

Biodiversity and Nature Protection Seminar EPROSAI WORKING

GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL AUDITING Sofia, 2 - 5

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Counsellor: Cristina Astraldi

Court of Audit of Italy

The Conservation and Enhancement of Natural Heritage and Biodiversity

In its Report no.35/2003/G, adopted by the II Bench of the Central Audit Chamber of the Court of Auditors on 16 July 2003 regarding the environmental protection programme, the Court of Audit set out its findings, referring in particular to the funding provided for its implementation, and a progress report on the implementation of the projects under by the programme, and the objectives attained.

Under this programme, law 344/1997 set out the priority areas of action for the environmental rehabilitation and safeguard policy for the three-year period 1997-1999, setting out the operations in terms of six strategic projects, one of which was for the conservation and enhancement of the natural heritage and biodiversity.

The conservation and advancement of the natural

heritage and biodiversity project comprised six subprojects:

- 1) fostering compatible economic activities;
- 2) developing tourism in the internal areas;
- 3) managing waste in the protected areas;

- 4) cleaning and removing the pollution from the waters in the protected areas;
- 5) instituting the National Documentation Centre on the protected natural areas;
- 6) biodiversity.

1. The "Fostering compatible economic activities" subproject comprises two areas of action: the PAN project, and the agrifood quality mark for products of from the parks and of the Parchi Ricchezza Italiana parks.

1.1 The first project was implemented directly by the Nature Conservation Service and was initially financed with EUR 1,291,142.20, which was later reduced to EUR 603,221.60.

In order to implement this project it was planned to conclude a programme agreement between the Ministry of the Environment, and the Regions and Autonomous Provinces and the "Protected Areas" Management Agencies, to enable the parks and the protected areas to draw up plans to set up centres for the promotion of typical and organic products,

which was not, however, finalised in time for the projects to be implemented. The Nature Conservation Service therefore proposed to change the programme agreement and to proceed to finance two projects submitted by the National Agricultural Economy Institute dealing with two aspects of relevance to the objectives of sustainable development in the protected areas. The first project, costing an aggregate EUR 746,280.20 was for a survey of agriculture in the Parks and in the National Ecological Network, which is the main tool for the surveillance of the territory and the primary producer of quality products for marketing both locally and at the national and international levels; the second project, costing EUR 400,000.00,

was to carry out a survey of the features of sustainable tourism supply and demand in the protected areas.

The balance of EUR 131,696.50 was used for subprojects submitted by the Cinque Terre National Park -the Municipality of Riomaggiore, as part of the "Treno dei Parchi" initiative.

The Nature Conservation Service then proposed a partial reallocation of the resources already earmarked for this project, redistributing that EUR 603,221.60 between "Agriculture in the National Parks" (EUR 309,874.10) and "Tourism in the National Parks" (EUR

293,347.50).

Following these changes, the Nature Conservation Service concluded four agreements in 2002 with specialised institutions to carry out the following: a survey of farming in the protected natural areas and in the national ecological network, for a total of EUR 300,061.40; a feasibility study for a quality mark for tourism in the parks, for EUR 86,764.70; the printing and distribution of the "*Red List of Birds*", for EUR 61,974.80, and the "Survey into developing sustainable tourism in the protected natural areas" for EUR 67,138.99.

These activities are still in progress.

1.2 "Parchi Ricchezza Italiana" (Parks Italian Richness)-

Environmental education for youth

The "Parchi Ricchezza Italiana" (Environmental education for youth) subproject, implemented by the Sustainable Development Service with funding of EUR 237,518.50 was implemented by reference to the strategic guideline entitled "Sustainable City - Environmental Education and Planning Tools".

The operations are now completed.

2. Using the internal areas for tourism

This project comprises two areas of activity: Treno

Dei Parchi (Parks Train) and APE-European Apennine Park.

2.1 Treno Dei Parchi: rehabilitation of the secondary railway networks.

EUR 1,394,433.60 were allocated for this activity, divided up, on the basis of the outline projects submitted, between the implementing parties, to which 70 percent of the allocated funds were simultaneously paid.

Further funding was allocated under Decree 23778/SCN of 28.12.2000, and Decree 1272/SNC of 27 November 2001, for a total of EUR 648,153.40.

The inspection conducted in May 2003 by the Administration revealed the following situation:

The Liguria Region - Ente Parco Antola (Antola Park Institution) requested an extension of the original October 2002 deadline.

The work of the Regional Park of the Apuan Alps has now been completed, and the balance of funds paid.

The Province of Siena reported the approval of the preliminary project for the railway station at Torrenieri in the municipality of Montalcino by the Provincial Government and the fact that the final drawings were currently being drafted. 70 percent of the available resources have been allocated.

The project has been held up by difficulties in

reaching agreement with the Italian State Railways, Ferrovie dello Stato, and the Italian train operating company, Trenitalia S.p.A., over the availability of station buildings.

In June 2001, because of real difficulties encountered in implementing the approved project, the National Park of the Belluno Dolomites submitted a fresh proposal to the Conservation Service equivalent in value to the project already approved, consistent with the purposes and the objectives of the original project, for the introduction of innovative management procedures to promote sustainable tourism within the Park.

In January 2002 the Abruzzo Region reported that it had transferred part of the allocated funds (EUR 16,423.30 out of EUR 273,670.50) to the municipalities of Acciano, Raiano and Fagnano Alto to recover buildings belonging to Ferrovie dello Stato and Trenitalia S.p.A. for the restyling of a railway carriage (EUR 3,615.10 out of EUR 36,151.90) and for consultancy services regarding the final project (EUR 5,939.20).

By March 2003, the work had been 50% completed. The deadline for completing the project was extended to 31.12.2003. Seventy percent of the funding has been transferred.

With regard to the municipality of Riomaggiore, work

on the station building at Manarola has been completed, and work on the Manarola guest centre began in October 2002 and is currently in progress, while work on the Riomaggiore station has now been completed.

2.1 The APE-European Apennine Park-Project

The EUR 723,039.60 allocated for this project has been used to implement a global strategy for nature conservation and sustainable development in Apennine system, based on the network of protected natural parks, in compliance with European Union and international guidelines and policies, with particular reference to traditional agro-silvo-pastoral activities, agritourism and environmental tourism.

The Abruzzo Region, as the project coordinator, has distributed this funding between the regions leading the project by area, and the National Parks Federation.

In October 2002, the Abruzzo region also reported progress exclusively with regard to the work falling within its jurisdiction and that of Federparchi (25 percent completed) but had no figures available on the Tuscany and Calabria regions.

3. Waste management in protected areas

Under the subproject, the Waste Management and

Reclamation Service directly undertook the following:

- separate waste collection in the protected natural area, which is still in progress;
- separate collection of eutrophic material, currently being implemented;
- building a composting unit, for which the final plans are now ready;
- a composting unit, for which the plans have been withdrawn;
- creating "ecological islands", now completed.

4. Reclamation and cleaning of the water bodies in protected areas

This subproject, which is divided into two areas of activity - relating, respectively, to reclaiming the protected natural areas and safeguarding the water in the natural protected areas - which were considered not to be priorities in the programme, has not yet been implemented by the Service responsible for it.

5. Institution of the National Documentation Centre on protected natural areas

For this project EUR 3,098,741.30 has been committed for allocation to the Rome City Council to set up the National Documentation Centre on protected natural areas,

in Villa Torlonia.

This funding forms part of a broader plan of reclamation operations for a total of EUR 11,878,508, of which twenty operations were to rehabilitate five buildings in the Villa Torlonia complex, and three were for natural and environmental aspects, so that the whole complex can be used as a Documentation Centre on protected natural areas.

For this purpose an EUR 1,500,000.00 agreement was concluded between the Rome City Council and the Ministry of the Environment to draft the feasibility study for the work on the whole complex, and carry out a number of external operations in the Villa Torlonia Park. This contract is still in force, and so far EUR 309,874.10 has been paid.

Following subsequent agreements with the Rome City Council and the Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Heritage, in June 2002 a New Protocol of

Understanding was signed for the implementation of the National Documentation Centre, under which was agreed to build an educational/recreational facility for children in the Villino Medievale and Limonaia at Villa Torlonia, to educate and disseminate environmental values and the protection of nature and biodiversity among young people, and to create a Documentation Centre on the parks intended

specifically for an adult public on the premises of Villa Farinacci and the park in front of it.

The Protocol of Understanding was approved and made effective on 25.7.2002. The transfer of the funding took place subsequently. At the present time, the contract setting out the procedural aspects for the measures is awaiting signature.

6. Biodiversity

This project comprises two areas of activity: "Biodiversity - analysis and evaluation of the Italian situation", and "Biodiversity - Environmental education for young people".

6.1 The first initiative, for which EUR 1,239,495.50 has been allocated, is under the programme agreement between the Ministry of the Environment and the National Research Council- CNR, comprising the following:

- a) "Knowledge, conservation and management of biodiversity": this subproject forms part of the biodiversity fact-finding activities to be used to implement a national information system on biodiversity and a "nature map".
- b) "Knowledge of biodiversity and genetically modified organisms": this subproject comprises

research areas which include the impact of the production, marketing and consumption of genetically modified plant products, the impact on the micro-fauna and micro-flora in the soil, monitoring techniques, and territorial ecosystemic biodiversity.

In order to implement each of these projects, the CNR has provided the Administration with technical and scientific assistance and support for research, development, trials, documentation, specialised consultancy for domestic, international and community initiatives, support for the drafting of regulations, setting up and managing data banks, and specialised support for managing emergency situations.

The activities were completed in November 2003.

6.2 The second initiative, "Biodiversity: Environmental education for youth" entailed the following initiatives: "The treasure map", by the Parks and Natural Reserves Federation, and the "Biodiversity Experience Centre", implemented by the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region. Both are now completed.