**Minutes of the Agenda**

**Exchange of Experiences: 2nd Interregional Learning Event**

(Dedicated towards learning the best practices and innovation policies in deltas)

**Venue:** Meetings are held in the office of Parque Natural de la Albufera: Centro de Interpretación Racó de L'Olla, C/Vicent Baldoví and of The Council of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Services and Shipping of the Valencia Region; Plaza Alfonso el Magnánimo, 12, both in Valencia

# **DAY 1: MARCH 5, 2019**

**9:00 - 9:15 REGISTRATION**

The registration list is enclosed. Scanned list of signatures is enclosed.

**9:15 - 9:30 WELCOME BY THE HOST PARTNER**

Director of the Albufera Natural Park welcomes all and wishes success in our work.

**9:30 - 9:45 INTRODUCTION BY THE LEAD PARTNER**

Yoram Krozerfrom the University of Twente (UT) welcomes all participants, particularly new ones. Hospitality of the Albufera National Park and The Council of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Services and Shipping of the Valencia Region is highly appreciated. He passes French partner’s apologies for their absence despite intensive interactions during weeks until 4th March, the day before the meeting. This issue will be resolved after the meeting. The project Progress Report for the 1st semester is delivered to the Interreg secretariat on time, thanks to Maia Lordkipanidze (UT), but the deliveries should improve in the 2nd semester because most of them were late and not all financial reports are delivered. Frans Coenen strengthens the UT team for coordination of finances.

**9:45 - 12:30 PRESENTATIONS OF PARTNERS**

**IRELAND (RIVER BLACKWATER DELTA).**

Darragh O'Suilleabhain from Cork County Council explains that the focus is on innovative services. It includes financial issues, such as willingness to pay for ecosystem services (ESS) and agreements between suppliers and buyers of services. Examples of Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) in water management are construction of an artificial dike for flood protection and tourism, sustainable forest upstream to reduce costs downstream (total € 8 mln investment during 12 years), private bids for uses of parks and grazing land. 1st meeting of the Regional Stakeholders Group (RSG) addressed green tourism, fees for ecosystem services in the region as well as water quality and quantity upstream. A stakeholder from Southern Regional Assembly (Bryan Riney) participates in the Valencia meeting. However, there is little national political buy-in and little support for the regional spatial and economic strategies. The local planners attended the 1st RSG meeting. Its aim is to prepare a few best practices in May or June 2019, e.g. tourism, agro-environmental schemes, water quality. Tim O'Higgins from University College Cork characterizes EES for production and welfare including cross-regional transfers. Best practices refer to ecotourism, salmon, rural – habitat improvement, “iron man” – infrastructure and recreation; e.g. “eco-board” – walk on a wooden path. The issues are: how to balance expenditures and benefits across regions (e.g. the agro-environmental scheme), how to deal with invasive species (www. catchments.ie), how to generate more local participation in water quality (e.g. meandering), stakeholders’ engagement in management plans, volunteers in cleaning banks, reward farmers for keeping trees in rivers, create wetlands and freshwater EES on 100 farms (funded with € 1.4 mln) and replicated country-wide.

**ITALY (PO DELTA).** Enrico Cancila from ERVET and Giuseppe Castaldelli from Po Delta Park explain that the aim is to assess Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) in the Valli de Comacchio. How to assess PES for biodiversity is discussed. It is focused on tourism. Key firms are asked to provide monthly data, e.g. 36 000 people pay a ticket for the boat trip on lagoon plus visit to salt work and nature museum. Inventory of revenues is in preparation. It is also aimed at reduction of nitrogen in water, which is easier than improvement of aquaculture, carbon storage and tourism. New management plan with PES is envisaged (the Frisian partners indicate that they can provide a proven method for the preparation of such management plan). The new plan should also include possibilities and incentives for investment and accessibility for people.

**NETHERLANDS (RIJN DELTA).**

Simon Tijsma from the Province of Friesland explains aim of innovations. Barriers are encountered, e.g. uncertain results, bias for short term actions, idea killers. Regional policy refers to the Sustainable Development Goals but bottom up implementation process with quadruple helix is envisaged. The role of province is to facilitate that process; create an innovators dancefloor for experimentation (effectuation) rather than receipts about how to innovate. Portfolio of projects links nature and culture, focused on community (mienskip), landscape (lanskiep), and heritage (erfskip). 1st RSG meeting identified possible projects. Two stakeholders participate in the Valencia meeting. Eileen Blackmore is designer focused on uses of regional bioresources which fosters employment with regional capabilities and proudness. Examples are sweater based on the recycled wool with local patterns (cross lines), cloths using flax mixed with PET bottles, rice bottle for tap water. She aims to identify local crops with sources and prices, but production is international, for instance flax is from Belgium, spinning in France and finishing in Portugal, € 139 - 169 shop price. Jan Willem van Kruyssen is cultural producer that relates nature and culture, e.g. “Silence of Bees” film, B-Rhapsody with bees, Bamboo Bees Schools that measure biodiversity. In the Frisian region only 15% of biodiversity is left; main problem is agriculture. It is difficult to cooperate with farmers, but he aims to assess impacts based on contracts with farmers. It is also difficult to convince politicians. The aim is to enlarge buy-in by showing benefits, e.g. started in water with € 5 000 cost 30 years ago and now € 400 million benefits.

**SPAIN (ALBUFERA DELTA).**

Paloma Mateache, Managing Director of the Albufera Natural Park, and Ana Benito from the The Council of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Services and Shipping of the Valencia Region, introduce main issues in the regional park. Prime issue is water management of the Albufera river linked to 12,000 ha park based on private and public ownership of the lake and rice fields. Economy relates to agriculture based on traditional irrigation system, as well as recreation on boats and sailing, and cultural activities related to gastronomy, films, festivals and scenery for TV programs, environmental activities of cycling and bird watching, as well as hunting and traditional fishing, mainly eel and cultural gastronomy. The 1st RSF meeting attracted 22 persons: Valencia authorities, DG EU fund, Industry (Camara Commerce - Valencia and a restaurant), association of ornithology, Vela Latina, Assut Foundation and others. Best practices are focused on ecotourism. Four best practices are proposed: the Tartana Foods on rice with restaurant, Association of ornithologists, Marca parcs natural (brand) and branding of the food origin as "Arroz de Valencia". Two out of them should be selected.

**ROMANIA (DANUBE DELTA).**

Jenica Hanganu and Madalina Sbarcea from the Danube Delta National Institute for Research and Development present their focus on reed land in the Danube delta. Sound management of more than 200 000 ha reed is key for more than 1,000 species in the delta in 22 habitats; reed being divided into categories linked to the land and water properties, e.g. water salinity. Reed beds are essential for wildlife, absorb nutrients and prevent erosion. Their present use is 80,000 ton per year, mainly traditional for thatching on the Europe market (they aim at support from the World Bank but lack support of the Romanian Authority). Other reed-based products are mats, fences, insulation, fuel pellets, bioenergy (an Italian investor is interested) and crafts. A typical farmer can harvest up to 5 ton per year but the Delta population of 2,000 persons decreases and youngsters move out. 1st RSG meeting involved authorities. Funding is discussed because local population is poor. The 2nd meeting will involve private partners and authorities and address dissemination, good practices in ecotourism and policy instrument for preservation of natural resources and economic development.

**12:30 – 13:30 ELABORATION ON A WORK PLAN FOR THE 2ND SEMESTER**

Maia (UT) presents the activities realized and to be realized and envisaged outputs for the 2nd semester with the deadlines by the end of May, as it is indicated in the application form. The table below shows the activities realized and to be realized per partner till the end of the 2nd semester.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Dec 2018 - May 2019** | **P1 NL** | **P2 NL** | **P3 FR** | **P4 RO** | **P5 IT** | **P6 IT** | **P7 ES** | **P8 IE** | **P9 IE** |
| **Activities for the 2nd semester** | **UTwente** | **Fryslan** | **Camargue** | **Danube** | **ERVET** | **DeltaPO** | **Valencia** | **Cork CC** | **UC Cork** |
| **Exchange of experiences** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Organize/ host the 2nd meeting |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| prepare agenda for the 2nd meeting |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| organize study trip to Albufera delta |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| initiate the case study research |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| prepare to conduct the case study |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| identify best practices |  |  |  |  |  |  | May 2019 |  |  |
| prepare report of the 2nd meeting |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| prepare template for case study,  template for RSG meeting report |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| organize the 2nd RSG meeting |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| present development of the policy instrument |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Participate in the Policy Learning Platforms |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Main outputs for the 2nd semester:**

2nd Learning Event conducted

Report produced after the session

Press release after the meeting

1 study visit to delta

6 regional stakeholder group meetings/reports

2 Steering group meetings/partner meeting

2nd newsletter;

2 good practices identified

2 case studies initiated (French, Spanish)

1 Progress & expenditure reports

**13:30 - 14:30 LUNCH**

**14:15 - 19:30 STUDY TOUR TO THE ALBUFERA DELTA**

* Tour across the delta and rice cultivation
* Boat trip and explanation of boat tourism
* Visit to farmhouse of local culture and foods

**21:00 - DINNER**

# **DAY 2: MARCH 6, 2019**

**9:00 - 9:30 STEERING GROUP MEETING**

John Lalor from Cork County Council will be new project manager of the Irish partner. Maia Lordkipanidze from the University of Twente underlines that the communication should improve. Yoram Krozer launches idea of a policy-oriented book on regional-national-EU instruments and payments for ecosystem services for policymakers/political buy-in.

The following agreements are made:

1. Skype conversation with representative of each partner once in a month about progress. Maia takes the initiative.
2. Delivery of draft partner reports to Maia Lordkipanidze ultimately 10 working days before the Interreg deadline; **too late delivery risks financial consequences!**
3. Partners will discuss the idea of a book for the 3rd meeting.
4. The 3rd meeting will be focused on answering two questions:
   1. What policy instruments for ecosystem services are envisaged, prepared by each partner.
   2. What are the main options for the Payments for Ecosystem Services (prepared by the Italian partner and lead partner)

Note that the 3rd meeting is crucial for progress and needs sound preparation.

**9.30 – 10.30 PARTNERS’ REFLECTIONS ON DAY 1**

All Partners are satisfied with the 1st day. There is progress among partners and several common issues emerge: rice, reed (biomaterials), water pollution, link culture-nature. Partners are encouraged to develop cross-links for follow-up because easier to generate funding and knowledge. The farmhouse in the delta was excellent by its arts, architecture and food. Beautiful scenery of the park nearby large city of Valencia is also appreciated but the areas in and around the park are polluted; e.g. cultivation of rice pollutes water in canals possibly by overload of fertilizers and there is much trash around.

**10:30 - 13.30 ALBUFERA STAKEHOLDERS AND BEST PRACTICES.**

Change in the agenda because of the fireworks of the festival Las Fallas in Valencia at 14.00. Three stakeholders and three potential best cases are presented and discussed sequentially, small lunch and coffee in-between.

**STAKEHOLDERS**

*Prof. María José Viñals* from the Polytechnical University of Valencia, School of Architecture, Dept. of Cartographic Engineering Geodesy and Photogrammetry, is involved in the management of heritage, nature and culture on wetlands, policy making at the Ministry of Environment, international policies on the Ramsar convention and tourism. She pinpoints that there is much knowledge about wetlands but little about who is connected, what results and by what principles. Emotions are crucial for the connections to wetlands to create social commitment (it is not about “bird watchers” but children). Since wetlands need much protection local interests are important though often neglected. Artists inspire because most people are linked through cultural assets. Politicians and influencers (e.g. a few royalties) can contribute, as well as celebrities (e.g. Antonio Banders). Re-imagining of wetlands is needed because perceived as dangerous. It should be positive image, e.g. family attractions, familiar icons (e.g. families of ducks, mom to mom horses). Emotion of food & gastronomy, use of senses, sports, competition, adventure, relaxing (mud), walking (Albufera is peri-urban park).

Discussion. Wonderful presentation but how to go forward. Need more private sector and more control of them. Emotion, memorable experiences, appreciations, pro-conservation due to pride and sense of belonging are effective. Also, education of managers on work with animals (foster protective attitudes, love through wedding pictures, bringing children, volunteer for cleaning campaigns).

*Paloma Mateache,* a General Managing Director of the Albufera Natural Park, presents the SWOT analysis of the Albufera Natural Park. ***Strength***: present situation (along coast, good climate, 1 mln people + 2 mln visitors - 50% foreigners, 40 000 in the visitor center. Also, landscapes, ethnography, first paella is from Valencia (made of rice and rats). ***Weakness*:** color of water (in 1973 in one month, plants disappeared), litter by plastics, insufficient control before water enters sea. Ugliness, poor link to visitors, small part of park used, poor knowledge. ***Opportunity****:* increasing awareness, networking, public investors. ***Threats*:** shortage of water, no regulations, changing environment, lack of funds, social disregard. Discussion. Is there policy interest in the national park? Priority for nature is low. Main interest is in the Albufera as a peri-urban park.

*Eduardo Ballesteros,* responsible for the branch “Marca Parcs Naturals” of the Valencia Region from the General Directorate of Natural Environment and environmental evaluation, Ministry of Agriculture, Environment, Climate Change and Rural Development: Valencia regional government is auditor of 22 brands of wines related to the park ecosystems. This way the government also promotes municipalities at the park. It certifies oils, rice, wines and other products etc. They must be based on the organic farming with documentation of the “artisan”. In addition, they are tough on certification of dishes, activities and accommodation. The aim is to brand landscape. Discussion Who pays for the audit? The government pays for the auditor. Are there reasons for additional regional branding because consumers confront many labels; does “organic Valencian” adds value?

**BEST PRACTICES**

*Santos Ruiz,* Manager of the Regulatory Board of the Arroz de Valencia Designation of Origin, presents DOP, Denomination Origin of Products. Focus is on rice (14 000 ha). Similar aim as Champagne brand. Valencia rice is the best rice for paella, and it is aimed to protect from competitors. Environmentalists say that rice is important for ecosystem and want to keep rice. Problem is high price of the Valencian rice. In support of the regional gastronomy, environment and heritage, they promote the Valencian rice instead of the imported rice. They promote education of consumers about quality. Aim at small projects with “poetry” but at the end must sell at high price.

Discussion. Albufera as a nature resort is used but what does the rice branding contribute to nature and why this rice is sold in supermarkets where it is hardly distinguishable from other products?

Juan Valero, Manager of the company Arroz Tartana: Since 1916 it is 5th generation rice producers. They do commercial and marketing activities of rice (worldwide 10 000 varieties) and agritourism, similar to vineries & oils. Competitive advantage of the Valencian rice is no gluten and sustainability related to the Albufera park. Package tours are delivered to 3 000 ha of tankas, similar to polders because below sea surface (El Embarcadero, a popular film in Spain, is set in the area). Discussion. What is the value added? The activities are related to local gastronomy because taste of rice is specific to local conditions. They have experience with peeled rice (not with unpeeled, brown rice) and organize events with cook chefs, among others from Holland, with competitions of paellas. Problems are about division of areas, limits to buildings and how to go about sustainability of rice. An observation is that rice cultivation also pollutes a lot but do farmers want to limit pollution if they must pay?

*Virgilio Beltran,* Birding Guides Association, professional bird watching in which 6 companies cooperate. They are locally based and aim at quality, safety and better protection. They explain areas and show variety of resources and support the bird watching. They link private, public and non-governmental organizations in the bird watching, fairs for bird watching, technical assistance to tour operators, journalists, courses. Four people work in Albufera. They do also organize biking, wine tasting, family tour packaging and tours for the bird watchers. Farmers are actively involved. Discussion. Relation to policies is issues. For public sector they promote area, facilities, combat illegal activities with NGO, and support environmental protection, e.g. educate people about birds, certify professional bird watchers who can become a guide.

**13.30. CLOSURE**

The meeting closes with the Valencia fireworks of the Las Fallas festival, followed by lunch offered by our Spanish host partner, The Council of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Services and Shipping of the Valencia Region.