

Implementation Of The *Global Plan Of Action* In Central And Eastern Europe: Challenges And Opportunities

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Introduction

Adoption of the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources* (GPA) at the first International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources held in Interlaken, Switzerland, in September 2007 created new political circumstances for the management of animal genetic resources (AnGR) (FAO, 2007a). Through the *Interlaken Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources*, 109 governments participating in the Conference confirmed their common and individual responsibilities for the conservation, sustainable use and development of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture; for world food security; for improving human nutritional status; and for rural development. They also committed themselves to facilitating access to these resources, and ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from their use. This commitment and responsibility has been confirmed by the FAO Conference, which at its Thirty-fourth Session in November 2007, endorsed the *Global Plan of Action* and the *Interlaken Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources*, as milestones in international efforts to promote the sustainable use, development and conservation of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture (FAO, 2007c).

The *Global Plan of Action* includes 23 Strategic Priorities under four Strategic Priority Areas: Characterization, Inventory and Monitoring of Trends and Associated Risks (2) Sustainable Use and Development (4); Conservation (5); and Policies, Institutions and Capacity-building (12) (FAO, 2007b). The majority of the Strategic Priorities for Action are addressed to governments and should be implemented at the national level, some of them are meant to guide the efforts of international institutions and organizations and international scientific community.

As was clearly shown in Country Reports, the level of advancement in the management of animal genetic resources as well as national capacities differs greatly among countries and regions. Therefore, the relative priority or importance of each Strategic Priority for Action and associated Actions within all four Strategic Priority Areas needs to be determined at the country and regional levels. Factors that will influence priority setting will include the state of the animal genetic resources themselves at breed and species levels; the production environments and husbandry systems involved; current management capacities, as well as scopes and outcomes of existing animal genetic resources programmes. The GPA was developed through considerable global efforts and intense negotiations, now it has to be translated into concrete plans, policies and actions within countries and regions. The key role in initiation and coordination of this work is played by the National Coordinators (NCs) and National Focal Points for AnGR (NFPs).

The Central and Eastern Europe

There are various classification systems of countries which belong to the region of the Central and Eastern Europe. The term is highly context-dependent and even prone to changes; there are "almost as many definitions of Eastern Europe as there are scholars of the region" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Europe). In general, this term describes former communist states in Europe, after the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989/90. The Central and Eastern Europe (CEE or CEEC) includes all the Eastern bloc countries west of the post-World War II border with the former Soviet Union, the independent states in former Yugoslavia (which were not considered part of the Eastern bloc), and the three Baltic states: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (Kłoczkowski, 2005). For the purpose of this paper the scope of CEE countries was even broadened, including also Turkey, Transcaucasian countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) as well as European former Soviet states (Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Russia and Ukraine), which totals 24 countries. It is a similar grouping as applied by the Convention of Biological Diversity, where the Regional Group of the CEEC includes 22 countries from 24 mentioned above (<http://bch.cbd.int/thesaurus/term.aspx?termid=3763>). It is also in agreement with FAO classification of countries belonging to the European region.

The CEE region is extremely diverse, both in terms of geographical and environmental conditions, historical and socio-cultural heritage as well as political and economical situations. Some of the countries were members of

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the OECD and became the EU Member states, while others are still struggling with the economic transition towards the market economy and tremendous changes in the structure of their agricultural sector and production systems. Such situation has severe impacts on the capacities of CEE countries to manage their animal genetic resources at the national level, as well as to contribute to global developments.

Agriculture continues to play a fundamental economic role in most countries of the region, contributing to the GDP, employment, livelihoods, trade and rural development. However, the level of contribution and the changes in the value of this indicator varied substantially between countries (Figure 1). From 1990 to 2006, a rapid decrease of agricultural contribution to the national economy has been observed in most of the countries of the region, at average from 19.12% to 8.89%. In post-Soviet independent states it was partly related to the substantial decrease of stock numbers and the emerging small holder sector in agriculture, characterised by limited commercial production.

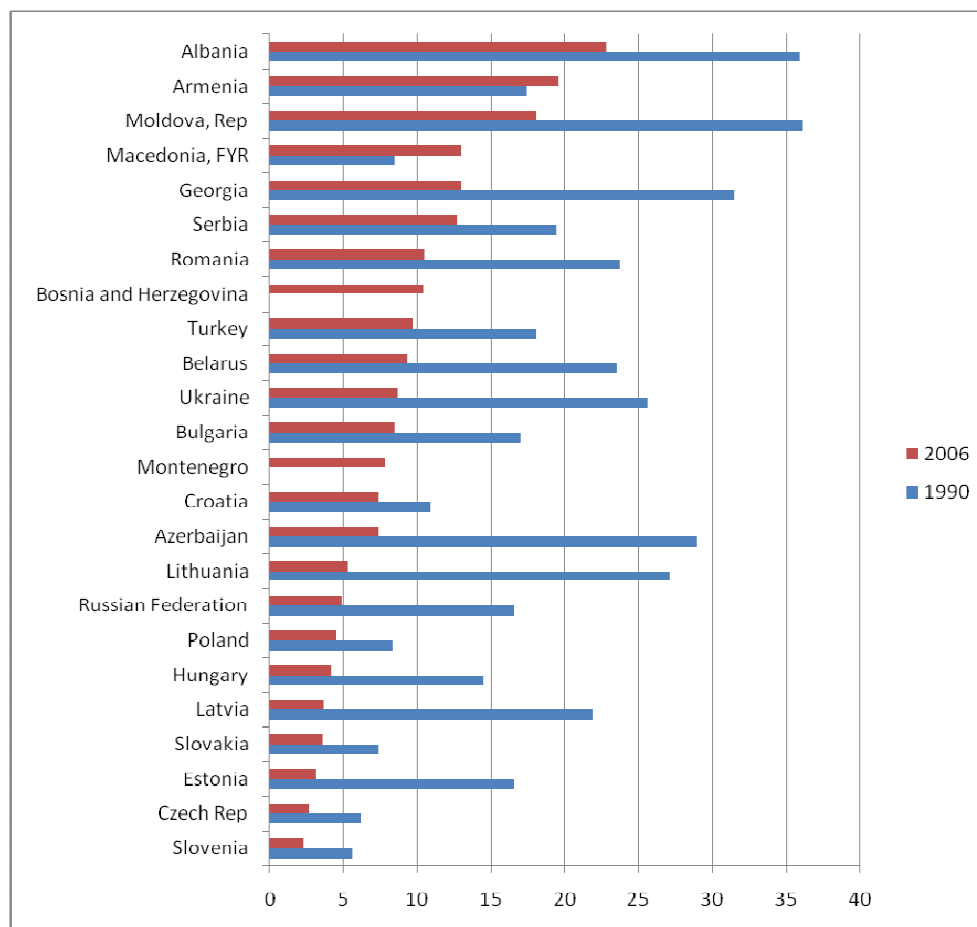


Fig. 1 Contribution of agriculture in the GDP in % in 1990 and 2006 (for Albania and Serbia data for 2005) (World Resource Institute 2009)

The livestock numbers, although decreased rapidly since early 1990s, have been recovering gradually in the recent years. Table 1 presents total livestock numbers in five species of major economic importance in countries of the region. The CEEC utilizes substantial livestock populations, over 71.8 mln sheep, 64.7 mln pigs, 62.6 mln cattle, 12.3 mln goats and over 1.2 billion chickens. There are differences in importance of species, based on environmental conditions and production systems, socio-cultural preferences of consumers, religion-related restrictions and export opportunities.

The CEE countries are characterised by abundance of local animal genetic resources. The data available in the FAO DAD-IS Global Databank for Animal Genetic Resources as of February 2010, indicates 1356 of local breeds in the region, which contributes 42% to the total number of recorded 3188 European local breeds. The total number of breeds recorded in the Global Databank in CEEC reached 2539, while in Europe 5521 (<http://dad.fao.org/>). However, it has to be underlined, that the current information available in DAD-IS does not reflect the real number of the local as well as total breeds kept in the region. It is due mainly to the slow rate

of completing and updating of the Global Databank, but also results from the continuous process of breed inventory and data collecting, taking place in some countries.

Table 1. Total livestock number for “Big five” species in the CEEC in 2008 (FAOSTAT 2010)

Countries	Cattle	Goats	Sheep	Pigs	Chickens 1000 heads
Albania	577 000	876 000	1 853 000	147 000	4 712
Armenia	629 146	38 985	598 116	86 710	3 793
Azerbaijan	2 212 800	586 713	7 523 000	18 676	19 900
Belarus	4 006 700	71 800	52 500	3 597 800	27 500
Bosnia and Herzegovina	459 218	70 392	1 030 510	502 197	14 000
Bulgaria	602 056	495 484	1 526 392	888 609	16 426
Croatia	467 077	91 902	645 992	1 348 343	6 816
Czech Republic	1 363 213	16 674	183 084	1 917 417	25 488
Estonia	242 000	4 000	72 400	379 000	1 444
Georgia	1 031 300	82 500	624 000	109 900	5 700
Hungary	705 000	67 000	1 231 000	3 860 000	29 866
Latvia	398 700	13 000	53 900	414 400	4 000
Lithuania	787 900	19 700	43 300	923 200	9 693
Macedonia FYR	253 766	126 452	817 536	255 146	2 264
Moldova	231 716	99 303	753 903	298 675	17 050
Montenegro	109 300	0	222 200	10 400	505
Poland	5 756 640	136 114	323 635	15 425 300	128 788
Romania	2 819 000	865 000	8 469 000	6 565 000	82 036
Russian Federation	21 473 200	2 182 200	1 8740 445	16 127 800	369 444
Serbia	1 057 000	154 575	1 605 000	3 594 000	17 188
Slovakia	488 381	37 088	361 634	748 515	11 228
Slovenia	479 851	28 228	131 180	542 590	4 354
Turkey	11 036 753	5 593 560	23 974 600	1813	269 368
Ukraine	5 490 900	644800	1 033 800	7 019 900	148 800
Total in the region	62 678 617	12 301 470	71 870 127	64 782 391	1 220 363

Livestock production based on the wealth of available animal genetic resources still maintained in the CEEC will be invaluable in the foreseeable future and will have a tremendous potential for further development. The region in general provides favourable animal production conditions, and animal products are widely used and highly valued, as have been for many centuries. The income growth and higher domestic consumption of animal origin products as well as opportunity to enter international markets will provide driving forces to fully capitalise on these advantages to enhance and diversify livestock production.

Implementing the Global Plan of Action at country and regional level

The sources used to analyse the current level of activities at the national level towards implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* included: country contributions presented during the FAO Global Workshops for NCs; country reports provided annually by NCs within the framework of the European Regional Focal Point on AnGR (ERFP) (<http://www.rfp-europe.org/>); country reports and other materials from the FAO workshop held in Almaty for NCs of Central Asia (FAO, 2009a); other FAO documents; and personal interactions with NCs from the region. A summary of activities towards implementation of the GPA in the region, based on reports provided by NCs at various fora are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2. State of the implementation of the GPA in the CEEC countries*

Countries	No of Country Reports	Last Country Report	AnGR infrastructure	Breeding law / NSAP	Cooperation with breeders	Inventory, characterisation and monitoring	Database	Sustainable use	In-situ conservation	Ex-situ conservation	Public awareness	AnGR Research
Czech Republic	8	2009	E	O	O	O	E	O	O	O	O	O
Hungary	7	2009	E	O	O	O	E	O	O	O	O	O
Poland	9	2009	E	O	O	O	E	O	O	P	O	O
Slovakia	7	2009	E	O	O	O	E	O	O	O	O	O
Estonia	5	2009	E	O	O	O	E	O	O	L	O	O
Latvia	3	2009	E	L	O	O	E	O	O	P	O	O
Lithuania	5	2004	E	L	O	O	L	O	O	L	O	O
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1	2006	E	L	N	L	L	L	O	L	L	O
Croatia	3	2009	E	O	O	O	L	O	O	I	L	O
Macedonia FYR	0		L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
Montenegro	1	2009	E	O	O	O	E	O	O	L	L	O
Serbia	6	2009	E	O	O	O	E	O	O	L	O	O
Slovenia	10	2009	E	O	O	O	E	O	O	O	O	O
Albania	7	2009	E	O	O	O	E	O	O	L	O	O
Bulgaria	0		L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
Romania	5	2009	E	O	O	O	L	O	O	L	O	O
Turkey	7	2009	E	O	O	O	E	O	O	O	O	O
Belarus			E	I	O	O	E	O	I	L	L	L
Moldova, Republic of			N	O	O	I	I	O	O	I	N	O
Russia			I	O	O	O	E	O	O	O	L	O
Ukraine	1	2009	E	O	O	O	E	O	O	O	O	O
Armenia			L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
Azerbaijan			O	O	O	I	E	O	I	P	I	O
Georgia	2	2009	E	N	L	N	L	L	N	N	N	L

* O – Operating; E – Established; I – Initiated; P – Planned; N – No activity; L – Lack of information

Table 2 shows that the involvement and contribution of a few countries to the global network of AnGR is very limited; although NCs are formally nominated they do not participate in FAO or ERFPP meetings and activities, do not provide annual reports, so there is no information available. It is also obvious that the area where information is most limited regards *ex-situ* conservation; when countries do not report on such activities, although formally it should be considered as a lack of information, in reality it may also mean the lack of such activities.

The broad framework provided by the GPA can support advancement of the AnGR management in several major areas, including: understanding the contribution of AnGR; strategic planning, policy and institutional development; projects and programmes formulation and implementation; awareness raising; country and regional collaboration; and global, regional and country reporting. Some examples of activities already undertaken, ongoing and planned in the CEE countries within these six areas have been presented below.

a. Understanding the contribution of AnGR

Both *State of the World Report* and the GPA clearly articulate the importance of AnGR at the global level, with approximately 70% of the world's rural poor depending on livestock as an important component of their livelihoods (FAO, 2007b). In many countries of the region, the importance of AnGR is already well documented in their Country Reports. The key challenge now is to further document this contribution, explain it and promote its understanding to ensure that appropriate policy and planning takes place.

As a first step, some countries are planning to undertake livestock census (e.g. Belarus) to improve knowledge on the size and distribution of their livestock populations. The estimation of relative value and importance of certain animal species and products requires constant monitoring. For instance, in Azerbaijan, development and enhancement of cattle production resulted in its growing contribution to GDP. In Slovenia, production systems for some autochthonous cattle and sheep breeds were assessed taking into account their social, economic and cultural values, specific knowledge related to their utilisation and importance for rural communities.

b. Strategic planning, policy, legal and institutional development

The GPA calls for institutional arrangements: establishment of National Focal Points, Advisory Committees and country AnGR networks. It underlines a key role of National Strategies and Action Plans (NASP) to guide AnGR programmes. FAO has been developing a number of guidelines to support countries in institutional arrangements including strategic planning. The history of use and development of AnGR has demonstrated the need for careful planning of these assets; if policy and legal framework are not carefully instituted they may have unintended adverse impact on these resources.

The institutional framework for AnGR management is well established and fully operational in majority of the CEE countries, especially in the Central Europe. Some countries still need to make efforts to strengthen their National Advisory Committees and country AnGR networks. In others the key elements of institutional framework are still in the process of development (e.g. Moldova, Georgia). In a few countries new institutional arrangements have been put in place (e.g. establishment of Indigenous Farm Animal Genetic Resource Committee and Gene Bank Special Body for Genetic Resources in Agriculture in Hungary or The National Association for Genetic Resources Management in Romania). An important institutional issue is to strengthen and enhance cooperation of NFP with breeders and their organizations.

Substantial progress has been achieved in the area of development of national strategies and legislation. While some countries were focusing on development or amendment of the breeding law to regulate overall breeding activities within the livestock sector (e.g. Russian Federation) or even individual species (e.g. Azerbaijan), in others the new or updated regulations were addressing specifically AnGR conservation (e.g. in Albania, Croatia, Estonia). Several countries, following agreed priorities in the GPA, initiated preparation of their National Strategies and Action Plans for AnGR (e.g. Belarus, Estonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine). For instance, in the Czech Republic a new National Strategy is being developed by recently established department of Ministry of Agriculture dealing with environmental policy and agrobiodiversity, and focusing on management of genetic resources.

c. Projects and programmes: formulation and implementation

Improving the use, development and conservation of AnGR will require significant financial investments and human resources. Projects in these areas must be effectively formulated and implemented to make the best use of resources available. The well-developed plans will facilitate undertaking necessary activities. Strategic Priority areas of the GPA represent global consensus on the priorities for AnGR. The key challenge now is to identify and formulate the national programmes and projects proposals. Using the GPA will facilitate national priority setting and project formulation; and implementing the globally agreed Strategic Priorities of the GPA will be particularly important in engaging international donors.

Over the last years, many activities were undertaken in the CEEC within the three technical Strategic Priority areas of the GPA. Several countries in the region are still in the process of initiating or completing inventories of their breeds. In Albania, successive field missions were undertaken to inventory and characterize local breeds, covering a broad range of species (also donkey, dogs, rabbits, and bees). The data were used to prepare an annual Catalogue of Albanian Farms Animal Genetic Resources. In Azerbaijan field missions resulted in registration and characterisation of 27 cattle breeds, including indigenous, local improved and imported ones. The identification, inventory and morphological characterization of the most endangered autochthonous breeds

were also undertaken in Montenegro. In Latvia field missions were conducted to identify valuable animals to be introduced into conservation programmes. Similar actions aimed at identification, recovery and characterization of isolated specimens of cattle breeds (Transylvania Pinzgau and Mocanita) were implemented in Romania. In Turkey documentary films and detailed Breed Catalogue covering local cattle, water buffalo, sheep, goat, chicken, rabbit, dog, cat breeds and bee and silkworm lines will be produced.

Significant efforts were also devoted to establishment of monitoring systems to evaluate trends in population size and structure of all breeds, and especially those at risk. Introduction of routine monitoring systems in cooperation with breeders' associations will provide effective tools for sustainable management of their breeds (as implemented in e.g. Czech Republic, Hungary Poland and Serbia). Routine characterization, inventory and monitoring of trends in Slovenian native breeds provide basis to prepare annual national "Register of breeds with zootechnical assessment". Preparation and adoption of plans for crisis situations, especially for critically endangered breeds have been completed in some countries (e.g. Croatia). Efforts to enhance molecular characterisation of various native breeds were also undertaken in many countries, e.g. Hungary, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia and Turkey. In Slovenia, Carniola bees are being characterized and genetic variability analysed in order to determine the purity level of bee population.

Within the sustainable use area, many countries, especially post-Soviet ones are focusing their efforts on enhancement of production and upgrading their livestock populations. Breeding improvement programmes are based on selection of commercial populations and development of new breeds (e.g. Moldova, Ukraine). In many instances it is accompanied by extensive importation from abroad of highly performing breeds, either as live animals, semen or embryos. Importation should be followed by introduction of breeding programmes, selection and dissemination of genetically superior animals, but not always it is the case. In other CEE countries development of programmes for sustainable use of autochthonous breeds became the key issue. It includes development of traditional products, their standardization, registration, and introduction to the market. Equally important is enhancement of capacity for production of raw materials, their processing, marketing and sales support. The countries very much involved in these activities include e.g. Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Montenegro, Poland, Slovakia, Serbia and Romania. In Slovenia inventory of all typical local products was carried out taking into account: type of product, species and breed, region, climate, technology, special characteristics, associated knowledge, market value, and market availability. In Hungary, besides the well recognized products from Hungarian Grey cattle and Mangalica pig, a new trademark HU-BA for indigenous poultry products was introduced. To protect specialty products and combat their forgery the Association of Hungarian Grey Cattle Breeders introduced a mobile phone system enabling cross-checking the origin of meat sold as from Grey cattle. In 2009, the "*Mangfood project*" with the aim to study the Mangalica pig DNA for impeding food forgery was implemented. There are also many attempts to improve profitability of maintaining local breeds through their promotion in organic agriculture, agro-tourism activities, landscape management and vegetation control. For instance, the Latvian horse breed is becoming popular for social events and is used in country tourism farms. The multifunctional pilot project for integrated conservation of genetic resources in traditional landscapes, conservation of traditional grazing practices and valorisation through rural tourism in nature protected areas is carried out in Serbia. Schemes for suckler cows and ewes of local breeds kept in extensive production systems, utilizing their landscape and agro-tourism functions are being evaluated in Slovakia.

The conservation activities in CEE countries were focusing on *in-situ* conservation of breeds at risk, carried out in state breeding centers (e.g. Moldova, Russian Federation, Ukraine.) or through collaboration with private farmers, who maintain local breeds (e.g. Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia.). In some countries the scope of national conservation programme is broadening and new breeds, requiring intervention, are being introduced (e.g. Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey). In many countries an important priority is to involve new farmers in implementation of AnGR conservation programmes and increase number of animals within given breeds. In Turkey some *in-situ* conservation programmes are undertaken within the framework of community based breed management in the areas of breed origin. The management of inbreeding to ensure maintenance of within breed diversity, especially in endangered breeds is being gradually addressed, with Estonia providing a good example of implementation of EVA software to control inbreeding and optimize matings.

The *ex-situ* conservation measures are well advanced in some countries; for instance in Czech Republic the National Gene Bank covers genetic material of plants, animals and microorganisms, and the system of on-farm collection of biological material using mobile laboratory proved to be very successful. Gene bank operation is also well advanced in Slovenia, including depository of semen, oocytes, embryos, somatic cells (blood, skin and hair) and DNA, with broad species coverage, including for instance also autochthonous dog breed and bees. In Turkey, the cryo-conservation project TURKHAYGEN-I started in March 2007, aims to establish gene banks to

conserve national animal genetic resources, to characterize local breeds at molecular level, to build national researcher capacity in animal genetics and animal biotechnology and to combine and disseminate knowledge. The Cryo-bank for AnGR established in the Institute of Animal Breeding and Genetics was recognized as national heritage of Ukraine. In many CEE countries there are some collections of deep frozen livestock biological material originally obtained within research projects, but no institutional gene banks were yet established or their establishment was only initiated. In such cases, the key priority is to increase number of breeds/animals/samples stored. Building-up national *ex-situ* collections, including field search for potentially available, valuable donors is indicated as an important activity in e.g. Latvia, Poland, and Slovakia.

d. Awareness raising

The GPA contains Strategic Priorities that call for raising national, regional and international awareness of the roles and values of AnGR. The key challenge will be strategic investments in communication and education. Common messages and collaboration among countries can reduce costs. Global communication resources have or are being developed by FAO and are available to countries. Target audiences need to be identified and most effective means of communication determined to best capture their attention. The very first step was a wide dissemination and popularisation of the GPA. Translation of the GPA into Polish, Russian, Slovak and Ukrainian languages has proved to be very helpful in reaching this goal.

Formal education and training in the field of farm animal genetic resources management is available in many CEE countries at various levels: the agricultural secondary schools, colleges, undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Public awareness building is best executed when people have access not only to publications and other educational materials, but can also enjoy direct contact with animals. Livestock exhibitions, including native breeds, Farm Parks and similar initiatives are widely undertaken in CEE countries. In Czech Republic, the permanent livestock exhibition presenting collections of native breeds is welcoming school excursions, and materials specifically prepared for children are available for distribution.

In Estonia, AnGR issues have been the topic of several meetings and round-tables discussions broadcasted on TV and radio to raise public awareness and appreciation of native breeds and to increase attention to the problems connected with their conservation. In Hungary, in the last few years, the Mangalica Festival was held in Budapest, where products of this breed were promoted to the public. In Slovakia, several events during the year are intended to increase public awareness of livestock breeds, their products and associated handicrafts: First Christmas farmer day, Easter farmer days, Days of ecological agriculture, National livestock show, and regional livestock shows, all of them accompanied by wide media coverage. A lot of awareness raising activities was also undertaken in the Balcan region, with Fair of Balkan Agrobiodiversity, and exhibitions of local animal breeds in Serbia and Romania. The variety of publications, including livestock albums, brochures, leaflets etc was widely developed in the CEE countries. An interesting initiative, from cultural and research perspective, provides preparation of bibliography of historical sources "The old Slovenian breeds of domestic animals".

e. Country regional and global collaboration

The GPA calls for collaboration at country, regional and global levels in the number of areas such as characterization, inventory, and monitoring of trends and associated risks, sustainable use and development, and conservation of animal genetic resources. Collaboration is also necessary to develop international policies and regulatory frameworks and to mobilize financial resources. The challenge is to gain from experience from other regions, to avoid repeating the same mistakes, to be able to reach agreement to effectively use limited national resources on research and training.

Growing global awareness of roles and values of AnGR has resulted in these resources being one of the key areas of focus of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and its Intergovernmental Technical Working Group. The GPA has been considered and endorsed at the highest levels within the Food and Agriculture Organization, and welcomed by Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. A key challenge will be to keep the high level of collaboration for the implementation phase of the GPA. Indeed, collaboration is more necessary than ever. Collaboration and coordination of AnGR initiatives within countries and regions will be advantageous and will further facilitate national and regional collaboration with the international bodies that are addressing the use, development and conservation of these crucial resources.

The level of participation in the regional and global collaboration differs significantly between the CEE countries. The countries that are members of the ERFPA have been enjoying for a long time a well established platform to initiate, develop and implement regional projects and initiatives. The annual *Call for Action* of the

ERFP enables financial support for a number of selected projects; some of these projects have been focused specifically on the needs of the CEE countries. Examples include projects such as: *Development of common approach and proposals aiming at the in-situ conservation of the similar local sheep breeds in the Balkan's regions*; *Saving a nearly forgotten breed, the Murinsulaner*; *Characterisation of the indigenous and improved Podolic cattle breeds*; and the *Study of the origin and conservation strategy for the Pramenka sheep breeds*. The ERFP also substantially facilitated and supported bilateral contacts and cooperation between NCs and countries.

However, so far the majority of Russian speaking countries of the CEE region did not have the similar advantage. Although all European countries are welcome to become members and join activities of the ERFP, the language barrier provides a substantial obstacle for their effective participation. Recently, various support tools became available in Russian, including the Russian interface of DAD-IS, translation of guidelines for development of the NASP and some other FAO publications, what should facilitate enhanced involvement of these countries. The translation of the *State of the World Report* into Russian by Prof. Sergeij Kharitonov provides a most valuable asset to these countries.

f. Global, regional and country reporting

In order to assess progress achieved in the implementation of the GPA, at the national, regional and global levels, measurable and time-defined goals and indicators would be extremely useful to assist the international community to monitor and evaluate efforts and successes in implementation of the GPA. The adoption of the GPA led to arrangements to measure progress in the implementation process. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture at its Twelfth Regular Session in October, 2009, set long-term modalities both for monitoring of status and trends of animal genetic resources and for evaluation of progress made by countries in their management of animal genetic resources and implementation of the GPA (FAO, 2009b).

The global level reporting will be possible and its outcome meaningful, if countries enhance their efforts in updating national databases in the Global Databank for Animal Genetic Resources. A number of CEE countries have identified updating of the European EFABIS database and FAO DAD-IS database as one of their priorities (e.g. Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovakia.) The agreed timetable for preparation of the Country progress reports on implementation of the GPA will hopefully provide additional incentives to strengthen national efforts to sustainably use, develop and conserve their AnGR. It should also be mentioned that the introduction of Russian as the official FAO language should facilitate and enhance contribution of Russian speaking CEE countries to intergovernmental process and the global reporting.

Challenges and opportunities

The implementation of the GPA at the national level is challenging and demanding, and requires long-term political commitment. It means that AnGR management should be considered a priority issue within livestock and agricultural sectors and mainstreamed into overall national development policies and livestock development strategies. Such approach requires undertaking significant efforts to develop the NSAP, with broad participation of national stakeholders, ensuring its official approval and successful implementation. The GPA first time ever creates opportunity for reassessing the value of AnGR, significantly advancing the importance of the livestock sector within the agricultural sector and, in particular, the importance of AnGR sustainable management.

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