



EEA Grants Project

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Project "Conservation of the Biodiversity of the ?Breite Ancient Oak Tree? Natural Reserve, Sighi?oara" financed by a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Financial Mechanism

In March 2006, the custody of the Breite Reserve was assigned to the Mihai Eminescu Trust and the Local Council of Sighi?oara for 5 years. The two partners committed to protect and preserve the flora and fauna of the reserve, to promote the reserve and the responsible tourism and to elaborate a management plan for the reserve. One year later, following scientific research and public consultations, the MET team elaborated the management plan of the reserve comprising the geographical, biological, historical and cultural description of the plateau, the assessment of existing and potential threats and a plan of administrative measures. The plan was approved by the Commission for the Protection of Natural Monuments within the Romanian Academy.

In view of implementing the Management plan, in 2008 the Trust in partnership with the Town Hall submitted a project to the EEA Grants Program administered by the Ministry of Finance. The Project named "Conservation of the Biodiversity of the ?Breite Ancient Oak Tree? Natural Reserve, Sighi?oara" was approved in May 2009. The project was implemented over a period of 2 years (1 June 2009 ? 30 April 2011) and had a total budget of 325,210 euro, out of which 264,688 euro grant (the rest of the funds were provided by the MET).

The project aimed at accomplishing the following key activities: studies and research, implementation of management actions, communication and publicity. As a first step, a strong team of professionals was created and accomplished vast studies and field research regarding the biodiversity of the plateau, produced research reports and scientific articles (many of which were published in prestigious magazines and papers from Romania and abroad) and built complex data basis regarding the fauna and flora of the plateau. As part of this approach, scientific equipment was purchased, an inventory of all oaks on the plateau and their health was made, the age of oaks was scientifically assessed, GIS mapping was put in place and all deployed activities were monitored.

The research activity also resulted in a considerable set of recommendations regarding the necessary management actions. These complemented the management plan, and were implemented over the two years of project deployment. The management actions included: clearing the hornbeam invasion and keeping it under control, introducing controlled grazing with sheep and goats, introducing experimental scything, uprooting invasive weeds and keeping them under control. Also, we consolidated the closure systems placed on drainage ditches, installed fences to protect oak saplings and systems to prevent the break-down of ancient oaks. Other key activities included completing the visitation strategy of the reserve, creating and maintaining a permanent rangers? service in the reserve, arranging a picnic area and implementing a waste management system.

Communication and publicity were also essential project activities. The planting campaign "An oak tree for every pupil" mobilized over 500 children and adults from Sighișoara. Community involvement reached a new level in 2010 when the Breite Stakeholders' Council was created with inhabitants of Sighișoara and relevant local and regional organizations. Also, the MET deployed a vast program of ecological and cultural activities on the Breite, starting with the Oak Festival and continuing with marking touristic paths, clearing the hornbeam invasion with the help of high school pupils, organizing unplugged folk music recitals and outdoor theatre plays. These were complemented by the mass-media campaign aimed at raising awareness and responsibility with regard to the reserve. To this we may add the creation of the reserve website, of an information brochure and of a flyer comprising the visitation rules, as well as the installation of information boards in the reserve.

The project results are presented in detail in the activity reports for years 2009 and 2010 annexed below, as well as in the other sections of this website.

In June 2010, the custody of the Breite Reserve was assigned by the Ministry of Environment to Progresul Silvic Association, as part of the Natura 2000 site ROSCI0227 Sighișoara - Târnava Mare. The project "Conservation of the Biodiversity of the "Breite Ancient Oak Tree" Natural Reserve, Sighișoara" continued until the completion date, according to the financing contract signed between the MET and the Ministry of Public Finance.

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