



LIFE International networking conference: **Environment needs LIFE for the next 25 years**

Highlights and conclusions from the conference

Ljubljana, 25 May 2017

Škocjanski zatok, 26 May 2017

LIFE International networking conference was held on Thursday, 25 May 2017 in Ljubljana (European Union House, Dunajska 20, Ljubljana, Slovenia) and on Friday, 26 May 2017 at Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve (Sermin 50, Koper, Slovenia).

The purpose of the conference was to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the LIFE programme and the Habitats Directive. Over 130 participants of the conference came from 9 countries: Hungary, Italy, Croatia, Latvia, Malta, Slovakia, Finland, Austria and Slovenia.

On the first day of the conference we consolidated the experiences, results and impacts of 25 years of existence and implementation of the Habitats Directive and LIFE programme. Additionally we outlined the challenges that can be addressed in the following 25 years. At the beginning of the conference the participants were welcomed by the Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Mrs. Irena Majcen, and Head of the LIFE Unit, DG Environment, Mr. Jean-Claude Merciol.

We continued with "introductory panels", where experiences with the implementation of both, the Habitats Directive and LIFE projects in Slovenia as well as in other European member states were presented along with the effects of the LIFE mechanism for the Europe - environment - nature.

Baselines in the opening panels were presented by Mr. Jean-Claude Merciol, Head of the LIFE Unit, DG Environment, mag. Tanja Bolte, Director General, Environmental Directorate, Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, dr. Peter Skoberne, Secretary at the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning and Mrs. Stefania Betti together with Mr. Federico Benvenuti, from Italian LIFE NCP, Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea/TA Sogesid S.p.A. The speakers presented the main effects of the implementation of the LIFE programme and the Habitats Directive.

After the introductory panels a followed the main networking activity of the conference - Project Café with International LIFE fair with 34 projects from four member states presenting their work. Project Café was provided to all participants an opportunity for international networking, exchange of practices and contacts for future project cooperation.

At the round table »Europe needs LIFE for the next 25 years« the moderator of the round table, Mrs. Špela Polak summed up their experiences with LIFE projects, reviewed best practices, presented LIFE programme and highlighted some of the strengths, weaknesses and potentials for the creation of new LIFE partnerships. The speakers at the round table were: mag. Julijana Lebez Lozej, Secretary, Slovenian LIFE NCP, Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, dr. Darij Krajčič, director, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, dr. Primož Simončič, director, Slovenian Forestry Institute, mag. Nataša Šalaja, Head of Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve, DOPPS – BirdLife Slovenia, Mrs. Nikolina Petković Gregorić, Head of Croatian LIFE NCP, Ministry of Environment and Energy.

In the last session of the first day of the International Conference »First aid for applicants and beneficiaries of LIFE projects« speakers presented the challenges of the LIFE programme, mechanisms of assistance to applicants and beneficiaries of LIFE projects, benefits and challenges of transnational integration and opportunities for a successful preparation of LIFE projects. As a useful tool for partner search and exchange of project ideas and practices a digital platform [Portal Life Slovenia](#) was presented.

The second day of the conference was reserved for the visit of an example of best practice in Slovenia. We visited Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve, which restoration was partly performed in the framework of Slovenian LIFE project [LIFE00NAT/SLO/7226](#). After the short presentation of the project and the following up activities, a guided tour of the reserve was performed.





Highlights and conclusions from the conference »Environment needs LIFE for the next 25 years«

Natura 2000

- Natura 2000 sites are our preserved wealth.
- A major challenge is the implementation of commitments and achieving the objectives.
- The solution is primarily in collaboration - each of us must contribute.
- Solutions are being explored to meet the needs of the environment. They should be complementary and not competing.
- Conservation of Natura 2000 sites: The need for measures in the field of management and information and greater cooperation the agricultural sector and also general support for conservation of Natura 2000 areas.

Program LIFE

- Clear rules are important for implementation and are also a good model for other European programmes.
- Reflection on the financing - Nature / NATURA 2000 gets more points.
- Great importance for effective project is a good project partnership where each partner has its particular role (it is important to clearly define the roles and rules between partners in advance). What is also important is the selection of the lead partner of the project.
- To achieve synergistic effects the cooperation of various European programs is important.
- Creation of financial structure: combination of different sources of funding, priority national co-financing of LIFE projects.
- Challenges and opportunities of transnational cooperation: they require detailed consideration of establishing cross-border partnerships (the traps and benefits / pros and cons). [Portal Life Slovenia](#) – it is an online tool to search for partnership, networking and exchange of practices and experiences.
- All topics in the field of environment and climate action raise the challenge of creating projects with the solution for the market (so called close-to-market projects).
- The proportion of funding of LIFE projects in comparison with other European programs is lower - the share of approved LIFE projects is relatively high.
- Complex preparation of LIFE project → easier implementation of LIFE project and also more effective planning of project actions.

