



Darwin M&E Programme: Final Report Review

Basic Project Details

Project Ref No.	EIDPO037
Project Title	Târnava Mare: securing the future of a Transylvanian HNV landscape
Contract Holder Institution	ADEPT Foundation Ltd
UK Partner Institution (s)	-
Host Country Partners Institution (s)	University Lucian Blaga Sibiu, University Babes-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca, The University of Medicine & Pharmacy, Targu Mures, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Regional Environmental Protection Agency, DAPHNE Institute of Applied Ecology (Slovakia), Ecotur NGO Sibiu, Local Action Group Dealurile Tarnavelor, Milvus Group
Darwin Grant Value	£156,700
Start/End Date	Apr 2010 – Dec 2012
Review Date	July 2013

1. Project Summary

The project sought to produce an official management plan that would induce state support while continuing to build local capacity and secure sustainable management of the Târnava Mare area (a high nature value farmed [HNVF] landscape of 85,000 ha in Transilvania). It also aimed to conserve the area's biodiversity and leave a legacy of increased capacity for conservation of HNMF landscapes for other areas in Romania to look up to.

The main activities of the project were to create a database for monitoring of habitat/species condition; to develop management guidelines, test their implementation and draft an integrated management plan; to facilitate workshops to train farmers on how to better market their produce; to promote Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification of forested areas; and to publicise the importance of and value in conserving HNMF landscapes through newsletters, school camps, teacher training, etc.

2. Project Purpose

The purpose was divided into three components:

1. consolidate management measures developed under main project into an official management plan triggering state support,
2. while continuing to build local capacity, to secure the future good management of the project area and conserve its remarkable biodiversity, and
3. leave a wider legacy in Romania of increased capacity for conservation of High Nature Value Farmed (HNMF) landscapes.

While the project has not yet triggered state support, it has produced a management plan and the other two components of the project's purpose have been achieved.

The project published a framework management plan in December 2012 (Annex A1 of final report). However, state support has not yet commenced as the plan has not yet been acknowledged in Romanian law and will not be until at least 2015 when a combined management plan with the Podisul Hârtibaciului SPA Natura 2000 site has been completed (the combined area is shown in Annex B of the Final Report). This will not have any practical effect on the time frame for support payments to farmers in Natura 2000 areas in Romania, as these will not commence until at least 2015 regardless of whether or not a management plan has been approved by the government.

Farmers managing 24,505 ha of grassland are now receiving payments from HNV grassland agri-environment schemes to support 'biodiversity-friendly' farming as a result of the project's farm advisory activities. Programmes have also been established for scientific and technical education in the identification, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity rich land.

The project has succeeded in leaving a legacy in Romania of increased capacity for conservation of HNMF landscapes. This is a prize winning project that was awarded "Best CAP communication award" by the European Commission (out of 118 candidate projects) and Fauna & Flora International has said that it is a model local integrated development project

3. Project Outputs

Other than the release of Natura 2000 funding, which will not happen until at least 2015 (a challenge outside of the control of the project was that support by the Ministry of Environment for Natura 2000 funding was not provided, although this financial support was assumed in the project's original logframe), all of the project's outputs were achieved.

Annex E of the Final Report shows the avenues used for publicity. However, it assumes no duplication in numbers (which is unlikely) to arrive at total figures of 55,000 and 480,000 people that have been directly and indirectly reached by various means, respectively.

The project was clearly well managed to achieve the key outputs as shown in the logframe, e.g. FSC certification of 20,000 ha of forest and increased community prosperity - with agri-environment payments well above the national average.

4. Project Achievements, Impact and Lessons Learned for future Darwin Projects

The project facilitated cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and worked with small scale farmers in the area. In doing so, the project increased the utilisation of agri-environment payment schemes and provided formal training in relevant fields to encourage sustainable management of the land so the potential value of biodiversity rich farmed landscapes can be fully realised. As the agri-environment schemes are directly linked to biodiversity (on the basis of the number of indicator species found in an area of land) as opposed to agricultural outputs, farmers are encouraged to manage their land in the way that has the most positive effect on biodiversity, as this will in turn likely have the most positive effect on their income. Using this approach, and through the implementation of a database for monitoring indicator species levels, biodiversity can be monitored effectively, and declines in species addressed more quickly and successfully. As a result of the increased agri-environment payments, it has been indicated that local farmers are receiving higher incomes than before (although clear evidence of this has not been provided).

It was envisaged that a PhD thesis would be submitted, but this has not yet been the case. However, two MSc qualifications have been obtained and a further 35 qualifications awarded to locals. The Final Report claims that 463 people have received some form of training (although no evidence has been submitted to substantiate this) while 6 papers have been accepted for publication in peer reviewed journals and 20 conferences attended at which project work has been disseminated.

An evaluation of the main project was carried out by the Daphne Institute that was seen to be so valuable that they became key partners for the post-project.

The project has contributed to a range of CBD Articles, as referred to in Annex 3 of the Final Report, and project staff in Romania have been in contact with Nicolae Manta, the CBD Focal Point at the Romanian Ministry of Environment and Climate Change to help ensure the project is involved in meeting Romania's CBD commitments through the incorporation of the area management plan in the forthcoming combined Sighișoara-Târnava Mare/ Hârțibaciu management plan. Facilitating cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change to encourage funding from Romania's rural development programme (from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development [EAFRD] under the Common Agricultural Policy) to support the CBD as much as possible has been another important role of the project.

FSC (the only forest certification scheme endorsed by major environmental NGOs such as WWF) certification of almost 20,000 ha will help to ensure biodiversity conservation of much of the forested area (although evidence of this certification was not provided). The project, and the publications it has produced, emphasise the high biodiversity value that (non-intensive) farmed landscapes can offer in Europe and thus the importance of this type of project in that context.

In addition to conserving biodiversity, the project has supported the livelihoods of local populations, with farms covering most of the project area's grassland receiving agri-environment payments and an improvement of milk quality to make it commercially viable producing a total additional income of EUR 16,000/month for 100 dairy farmers. The project has also been involved in training hundreds of locals in sustainable management of the land and educated locals on the conservation value of forest and grassland areas, which can now be visually demonstrated following the GIS mapping of the landscape and the database updated to monitor indicator species (guides for which have been developed in collaboration with Babes-Bolyai University).

The project made good use of partnerships with local universities to collaborate on management planning and one senior member of staff has been involved with a local partner to the extent of taking up an Associate Professorship and the position of Associate Editor¹ of the journal *Contributii Botanice* at Cluj University. The project is also involved in the policy discourse in this area, which FUNDATIA being a Member of the Romanian National Monitoring Committee and head of the agri-environment and rural development working group of CEEweb (an umbrella organisation of NGOs in the region). The innovation poster (Final Report Annex D) shows that following communication with consumers, policy development is achieved through cooperation with the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development which in turn acts as a "one-stop shop for farmers" to access information on a wide range of topics related to their livelihoods.

While the project has not focussed on creating internationally leading experts, collaboration with Professor Laszlo Rakosy of Babes-Bolyai University has enabled Romania's first Lepidoptera-based agri-environment measure (payment to farmers in return for their agreement to manage the landscape in such a way as to protect Lepidoptera) in HNV grasslands.

¹ http://reviste.ubbcluj.ro/contributii_botanice/en/comitet.php

5. What lessons learned/or failures/challenges from this project could be used to improve/inform future Darwin projects or the wider Darwin programme?

The project management structure seems to have worked well, with a high proportion of Romanian staff involved helping to keep staff costs somewhat below what was budgeted and building local capacity that can advance the project's achievements going forward. There appears to have been no lack of capacity among the project team to achieve the outputs, with key factors causing delays being: i) the decision to create a combined management plan across two Natura 2000 sites and ii) Romania's decision not to pay farmers in Natura 2000 sites until at least 2015, and both of these outside of the control of the team of highly qualified staff. The project showed a good understanding of the underlying issues surrounding biodiversity conservation in HNV landscapes, as shown by the involvement of numerous strategic partners to make best use of expertise in research (e.g. University Babes-Bolyai, University Lucian Blaga Sibiu), environmental legislation (e.g. REPA Sibiu), sustainable land management and farmer training (e.g. ADEPT).

The project has experienced how political decision making can greatly influence outputs, with the decision of the Romanian Government not to make payments to farmers on Natura 2000 sites until at least 2015 and the decision not to legally recognise a management plan for the Tarnava Mare area alone and instead favour a combined management plan for the Sighișoara-Târnava Mare Site of Community Interest both delaying the impact of the project's activities. Prospective Darwin projects should thus be aware of the potential for political decisions to influence their projects and plans put in place to adapt to such changes, where appropriate.

The project offers numerous positive lessons to be learned for future work in this area, including the value of collaborating with local institutions, building capacity of farmers and using television to disseminate project messages (Final Report Annex E shows the number of people reached through TV programmes and other media, including one programme that had 180,000 viewers alone).

6. What is the sustainability and legacy of the project? What achievements are likely to endure and why?

The project should have a high degree of sustainability now much of the work for the combined management plan has been done and there is confidence through the partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development that the combined plan will be supported in Romanian law and the payments for Romanian farmers in Natura 2000 sites will commence from 2015. However, as national debt increases not only in Romania but in countries across Europe, so does pressure to cut public spending and political priorities may shift away from the biodiversity and livelihoods conservation of the Târnava Mare HNV landscape. It is therefore important that the project's objectives are kept high on the political agenda through continued engagement and cooperation with the relevant Ministries.

The content of the management plan for the Târnava Mare area is going to form much of the combined Sighișoara-Târnava management plan. The capacity built among farmers to manage land in a way that conserves biodiversity and allows them, for instance, to produce higher quality, saleable milk, is not an achievement that is likely to fade away quickly. In addition, the monitoring of indicator species to ensure biodiversity levels do not diminish should be preserved through the direct linking with the level of agri-environment payments received. The increased capacity of local NGOs is also an important achievement that should provide continued support to the project after Darwin funding is no longer provided.

7. Project Budget

Staff costs covered by Darwin were over £5,000 less than budgeted due to reduced field work.

The project received £156,700 from Darwin over its two year period, in addition to £203,795 of co-financing. The project has generated approximately EUR 2 million per year in additional income for local farmers, producers and service providers. This represents a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of around 9 and is therefore very high value for money, as is claimed in the Final Report.

8. Key Facts for Project Publicity

- The Târnava Mare HNV project created the first management plan for a lowland farmed landscape in Romania.
- An innovative database using GIS has been developed and is operational and accessible to all those involved in habitat/species management in the area
- Capacity was built among dairy farmers to produce higher quality milk and enable the sale of that milk at much higher rates than was previously possible
- 19,675 ha of forest has been FSC certified
- 463 people received some form of training through the project
- The project received the “Best CAP communication award” by the European Commission (out of 118 candidate projects)
- Over 500,000 people were reached (both directly and indirectly) by the project’s media strategy
- The project proved to be excellent value for money, with over £8 generated for local biodiversity conservation linked livelihoods from every £1 invested