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WETNET first focus group with stakeholders in the pilot area of the Ljubljansko barje, Press release

Katarina Polajnar Horvat, Daniela Ribeiro, Aleš Smrekar

Ljubljana, SLOVENIA – 26th September, we organized the first focus group with stakeholders of the WETNET project - Coordinated management and integration of Mediterranean wetlands, which is being carried out under the Interreg Mediterranean program and financed by the European Regional Fund. The focus group, organized by Anton Melik Geographical Institute ZRC SAZU as partner and Landscape Park Ljubljansko barje as associate partner, was attended by 42 stakeholders from different sectors. Attendees were representatives from the academic sphere, non-governmental organizations, the public and private sectors.

The first part of the focus group was devoted to the presentation of the project and presentation of the idea of the wetland contract. Thereafter, experts from the sectors of water, biology and agriculture presented their expert opinions for the maintenance of biodiversity and the water regime of the Ljubljansko barje wetland.

After the introductory presentations, a discussion was held on the issues perceived by stakeholders in the pilot area. A number of issues have been elucidated, from problems of reduction of biodiversity, floods, initiatives for zoning the Ljubljansko barje, more efficient regulation of ditches ... The latter problem has proven to be one of the most critical, therefore, we will focus on finding solutions for more wisely and efficient ditch management in the Ljubljansko barje pilot area. The first focus group was very successful and will be followed by another 3, the next one is expected in January.

Wetlands are vulnerable environments that need special care. One of the main characteristics of wetlands is that they combine the properties of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, which are often intertwined. This is why they are so special and are distinguished by their diversity and richness of different life forms. Within the framework of the WETNET project, the partners aim to establish multi-level management of Mediterranean wetlands, which would improve mutual cooperation between individual wetlands and associated local areas. One of the objectives is also to set priorities for the protection and subsequent development of a common territorial strategy for integrated wetland management. The wetland network will be based on experiences from the already existing River Contracts. It will be based on a participatory process, stakeholders, both public and private, will be invited to integrate the conservation of wetlands into their regular activities. The project

partnership includes policy makers as well as other relevant stakeholders working in the field. The results of the project will thus meet the needs for effective wetland management at a wider scale and ensure the transferability of project results to other EU countries.

For additional information please contact:

Aleš Smrekar

e-mail: ales.smrekar@zrc-sazu.si