



PROJECTS

General progress of the unique Life+ project 3watEr (before 'Triple E')



The Life+ project 3watEr started on the 1st of January 2010 and will run for 4 years. The project aims at the sustainable development of a pond area with high nature value of 4000 ha in the north east of Belgium. The area is for a large extent Natura2000 area and covers valuable wetlands and heathlands and the core populations of Bittern and Tree frog in Belgium. The project is unique in the sense that it goes through a close collaboration of all stakeholders involved and in particular the local private landowners and the Agency of Nature and Forestry. The project is innovative since it handles a Triple E approach. This Triple E approach stands for the establishment of more synergy between Ecology, Economy and Education, the fundamentals of a healthy, sustainable society.

The ELO is the coordinating beneficiary of this innovative project. The project is supported by the EU and the Flemish Government

So far, the project is progressing very well. In 2010 there were already 7 Steering Committee meetings and 19 Working group meetings which are good indicators of the productivity. Running a Life+ project properly takes some effort that must be said: The administrative work, the many guidelines, the financial rules, the tender procedures, but also to become familiar with the work environment and approach of each of the 7 beneficiaries. With each of the beneficiaries a 'Partnership agreement' was signed, explaining in detail all what is relevant for a good execution of their actions and roles.

Nonetheless most partners are dealing with work overloads; they are doing major efforts to participate in the Steering Committees and Working Groups and to deliver the necessary administrative and executive work on time.

On the 26th of March 2010, the project had its first press event followed by many dedicated articles and some radio interviews. The project already received the status of best practice regarding partnerships for Biodiversity, presented at the Biodiversity conference organised in Ghent on 8th & 9th September 2010 for the Belgian EU presidency. The project was also presented at the European Green week and on several other events.

The website has been launched: **www.3water.eu** (before we used **www.lifevijvergebied.eu** which still works) but will get strongly improved and updated in 2011. We are inviting everybody to visit the website and especially to fill in our online questionnaire. This online questionnaire is in three languages (English, French and Dutch) and was created by the ELO to investigate both good and bad experiences of the private sector whilst carrying out their role in dedicated conservation and management of Europe's nature and biodiversity. The outcome of this survey will be presented during a European conference on 'The participation of the private sector in Natura2000' on 10 and 11 November 2011 in Brussels.

Beside the set up of this study on the participation of the private sector in the management of Natura2000 areas there were some more studies launched in 2010. A communication study was subcontracted to an expert bureau to develop a good commu-



Launch conference in Heusden-Zolder

nication strategy and house style to make the message and content of this project clear and visible for the general public. This study will be finished in the beginning of 2011. A study on education was also launched aiming at a clear vision and guidelines for better education in the area.

The first walking map with information about the Life+ project and Natura2000 is printed and there were already several guided visits, introducing people to this project and the remarkable nature, history and partnerships of this area.

But it will be for 2011 that the project really becomes visible on the ground. The new house style will be ready and implemented in the website, brochures, posters, information panels and other communication carriers, a video crew will appear in the area to start with the recordings for a special video documentary, the first ecological restoration actions will start, local information sessions will take place and much more. But this all will be for the Activity Report of 2011.

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