

BES-Net Trialogue on Pollinators, Food Security and Rural Development

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

18th - 20th October 2017

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“The role of pollinators is irreplaceable” and “we need to work together...to integrate conservation measures into sectoral policies, such as agriculture and forestry,” stated Ms Edita Djapo, the Minister for the Federal Ministry for Environment and Tourism for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in her opening words for the Trialogue on pollinators, food security and rural development. Pollinators are important contributors to world food production and nutritional security; pollinator health is directly linked to our own well-being and is critical to securing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals on food security and poverty eradication, as well as for helping family farmers' adaptation to climate change.



The first-ever regional BES-Net Trialogue was successfully held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, from the 18th to 20th October 2017 and involved fifty-two stakeholders from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova and Montenegro. The event brought together scientists, local farmers, bee-keepers, NGOs and policymakers from the agriculture, plant protection and environment sectors. On the last day, the High-Level Breakfast provided a rare opportunity for high-level government authorities and international donor partners in the region to chew over the key messages emerging from the dialogue, together with the delicious pollinator-themed breakfast fare, and to engender their support for local policy proposals, such as the explicit inclusion of goals and actions to conserve pollination services in the forthcoming Federal Strategy and Action Plan for Environment for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Over the three days in Sarajevo, the Trialogue fully achieved its objectives of raising awareness about the relevance of the global findings of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (**IPBES**); sharing knowledge across the policy, science and practice communities; identifying regionally and nationally-relevant risks and opportunities for pollinators and pollination; and generating commitment to collaboration and action to protect pollinators in order to ensure sustained agricultural and food production. Participants highlighted the fact that this was the first time that they had ever come together to focus on pollinators as the lens for understanding the link between ecosystem services, agriculture and rural



development, and they found it a powerful call to action.

The [assessment on Pollination, Pollinators and Food Production](#) is the first ever issued by IPBES and is a groundbreaking effort to better understand and manage a critical element of the global ecosystem. It is also the first assessment of its kind that is based on the available knowledge from both science and indigenous and local knowledge systems. Nevertheless, as the report concludes, there is “a need for more flow of information in multiple directions...both bottom-up and top-down systems of sharing information to address the lack of coordination between sectors (conservation, infrastructure, energy, agriculture) that leads to a conflict in practices on the ground, and the loss of species and habitats.” A further challenge for policy uptake of the global IPBES assessment findings is the low level of participation of experts and knowledge-holders and the scarcity of published and available data from certain regions, such as the Eastern European region.



The innovative BES-Net Triologue methodology aims to address these challenges directly and provides a stimulating and constructive space to learn together, build capacity and to foster inter-cultural understanding and inter-institutional coordination. The Triologue methodology began several months before the actual event with the identification of key stakeholders from the different communities in each country, including a gender analysis of the final invitee list to ensure both diversity and equality. Early work also began on the collaborative drafting of a [regional Background Document](#) that synthesizes the global IPBES assessment results and draws together available knowledge regarding the status of pollinators and pollination at the regional level, together with an analysis of threats and drivers of change at the national level in the five countries. This is a living document which was further shaped and updated by the participants through the dialogue and working group exercises. By the end of the Triologue, this had metamorphosed into a draft Regional Action Document on Pollinators, providing an immediate platform for collaboration and follow-up of the policy and management responses that were identified. In the post-Triologue period, participants and donor partners will review and refinement of the Regional Action Document on the specially-designed networking portal hosted by BES-Net.

As part of the innovative and immersive Triologue methodology using state-of-the-art facilitation, participants spent the first day celebrating and learning about the diversity of pollinators and ecosystems in the Eastern European region, delighting the senses with taste, smells, sights and sounds, and discovering the abundance of pollinated crops in the region that are both important dietary sources of vitamins and minerals, as well as key crops for exportation within the European Union and internationally, such as cherries, pears, almonds,



cereals such buckwheat, honey and oils. Lively conversations led to an acknowledgement that the issue of pollination is not limited to bee-keeping and honey production - and yet this is the low-priority area to which the topic has been relegated within Ministries of Agriculture and Environment in all of the countries. It was also an opportunity to visit and engage with local farmers and bee-keepers in the hills around Sarajevo, in the Republika Srpska, leading to a greater awareness of the real-time decline in wild and managed pollinators and the impact on crop production.



During the following two days of the Triologue, participants realized that, in the region, they shared similar situations in terms of rich biodiversity, increasing levels of abandonment of rural farms, the alignment of agricultural and rural development strategies in the process of EU accession, and the dependence on certain key exports which are pollinator-dependent. All countries are also experiencing growing threats to pollinators due to a lethal combination of land-use change, pesticides, disease and climate change. Their

shared experiences and co-creation of knowledge led to enthusiasm and commitment to not only national actions, but to the necessity of regional cooperation given that pollinators and threats do not recognize national boundaries. Some innovative ideas for regional cooperation emerged including:

- a regional hazard monitoring and early warning system for sharing information and data on invasive species, pests, disease and environmental pollution;
- the development of a regional database on invasive species that are a threat to pollinators;
- a regional networking initiative to generate and share data on status of pollinators and pollination services as an integral part of the evaluation of ecosystem services and agro-biodiversity initiatives, potentially an Eastern European branch of the CBD International Initiative on Pollinators;
- regional guidelines and training of farmers on the use and control of pesticides in alignment with EU regulatory framework;

At the national level, the Triologue participants have identified key practical actions. For example:

- The participants from Moldova committed to immediate action and, as a result, have created a cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder National Task Force on Pollinators to identify policy options and implement actions.



- In Montenegro, participants have committed to following the Bosnia and Herzegovina example of adopting a National Rulebook on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides in alignment with EU and Annex I country requirements. Both countries want to collaborate on the training of farmers in the implementation of the rules.
- In Albania, the Director for the Institute of Organic Agriculture has already published two articles in local newspapers on the results of the Trialogue and has committed to undertaking interviews on local and national media.
- In Georgia, participants identified local-level strategies for cooperation and learning between farmers and bee-keepers, as well as proposing the need for a conference on pollinators and climate-smart agriculture.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, participants identified the gap regarding pollinators in their recently adopted National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, and have committed to including explicit goals and actions to conserve pollination services in the forthcoming Federal Strategy and Action Plan for Environment for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A key component of the BES-Net Trialogue approach is the collaboration with international and local donor partners that are active in the region and can provide ongoing support to the implementation of actions and policy options identified in the Regional Action Document. Prime examples of this collaboration include: the collaboration with UNDP country offices and GIZ in the identification of participants from different sectors and communities within the region; and the fact that the Trialogue was held immediately after the regional IPBES capacity-building working organized by the German Institute for Biodiversity, enabling cost-sharing and efficiency as well as developing deeper bonds, capacity and networking between those participants who attended both events. In the closing panel on Friday 20th October, participants from the Regional IUCN Office, the German Institute for Biodiversity, the GIZ Open Regional Fund for Biodiversity in Eastern Europe, UNDP BES-Net were able to highlight funding, training, research and networking opportunities that were relevant and could support the actions outlined in the Regional Action Document. This was not only a one-way exercise, partners from these resource organisations also highlighted ways in which their own regional initiatives can and should more effectively incorporate the role of pollinators and pollination services. In the words of one of the participants, “the bells are ringing”, a crisis is looming and we need to take action now.

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