

TRANSACTIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTING SYSTEM AND DEVELOPMENT OF PRO-BIODIVERSITY BUSINESS

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Business-biodiversity opportunities exist primarily in the sectors of agriculture, forestry, tourism and a wide range of supply chain activities. Companies in the sectors, having impact mainly on biodiversity, are in most cases micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The latter constitute over 99% of all economic activity in the EU25.

The DG Environment-funded project Biodiversity Technical Assistance Units (BTAU) on businesses supporting biodiversity was started in December 2006 and is implemented in Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland. It seeks to demonstrate how economic incentives can be re-oriented to drive private investment, production, and services to enhance biodiversity conservation.

Three separate but related functions must be fulfilled to encourage and promote the development of PBBs. Firstly, the development of an appropriate enabling policy environment by the national governments and the European Union is needed; secondly, the provision of technical support for the development of viable investment projects at national, regional and local levels is needed – especially enabling access to know-how and environmental information; and thirdly, access to innovative, targeted finance facilities, aimed at the realisation of a latent market of PBBs is needed.

While exploring the specific link to economy, biodiversity and habitats, SMEs faced a number of opportunities and constraints. The major challenge is bringing together all the socio-economic and ecological information necessary for making decisions that would satisfy both the sustainable managing of biodiversity and achieving commercial viability.

These challenge, among others, are being addressed by designing an internet-based Transactional Environment Support System (TESS), with European Commission 7thFP funding. The aim is not only to help the rich but disparate environmental research findings from all across Europe with access problems, but also to integrate the economics of sustainable use and state incentives for cost-effective environmental decisions at all levels.

The TESS project is testing the idea that although planners can now anticipate and constrain or alleviate environmental problems from corporate sources, it is the myriad of individual decisions, on what and when to plant or remove, what to consume or discard or how to travel, which summate to change the biosphere and its diversity of life.

Central governments cannot regulate all these decisions without harming the diversity of human interests and land uses that can sustain a diversity of fauna and flora. Instead, as foreseen in CBD, local communities need to be enlightened, empowered, motivated and guided to manage the environment. However, as to date, the SME sector, making a living from biodiversity, has been marginalised by governments.

The market, properly managed by public policy, remains the best mechanism we have for managing scarce resources and improving livelihoods. However, to make it happen, public policies and the decision making system have to be well-based and supported by environmental information gathered on local and often end user level, towards which the TESS aims at.

References:

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