the planning process of the park designation (S)</li> </ul>

Figure: Topics of the interviews with the state (S) and/or local (L) elite respondents

#### 4.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE/FORESTRY AND FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT/NATURE

In the park area, which is predominantly covered by forest, agricultural production is physically limited. It has always been considered mainly as a supplementary activity to forestry, which in the past represented a major source of income. After the Second World War when numerous local residents got job in industry and in various offices and agencies in the nearby cities, even forestry became a supplementary income source for farm families. In most cases, they transformed their enterprises into part-time farms. But in spite of this fact family farming in Slovenia has kept the tradition of combining agriculture with forestry. Thus, it was not surprising that the open question about the "types of agriculture that would be suitable for the park area" was negatively answered by only one out of twenty local elite respondents, saying that there was "no possibility for agriculture". A total of 19 respondents (84.2%) favoured either the promotion of biological/ecological/traditional farming or extensive/traditional animal husbandry. State elite respondents spoke in favour of sustainable/traditional/ecological farming and cattle breeding for the case study area and only one person suggested fruit and berry (even intensive) production.

The project results indicate a below-average human potential for carrying out ecological farming, with the exception of the readiness of the local population for it. This points to the fact that adequate qualification and training as well as a guarantee for satisfactory incomes are requirements to start this type of farming. While there are chances to improve these preconditions, there is almost no chance to find the required workforce for ecological agriculture. Estimating the natural conditions and the qualification of local population for ecological farming, the representatives of NGOs and local professionals turned out to be the most "pessimistic".

#### *4.4 RESPONSE OF LOCAL ELITES TO REGIONAL PARK PROPOSAL AND STATE OFFICIALS' EXPLANATION OF THE TOP-DOWN APPROACH*

Although the procedure for constituting a regional park has not been formally defined (Prem, 1999), it has been practiced in the following way:

- (a) The Nature Protection Authority within the MESP together with the Regional Administration for Nature Conservation proposes the boundaries of the future regional park.
- (b) Mayors/representatives of the municipalities, covering at least some territory of the proposed park, constitute a "Programme Council" in order to coordinate local interests with the interests of the state who is responsible for regional parks.
- (c) Required documentation/data about the characteristics of the territory and the possibilities of future development of the park area is provided by the "Project Council" composed of professionals of various profiles. On the basis of the results of their work, the proposed borderline is adjusted to local characteristics and a final proposal for the park boundaries is presented to the local public. The project Council is nominated by the Programme Council and monitored by state authorities.
- (d) The proposal for the park boundary as well as the regimes for protecting nature and stimulating development are presented to local residents in most cases via mass media and workshops in which local residents should participate actively in identifying opportunities and ways of realising them within their local context.

The majority (16 out of 20-80%) of the local elite was familiar with the proposal of the park, including all mayors and municipal officials. The most frequent source of information was the publication about the park (Prem, 1999), which was delivered to all households of at least one of the eight municipalities in the planned park region. Another source of information was a booklet describing all existing and planned parks in the country, published by the Nature Protection Authority. NGOs and individuals also contributed to the information flow. Less than half of the local elite respondents (45%) supported the idea, the same number (9, i.e. 45%) supported the idea partially (under certain conditions), and 2 out of 20 rejected the idea of establishing the park. Both these respondents were from the group of "NGOs and local professionals". The reasons why the idea was partially rejected were the missing of good arguments for it, the lack of a specified park boundary, and the request for excluding certain borderline villages from the proposed regional park.

The arguments for supporting the park include the possibility to keep local residents in the area, maintain agricultural activities, and guarantee the formulation of rules which should help to protect the region's environmental, natural and cultural heritage.

The majority of state elite respondents agreed to the statement that local professionals, who are most familiar with the area, were not consulted in the first drafting of the park proposal. They also confirmed the fact that state institutions tend to neglect the opinions and wishes of local residents, and that they do not pay enough attention to informing the local population about the opportunities that a future regional park could offer. Some respondents did not answer the question and simply stressed the need to inform and involve local residents more actively in the process.

State elite respondents believed that the regional park should help to reduce depopulation from the area by supporting agricultural and environmental programmes. Only two (out of seven) state elite respondents did not consider this a solution for out-migration due to potential limitations of various economic activities.

### **Coordination of agricultural and environmental interests in the planned regional park**

In general, there is definitely an adequate legal framework to allow the coordination of agricultural and environmental/nature protection interests in Slovenia including specific regulations for protected areas (see Table). Almost every law/decreed under study was related to agriculture (11 out of 12), environment/protection of nature (10 out of 12) and to human wellbeing (10 out of 12). A local elite respondent highlighted these laws by stating that existing agricultural and environmental policies have numerous goods and strengths.

In addition, local elite respondents were moderately sceptical about the chances to harmonise agricultural and environmental interests. State elite representatives were much more optimistic about such an opportunity (almost at 100%), indicating either a top-down approach or the ignorance of a local situation. In reality, the coordination of these interests can be realised within the frame of sustainable development projects in specific rural areas, especially in protected regions.

In protected areas where the maintenance of extensive agriculture is required, the conflict between the interests of agriculture and environment/nature protection is a hot issue. During the fieldwork it became evident that some farmers (e.g. a sheep breeder who produced expensive sheep cheese) prioritise the continuation of a viable agricultural production. Although they respect nature and environment protection goals, they would not accept any limitations at the expense of the viability of their cattle and sheep breeding business. Instead, local elite representatives pointed to the industrial pollution in the region (as was the case with one mayor who was also a farmer in the park area).

**Table: The matrix of agricultural and environmental legislation relevant for the case study problem**

Law, decree	Agricultural land/forest	environment, nature protection	human wellbeing
Law on Agriculture	+	+	+
Law on forests	+	+	+
Law on denationalisation	+	+	+
Law on agricultural land	+	+	+
Law on ownership transformation of companies	+	0	0
Law on agricultural cooperatives	+		0
Decree on financial interventions in agriculture	+	+	+
Law on physical planning	+	+	+
Decree on changes and completion of physical plan of RS	+	+	+
Law on the protection of environment	+	+	+
Law on equal regional development			+
Law on the protection of nature	+	+	+

+ influence/existence

0 no influence

Agriculture was not the only critical issue raised by the local elite representatives. The president of the Gora - society for conservation and protection of natural and cultural heritage, which is an extremely active NGO, supported the foundation of Trnovski Gozd Regional Park, but only under the condition that one expanding village would be excluded from the park. In his opinion, national park regulations restricting the construction of new houses and other buildings would hamper local development. Another interviewee, a tourist farm manager was most interested in the reconstruction of the road connecting the upland area of Cepovanski dol with the nearest town down in the valley in order to promote tourism in the area. Keeping cultural landscape by himself mowing grass on the meadows next to his farm is also related to his business.

A suggestion to protect cultural heritage of the area was made by the president of a local community – a territorial unit of a municipality (he runs two stores in two different villages as one-man business). To preserve the local cultural heritage of the traditional blacksmith's work, he has proposed the establishment of a museum in the area offering the possibility of live demonstrations. The regional museum made the following statement on that planned action:

“The initiative of the local community for founding a permanent collection of blacksmith's work in Lokovec can be of essential importance within the project of revitalisation of the area because it can represent the core of its cultural-tourist offer. Therefore, Goriški museum supports the initiative of local community Lokovec and is willing to offer its professional support in setting up the museum, to participate in the future activities of the museum and to act as its supervising institution (Plahuta and Brezigar, 1999)”.



Certain interests related to the proposed park might represent an obstacle while others may be an incentive for the area's local development. The foundation of Regional Park seems to be an optimal frame for coordinating conflicting interests and for motivating local residents for active participation. Regardless of general limitation factors (scarce and ageing population, low level of education, distance from settlements with central activities), the local population as well as professionals from regional offices/municipalities wish to play an active role in local development. Although the majority of local elite respondents has been familiar with the proposal of Trnovski Gozd Regional Park, less than half of them unconditionally do support it. According to local elite representatives, local residents would be rather suspicious about the park proposal. They would either oppose the proposal (45%) or accept it under certain preconditions (45%). The reason for such a perception could be that local elite (mayors/municipality officials, employees of regional state offices, representatives of NGOs) felt excluded from drafting the proposal. Although in accordance with the formal procedure, the first proposal on the boundaries of planned parks is made by the Nature Protection Authority at the MESP, it should not serve to exclude local actors from the very first step of the protection procedure.

The foundation of Trnovski Gozd Regional Park is presently not among the priorities of the Nature Protection Authority. There will be a waste of time and energy if relevant actions (information, awareness raising, stimulation of local nature protection and development actions) are not taken immediately, that is, before the formal procedure is continued. If nothing happens for a long time, the positive effects of informal actions already taken (distribution of a publication in 1999, the selection of the area as a case study for the CEESA project, activities of some NGOs) might dissipate and the alienation among local residents might increase.

## **5. Conclusions**

In Slovenia, the transition has been characterised by three processes: creating a new independent state, introducing multi-party democratic political system, and replacing planned-market economy with the market one.

### *5.1 POLICY*

The range of new laws adapted by the Parliament served the purpose of constituting a new state, rectifying the injustices of the former socialist state and capacitating organisations for a democratic political system. The process of land restitution (agricultural land and forests) to former owners has been carried out in accordance with The Law on denationalisation (1991). Slovenia is the only country in transition that restituted the land in nature. As a result, agricultural holdings were broken up and, frequently, land was given back to the former owners or to their heirs who had no experience in farming and/or did not intend to farm. The privatisation of state farms and food-processing firms (they were converted into joint stock companies) caused some problems with regard to keeping former market positions but they recovered rather fast. However, the problem of managing food-processing firms has still to be settled. In accordance with The Law on Cooperatives (1992), these firms have been owned at 49% by the members of agricultural cooperatives due to their rights of contributing to the property of those firms enforced by the former system. Agricultural cooperatives, looking back on a tradition of over hundred years in Slovenia, have adjusted their organisation to the new political and economic circumstances in accordance with the new legal regulations.

The impact of relevant new laws both on agriculture/forestry and on protection of environment/nature was studied, and their impact on the perceptions of the impact of legislation on the case study topics investigated. They revealed that the environment and nature protection legislation is more elaborated and more effective in practice than the agricultural and forestry legislation. This might explain the finding that respondents from all state institutions feel responsible for ecological farming and that the support for agri-environmental measures has been one of the priorities not only for the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food but also for the state.

The adoption of the *Acquis* is expected to shift responsibilities and decision making from national to regional and local levels. In line with the requirements of the EU enlargement and harmonisation process, Slovenia's agri-environmental programme (SAEP, 2001) spells out the objective of the promotion of sustainable farming practices. The Government enacted the Decree on Realisation of Agricultural Policy Measures in 2001 to financially support and implement the related policy measures.

## 5.2 ACTORS

Actors relevant to the case study problem were investigated at three levels: state administration; local community/municipality, and NGOs and influencing individuals. During transition, the actors have not changed considerably. Almost all basic organisations relevant to the case study issue had already existed in the pre-transition era, e.g. different ministries and agricultural extension service. During transition, their organisational forms have been mainly transformed and modernised to be more effective and compatible with the counterpart organisations of the EU member countries. Even the range of NGOs has not increased significantly with the exception of societies for protection of natural and cultural heritage and societies of ecological farmers. Many of these NGOs were established over the last decade. However, this fact cannot be attributed solely to the transition but much more to recent global developments (increasing ecological awareness, growing consumer interest in healthy food, high prices of organic products).

Several characteristics of the relations among relevant actors have been identified:

- The research analysis reveals that, at state level, there is rather poor co-operation among the sectors/ministries with the exception of the Ministry of Economic Development that is responsible for balanced regional development. In general, ministries practice a top-down approach in their policy field. The co-operation between the state and municipalities is exposed only in the Law on Nature Protection (1970) and the Law on Spatial Planning (2002).
- At municipality level, there exist at least three types of horizontal cooperation. The first is a close relationship between a municipality and local private development agencies that carry out some professional tasks for the municipality. The second one is a cooperation among neighbouring municipalities in carrying out specific tasks. The third one represents agreements/contracts for cooperation among local/regional developmental agencies/firms in order to perform certain tasks as efficiently as possible. In the case study area, such an agreement has been made by four development agencies at the level of Severna Primorska statistical region to establish the network of developmental agencies (*Mrezo razvojnih agencij*). The network aims at elaborat-

ing regional and common development programmes; coordinating the work of local development agencies, which participate in the elaboration of regional development programmes as well as at monitoring, controlling and reporting about regional and common development programmes. Furthermore, it advises on and helps to prepare applications for funds for supporting regional development; organises, advises, and coordinates other tasks related to regional structural politics and participates in formulating state documents on spatial planning, strategies of the Slovenian regional development and state development programmes.

- There has been poor cooperation among different types of NGOs at local level, probably due to their specific fields of work. However, a good vertical cooperation between a local NGO and the Association of local NGOs was observed.

### 5.3 REGIONAL COOPERATION

Although Slovenia has not been formally divided into regions yet, "regional" cooperation has been advanced very fast on the basis of neighbouring municipalities' initiatives. The need of individual municipalities for formulating strong "regional" developmental programmes has, thus, outrun state administration. For example, state elite respondents believe that the constitution of a regional park to be shared by numerous municipalities is a very difficult endeavour. According to them, municipalities would hardly be ready to cooperate for the sake of faster mutual development.

### 5.4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STATE AND MUNICIPALITIES

The analysis of legislation and the empirical study reveals the superior attitude of the state towards the municipality level. In legislation, a partnership between the state and the local level is rarely prescribed. The relationship between the two levels can be characterised by a top-down approach.

The empirical evidence of the superior attitude of at least some state officials towards the local level can be illustrated by the statement of one of the state elite respondents: "Regional park does not mean that now the state will take care of the people in the park area". In spite of the necessity to define professional arguments/data for formulating protection as well as development programmes in the process of constituting a regional park (Project Council is responsible for it), the relevant data were found to be in most cases collected with delay and interdisciplinary coordination was insufficient.

In *protected areas*, a sensitive combination of conservation and development measures would be required in order to secure the conservation of nature values which were mainly developed through traditional farming and forestry operations. In addition to ecological farming, diversification of economic activities of farmers/rural residents needs to be stimulated in order to reverse the current trend of depopulation in protected areas. This will entail extensive co-operation between various organisations and policy actors. In the context of protected areas, co-operation is defined as vertical and horizontal relationship among all relevant actors ranging from national and regional organisations, NGOs, public authorities, farmers and relevant regional economic organisations. Although the effects of transition have been identified in the case study, it has to be stressed that the word "transition" hardly bears the meaning ascribed to it in West European countries. The transitional phase of building a new, democratic state and a market economy in Slovenia has not been completed yet. However, there is strong evidence of

the fact that new policy networks have developed within which sectoral policies are formulated and carried out by state organisations in close cooperation with different interest groups and regional and local administrative bodies. Horizontal networks have prevented the formation of vertical clientelistic and clandestine groups of decision-makers. However, the role of science and research still needs to be intensified in all phases of the decision-making processes: in formulating options and defining their possible results, realising the decisions and evaluating the results.

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