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Pan-European Ecological Network
Fact sheet VII – Information exchange and awareness raising
Communicating PEEN

In 21st century Europe policy and plans to protect nature can only be successful if they are accepted and supported by a wide variety of stakeholder groups such as farmers, foresters, local communities and visitors. Consensus building and stakeholder involvement are becoming essential elements in nature conservation policy, and communication is one of the most important tools at the disposal of nature conservation professionals.

In the case of ecological networks, the need to communicate is even greater than in nature conservation in general. Developing ecological networks means extending conservation action outside protected areas, thus increasing the number of stakeholders involved. Establishing dialogue with these groups in order to obtain their support is a challenge but it is also an opportunity to generate wider involvement and interest in nature conservation within society: the concept of connecting core nature areas by corridors to create networks has considerable popular appeal.

Capacity building among nature conservationists to help them plan and implement effective communication strategies is a vital element of supporting the implementation of PEEN. The ECNC publication, “Communicating Nature Conservation” is a self-study manual for anyone involved in conservation policy or conservation projects. At the same time it gives a 'state of the art' of current insights into the way communication works, and deals with new approaches in conservation policy like stakeholder participation and interactive policy making.

There is also a need to communicate within the nature conservation community: The concept of ecological networks in general and PEEN in particular is becoming increasingly well known, but there are still white areas on the map of Europe where no ecological networks are being developed. ECNC's report “Support for ecological networks in European nature conservation: an indicative social map” provides information on how ecological networks in general and PEEN in particular are appreciated by researchers and policy makers in different countries of Europe.

Introducing the PEEN concept to policy makers and researchers, providing them with relevant information, presenting case studies and examples of good practice and creating a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences is crucial. The Council of Europe is providing this role, via its publications and seminars, and via the work of the Committee of Experts for the Establishment of PEEN. Over the past years, the Council of Europe has published two brochures on PEEN, aimed at a wide audience, and has dedicated an issue of the Naturopa magazine to this topic. To stimulate methodology development and building of expertise, seminars are regularly organized in the framework of the Committee of Experts.

Regular updates can be found on the Council of Europe website
Further information: http://www.coe.int/t/e/Cultural_Cooperation/Environment/Nature_and_biological_diversity/Ecological_networks