



Second meeting of the SCB-ES Policy Committee Le Luc en Provence, France, Dec 2-4, 2005

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INTRODUCTION

The SCB-ES Policy Committee has remained a very active group after the Eberswalde meeting in 2004. The participants of the second PC meeting in Le Luc were very eager to meet again personally and work together. A major concern was raised with regard to the efficiency of our actions, as questions have been raised on the efficiency of PC actions in connection with the Bialowieza follow-up and mainly the Biodiversity Resolution (achievements?).

During the meeting, 2004 tasks and their completion were reviewed, , a broad discussion on orientation and goals was initiated, future focal issues were defined and new tasks were allocated to different PC members.

As for the Eberswalde protocol, this document was developed from the meeting minutes and is structured according to the major topics discussed during the meeting. It focuses on the key issues and key statements, rather than providing a precise listing of contributions

REPORT ON COMPLETION OF TASKS

Tasks completed include the **Bialowieza Resolution follow-up**. A letter to Stavros Dimas (EU Commissioner for the Environment) asking for a Bialowieza logging moratorium was completed and mailed. A split discussion on the SCB-ES BOD on letter content centred around the last sentence in the original version. This last sentence had been considered too harsh by half of the BOD. The sentence was subsequently changed in order to reach agreement. Kiki Kati wrote an article for one of the prominent newspapers in Greece that was published only after establishment of personal contacts (time consuming). Tomasz Wesolowski's paper on "Virtual conservation" as it relates to Bialowieza Forest has been published in the October issue of Conservation Biology.

The revisions for the cover letter(s) of the biodiversity resolution were completed and an accompanying press release was produced. Resolution and press release asking for more involvement of independent conservation science in EU conservation programs were forwarded to the EU Commission, members of the European Parliament, major NGOs and to the media in major EU countries. Kiki Kati described her experience with contacting the press, and found the result to be disappointing. Response in Germany was better. As a result of distribution via the Hohenheim University Press Office the resolution was published on most web-sites linked to news from academia, but not in the main stream media. The resolution triggered a request from the BBC. Information was provided which did not yield any further publication. The BBC was looking for a Conservation Biologist in Action just saving the world or at least some large charismatic species (there was a specific request of that kind). Biodiversity resolution topic (increased involvement of independent scientists) obviously not catchy enough for main stream media.

The resolution yielded important outreach to the EU (offer for help) and was referred to in an official request to the EU Commission by the Swedish EPA. This illustrates potential positive effects of networking. In the discussion, a follow-up with a more critical tone was suggested. A next step could be to highlight examples where EU funding does not work (money misspent, negative effects, etc). Current agri-environment schemes might be a target in this context. It was noted that care must be used not to play into the hand of opponents of conservation when criticising programs. We do not want funds to be cut, we want funds to be spent more effectively. Thus, we need to offer solutions, not just be critical. A series of concrete examples of poor performance are needed.

A lively discussion centred around the term “independent scientist”. The need for independent scientists in nature conservation was acknowledged (move beyond administrator-scientists and administrative reviews). Extended discussion on what actually constitutes independence in this context. Danger of corruption of independent status as a result of funding. Diversity of views as an indicator for independence of expert panels, e.g. administrator-scientists only is not enough in terms of expert panels to be independent.

The need for an external review of the EU NATURA2000 approach to nature conservation was stressed. Does the implementation of Natura2000 (Habitats Directive) really fulfill the commitments of biodiversity treaties? Identify deficiencies/opportunities remaining after fulfillment of obligations under Habitats Directive, need for complementary activities. Could be a topic for an editorial in Conservation Biology, e.g. basic flaws in the rather progressive EU approach to nature conservation.

Tasks partly completed include **publication of the Eberswalde protocol**. The protocol of the First SCB-ES PC meeting in Eberswalde was completed but not published on the SCB-ES web site, because the SCB web site was under reconstruction and thus not functional to that end (several requests for posting it on the SCB web site had been made). **The general need for web space to report on PC activity and to increase PC productivity (effectiveness) is acknowledged.** Appropriate requests will be forwarded to the SCB Executive Office.

Issues relating to the First European Congress of Conservation Biology (ECCB2006) to be held August 22-26 in Eger (Hungary) include questionnaires sent to PC members and asking for input in terms of key note speakers, symposia titles and other ideas. However, input was low. Titles for contributed symposia, composition of SciCom now are set, there are still discussions on plenary speakers.

Contacts to PCs of other SCB sections were accomplished. However, there is a need for a follow-up. The suggestion was made to forward the Le Luc meeting protocols to other PCs and to provide an opportunity during the First European Congress of Conservation Biology (www.eccb2006.org) for other PCs to present their activities (poster type presentation).

Issues not addressed include the **list of main questions for meeting with EU officials**, as the BOD did not succeed in setting a date for such a meeting. **Need for viable contacts with EU higher-ups acknowledged and reiterated.**

The issue of possible **changes in the Habitats Directive** was dropped at this point, because currently this would add more confusion to the rather difficult process of implementation.

The **revision of the SCB-ES PC Strategy document** has not been completed. As is the document lacks a clear mission statement and targets. In addition, there is a need to interpret the new SCB strategic plan and integrate provisions from this plan into the PC strategy document. Having clear targets is a precondition for doing important things.

The **“sham conservation project”**, i.e. the collection of case examples where the term nature conservation or biodiversity protection is used to justify destruction was not tackled. The **project needs to be redefined** (content, tasks, procedures, assignments).

IMPROVING OUR EFFICIENCY

Project level efficiency

Given that we are all very busy with our respective jobs, an optimal way of working must be designed so that we can achieve the best possible efficiency in designing or reviewing new conservation actions, directives and/or tools. To do so, we propose the following organisation:

- Work in small teams (two+), these teams should be able to work at a distance
- Structure the work on projects by defining in each “Project Proposal” (White paper)
 - o objective
 - o content
 - o time table (milestones, including prospective termination)
 - o communication plan:
 - who to address and then (networking, partners, info sources)
 - media involvement
- develop “White Paper” into project report by adding a summary of results and critical evaluation of success (follow up if necessary)
- Use project partners (networking at the project scale)
 - o Provide partners with the Project Proposal. This requires clear specific issues for contact networks to function, used in context of focal projects. Contacts can be project specific (temporary).
- Structure termination of projects (need to move on)
 - o hand over to local organizations/NGOs
 - o be able to simply terminate projects independent of achievements

The White Paper is a term that has been introduced by the Chair of the SCB Policy Committee (Luigi Boitani). The term will need additional clarification (e.g. contents, format and methodology of project evaluation). As proposed the White Paper would be a dynamic document (i.e. a document partly to be developed in the course of the project). At any time the White Paper would serve as a source of information and help dealing with outside requests. If properly handled, the White Paper has the potential to significantly increase project efficiency.

Selection of project partners is critical. Need to be selective according to specific issues addressed in a project. There are clear limitations in terms of how many project partners can be handled efficiently. Risks are involved in establishing and maintaining a standing network, with established groups, in igniting un-meetable expectations. Active, project specific partners (task for the PC project manager) vs. list of potential (passive) project partners (task for SCB-ES BOD). Need for clarifications with Communications Committee. Recommendations on developing networking strategies should be made to the BOD.

PC level efficiency

The discussion aims at ways and means to work more efficiently as a committee, and to enhance our visibility at a European scale. We agree on the following:

- **the overall PC group size** that would maximize efficiency is 10-15, resulting in 8-10 representatives participating at any particular PC meeting.
- **work in small groups** on projects, organisational issues or issues related to services the PC may want to provide
- **attracting new PC members**
 - o use available power-point presentations on SCB, SCB-ES PC to fish for members at regional meetings. Ask Communications Committee to make such presentations available (web address, list with presentations).

- develop focal areas into which new members can integrate themselves (issues that relate to new EU member countries and non-EU member countries)
- use ECCB2006 to attract new PC members
- send out an e-mail to SCB-ES members through to list server to draw attention to PC activities. Arguments (contents) would be:
 - PC involvement allows to learn face-to-face about conservation situations in other European countries (learning experience)
 - bridge between science and applied conservation
 - bridge between local and global
 - networking opportunities as an immediate gain resulting from participation
- seek membership participation when selecting focal issues
- selecting group members
 - make sure of willingness to actively contribute
 - increase geographical scope of participation, i.e. eastern countries
- passive PC members

Membership in the PC requires active participation and input (efficiency issue). This in turn requires the establishment of a process to exclude passive members. We agree that after an allowable time period for inactivity of 9 months, a standard letter is sent to the respective PC member. The letter will ask for prospective resumption of active input and threaten expulsion in case activities are not resumed timely. The standard letter will be drafted and approved by the PC before action takes place.
- working with the media
 - use publicity offices of universities to spread messages
 - select partners that may help establish media contacts (e.g. from SCB membership)
 - install a PC subcommittee of media-related people (Paul Hatchwell, Balint Bajomi, Sheila Abrams)
 - develop media strategy (strategy document, white paper holding basic information on issue, press releases)
 - establish contacts (few but relevant media contacts in each country)
 - test strategy with case examples
 - coordination with Communications Committee

COMPARING SCB TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS

How is the SCB different from other players in the nature conservation field? Defining ourselves and our role is important as this is a means to increase our efficiency by better targeting our actions and impacts, and by attracting people with similar interests. In the general crowded realm of conservation, the question is “what is our niche” in comparison to organisations like the British Ecological Society and IUCN?

Our specificities seem to be:

- bridge application (implementation) and science (scientific values)
- bridge local to global
- be a player rather than just a contributor
- multidisciplinary
- not nationally focused, European perspective with a global backup
- young organization, still in the process of development (openness, no structural obstacles/ well established hierarchies)
- SCB-ES members are educated in research *and* conservation
- scientific approach (evidence based)

Many of the points listed above refer to the diversity of approaches based on a sound scientific education as a key feature of our identity.

THE ROLE OF THE PC WITHIN THE SBC/SCB-ES

SCB strategy document

The SCB strategy document has just been approved, thus suggestions and comments will refer to the next revision cycle. It is pretty open in terms of what can be done, leaves sufficient room for PC activities. Different parts obviously have been written by different authors (tension science – application).

Resolutions

During the latest BOD meeting in Hatfield, doubts have been raised about the usefulness of preparing and delivering resolutions. Given the limited amount of time we all have, it is true that drafting resolutions may not be a priority, as their impact seems to be rather limited in the short term. We could concentrate on scientific paper work (original task of a scientific association), rather than on lobbying (large NGOs are better at that).

To put things into perspective, only two such resolutions have been produced by the SCB-ES since 2003. If the diversity of approaches translating into comparative freedom of membership activities (as compared to strict hierarchical approaches) is one of the indicators (“niche properties”) of the SCB-ES in general, and the PC within the SCB-ES in particular, then resolutions certainly have their place.

Usefulness of resolutions:

- personal satisfaction from actively trying to combat continued destruction (motivation)
- SCB members identify with active work (see results from SCB inquiries), activities thus foster coherence within the society.
- initiate/contribute to change wanted

- external recognition of SCB-ES as active player/contributor
- preparation of route for better SCB-ES representation (biodiversity resolution and the scientific working group)
- networking

The Bialowieza resolution provides a case example for achievements/non achievements
The resolution did not produce any short term results with respect to the cessation of logging activities in the Bialowieza forest. However, the resolution generated various responses and actions.

- broad recognition and approval by the SCB-ES membership
- article in the journal "Conservation Biology"
- articles in several newspapers in Europe (Greece, Finland, Germany)
- encouragement for continued on site activities by scientists.
- possible international complaint to the EU commission resulting from the Dimas' response to the SCB-ES follow-up. NGO's from Germany, Poland and possibly other EU member states should again respond by filing a complaint using the forms provided by the EU commission. The complaint would be directly coached (prepared) by Tomasz Wesolowski, SCB-ES could act as scientific back-up if deemed necessary (BOD decision pending). New dimension: multinational NGO complaint on NATURA 2000 implementation backed by scientific expertise provided by SCB (science – NGO partnership). This could also translate into a successful case example for project termination. Hand over responsibility to NGOs, restrict role of SCB to future scientific comment (upon request, e.g. passive mode).

Resolutions should still be delivered by the PC, as long as the time required to design them does not prevent more efficient activities. The PC therefore explicitly confirms and reiterates the original **Eberswalde statement on legitimate advocacy**:

"The question whether the role of the SCB-ES should be limited to advising or if necessary expanded to advocacy was discussed. Advise would be to inform, while advocacy would include information and tools to actively trigger change. Advise has a strong re-active connotation (provide advise when asked) advocacy has a much more active connotation (advocate even if not asked for advise).

Oxford Dictionary, synonym dictionary and French translation:

to advise: give opinion; synonyms: to counsel, to recommend, to suggest.
French translation: conseiller.

to advocate: recommend; synonyms: to support; to recommend, to argue or plead in favour of.
French translation: préconiser.

The PC members present agreed that we should actively promote conservation and thus advocate as often as necessary. Advocacy should always and strictly be based on evidence. It should be limited to issues that are of international importance at the European level.

The basic difference to NGOs is that advising and advocacy will always be based on sound scientific evidence (publications, reports and/or data sets). As often as possible comparative assessments including information from all over Europe will be conducted. Training in scientific assessment and review is perceived as a key advantage of the SCB-ES in the context of public advocacy. Our assessments are evidence-based, not sensitive to contemporary political correctness. The basic difference from other scientific organisations is the explicit willingness to advocate and go public if necessary."

PC expectations towards the SCB-ES BOD

In many respects the SCB-ES PC needs guidance, help and general input from the SCB-ES BOD. This includes help the PC produce criteria for project success and effective project management. It also includes a critical review of PC priorities (focal issues) and the development of guidelines in terms of cooperation within the SCB-ES (e.g. PC - Communications Committee interface), and the definition of criteria and standards for sound conservation science and scientific credibility in nature conservation.

The following immediate needs to be addressed by the BOD were identified by the PC members:

- develop a strategy for networking (who, how many, how to maintain networks)
- networking beyond Europe (contacts with other sections)
- strategy for involvement in existing European networks (ALTER-NET, EU biodiversity expert group etc.)
- engage in a 7th Framework Program follow-up in order to secure sufficient funding of conservation research, possibly develop strategies to improve regional (national) funding programs (e.g. best practice examples)
- more activities regarding practical conservation issues
- develop a strategy and action towards establishing contacts to the EU administration

ECCB 2006

The Eberswalde suggestions concerning the ECCB2006 were presented during the 2005 BOD meeting in Budapest/Eger. The PC had proposed a strong emphasis on communication for the ECCB2006. BOD felt that ideas were good, but as yet most of these ideas did not get incorporated into the program. It was therefore decided to approach th BOD and the ECCB2006 organizing committee with the following suggestions:

Natura 2000 special poster session

A special invited poster session to report on the status of Natura 2000. Representatives from each EU country should be invited to contribute information. This requires to define expectations to be communicated to presenters, and to address national experts on Natura2000. There is a potential to produce a document "Conservation issues in Europe" from this session.

Conservation Market

Organise a market on products from conservation oriented land use, projects and ideas. Emphasis on communication and conservation in practice. Should include "the students can meet professors" idea. Could be held parallel to and after the "poster session" on Friday afternoon.

Presentation of the Policy Committee

The opportunity to present the work of the PC to the wider membership and public during the ECCB2006 should be used. However, this requires that what the PC actually is and wants to do is defined in a concise way. Thus, revision of the strategy document is perceived as a precondition for successful presentation. Presentation may include a workshop denoted to SCB-ES Committees in general or the PC in particular and a poster presentation during the congress (context of an SCB-ES presentation). Suggestion to invite PCs from other sections to present their activities in this context.

CONSERVATION ISSUES

Conservation Action and Academics (Kiki Kati)

Scientists shoulder an important responsibility face to society: to communicate their findings and the latest scientific achievements for the human well-being. In our biodiversity crisis era, **environmental scientists** and conservation biologists in particular, shoulder an even more critical and complex role face to humanity: not only to communicate their latest scientific achievements, but also to raise public awareness on the value and loss of biological diversity, to provide guidelines for efficient conservation action based on sound scientific evidence, and to urge political decisions towards halting the loss of biodiversity by suitable action at the local, national or international scale.

Most **university tutors** do not get involved with the practical implementation of their scientific findings and they do not interfere with society to form public consciousness for environmental conservation. In the competitive academic environment, careers and financial status depend almost exclusively on the bulk of scientific publications produced. In a competitive environment, very few academics have consciously set as top priority an active role in conservation and society.

Conservation biology is a **crisis discipline** demanding urgently the coordination of activities from all possible fields and human resources, close cooperation between science and application. Besides scientific publications **conservation action in a non-academic environment**, and particularly the contribution to biodiversity conservation and to environmental health, at both social and scientific levels, should be counted as an additional prerequisite in the evaluation of academics' achievements (e.g. Involvement in International Scientific Societies, Ecological Societies, Non Governmental Organizations, advocating conservation science in the media etc).

A potential for a focal project on the link between conservation action and academics is perceived.

Issues to be addressed within such a project include:

- project justification (why relevant)
- need for additional information of the status on conservation action and academics in Europe (variation between countries)
- need criteria for evaluation of collaboration with conservation 'end users'
- possibilities for funding (bridging science and application key is a target in EU Framework programs, seek project support from the EU)
- potential topic for editorial in Conservation Biology

Financing and management of Natura 2000 (Kiki Kati)

Permanent funding of the Natura 2000 network and the implementation of the Habitats Directive is a prerequisite for successful biodiversity conservation in Europe. But providing money for implementation is not enough. Other conditions such as education of the public, control of efficient allocation of funds, and policing regulations (Natura2000 Rangers) also have to be met. An active role of high standard and independent scientists in the design and implementation of management schemes, and the monitoring of results is needed. The challenges to develop appropriate strategies are formidable. This includes management rules that are flexible enough, e.g. NATURA2000 management recommendations may yield negative biodiversity results (examples in Sweden, Germany).

Moreover, if conservation funding in the future is largely restricted to NATURA2000 then this may enhance a segregative approach to nature conservation (small scale reserves), while

holistic and integrative conservation is needed to met the CBD targets – conservation that goes beyond islands of protected areas.

Ad hoc committee on agri-environment schemes (Per Sjögren-Gulve, Martin Dieterich)

An ad-hoc committee on agri-environment schemes has been proposed. The committee should closely cooperate with the PC and the Communications Committee. Tasks for such a committee would be to analyze the situation in terms of the efficiency of agri-environment programs with respect to biodiversity conservation, then write a document (potentially a resolution) and approach the EU Commission.

Possible goals for the ad hoc committee include

- improve effectiveness of agri-environment schemes in terms of benefits for biodiversity
- research project relating agri-environment schemes and biodiversity conservation,
- report on the effectiveness of agri-environment schemes in terms of biodiversity conservation
- collection of best practice examples from across Europe

Possibilities for innovation and efficiency in terms of selection of participants. This would include participants from the implementation side (farmers).

Scientific Advisory Panels (independent scientists) (Per Sjögren-Gulve)

There are different scientific advisory bodies related to international conventions and laws. There should be a place on existing panels for SCB or SCB-ES representatives. Securing such representation could be a major point for discussion during the next BOD meeting in Hungary. A rather critical aspect in this context is the inefficiency of many parallel bodies working on biodiversity. Scientific advisory panels of interest include:

- Habitats Committee specifically the Habitats Committee Scientific Working Group
- IMOSEB (International Mechanism on Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity)
- SBSTTA (Subsidiary Body of Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice)

It would be important to find out more about current SCB-ES members involvement in such bodies, possibly establish contact to members already involved and find out more the different bodies concerned (insider information). The IMOSEB process launched (proposed) by the French government in January 2005 at this point is not clear, the IMOSEB secretariat therefore should be approached (Didier.barbin@imoseb.net) With respect to the IMOSEB concern was raised that once established there is going to be a bias towards taxonomy on this panel. It was suggested that the SCB-ES should support the formation of a committee analogous to the SBSTTA to do similar work at the European scale.

Case Studies Project

The “Case Studies Project” from last year’s list of task was not initiated, because the type of cases to address, how to proceed and other issues were not clearly defined. Discussion during the meeting in Le Luc sought some clarification.

Case examples to be collected can span the following range:

- EU funds for Nature conservation/sustainable development used to violate EU conservation directives (minimum range, worst case)

- public funds violating biodiversity targets (EU Directives, CBD, Gothenburg 2001) (maximum range)

Additional case examples may include:

- violations (gross violations) of directives in general (public or private funds)
- poor or ineffective use of European nature conservation funds
- fraudulent use or malicious use of conservation funds to circumvent or violate conservation objectives

Strong interest was expressed to tackle the project. A solicitation letter asking for a broad range of case examples will be written, addresses for the solicitation letter will be collected, and the BOD will be consulted before sending the letter. Collection of responses, and subsequent evaluation of direction (definition of scope depending on case examples obtained) would be the next step (more collection of cases, or development of action plan based on case studies available). One source of case examples could be cases submitted to the EU Commission. As conceived the project has an extremely high potential for networking/outreach.

Targets to be achieved by the case studies project include

- identify systematic errors relating to (conservation) funding at a European scale
- potentially identify and summarize geographic trends
- project could result in a change in the processes of evaluation of impacts in the context of Natura2000 and the Directives.

BASIC ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

Finances

The need for an appropriate SCB-ES PC budget is acknowledged. Meetings once a year have been essential for stimulating committee activities. Such meetings are possible only, if travel and accomodation expenses of participants can at least partly be covered. Budgetary requirements will increase as PC membership increases. Finances will require discussion with SCB-ES BOD. The SCB-ES BOD has issued a funding request to the SCB including \$1.500 to cover cost for PC meetings.

If we want to attract new participants to various committees, we must take into account financial considerations. Participants from eastern Europe, in particular, face budgetary constraints. Cost for co-operation should be minimized by using the web as a suitable source for communication. The workspace established after the Le Luc meeting could prove helpful in this respect.

Sites for annual meetings should be easily accessible in terms of cost. Holding meetings during SCB/SCB-ES congresses in Europe will also contribute to efficiency in terms of cost.

Presentation of the PC on the SCB website

A plan for the presentation of the SCB-ES on the SCB website was accomplished. Content of the web site should include:

- profiles (PC members)
- active projects (topics)
 - o documents
 - o database
 - o project related web forms

- links to project partners
 - topic links
- finished documents (archive)
 - protocols (meetings)
 - concept papers/essays
 - project archive
 - resolutions
 - press releases
 - databases
- list of activities
- information relating to meetings
- key words and corresponding search function
- chat room for members to express their opinion with regards to current and future focal issues

The route to get something on the web still needs clarification. As soon as the new SCB website is available, a plan should be drawn up to establish the basic set-up outlined. There is still a need for clarification on the route to get something on the web. Who will actually be allowed to put documents on the SCB Website. The PC committee directly, the secretary of the European Section or the Executive Office in Washington. What degree of automation is possible? What degree of independence is possible for the PC? Would prioritization of documents help in terms of what can be done independently?

Next PC meeting(s)

The next meeting of the SCB-ES PC will be during the ECCB2006 in Hungary. PC members are requested to reserve Tuesday morning and afternoon before the official reception.

There will be a meeting in Stockholm in January 2007 hosted by Per Sjögren-Gulve.

There will be a meeting in Greece in January 2008 hosted by Vassiliki Kati.

Suggestions for improvements

Usually, even successful meetings leave plenty of space for improvements. Thus, to avoid that an optimistic overtone prevents suggestions for improvements, this should be dealt with as a separate issue at the end of each meeting.

Suggestions for improvements include:

- distribute list of discussion points earlier
- more input from PC members to the program (none this time)
- request for BOD feed-back on PC work
- organizational issues should not be a top priority of the program, e.g. should not be dealt with in the beginning of the meeting. Conservation issues are more important. Would have liked to see more discussion time devoted to conservation issues.

FUTURE FOCAL POINTS

The meeting was concluded with a selection of future focal points for PC activities. Future focal points will include:

- ***misuse of funds (case studies project)**
- ***incentives linking academics to application (conservation action and academics project)**
- ***implementation of NATURA2000 (poster session ECCB2006)**
- ***agri-environment (ad-hoc committee on agri-environment schemes)**
- ***conservation and global change**

Other issues discussed as future key topics include

- sustainable use of wildlife resources (hunting management)
- economics for nature conservation
- IMOSEB
- geographical dichotomies in Europe in terms of urgent 'nature conservation' issues (E vs. W, N vs. S, inc. pristine area cons. vs. management, degree of implementation)
- pristine areas including marine pristine areas
- gillnet issue (marine section)