



BioTopic

National Biodiversity Monitoring of Georgia (NBMS)

Background

During the last decades Georgia's Biodiversity has been severely affected by the destruction of habitats through large-scale transformations of forests into agricultural land and grassland, as well as through various unsustainable practices in using natural resources. In addition to the destruction of habitats, a lot of species are endangered of extinction or became already extinct in Georgia through exploitive hunting practises and poaching activities. Nowadays, additional factors like urban sprawl for road and house construction as well as the development of industrial regions and the large-scale development of recreational areas (e.g. skiing sites) are endangering the existence of a lot of species. With reference to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Georgia has developed a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2005) outlining its future policy in the field of biodi-

versity protection. A key issue of this strategy which has been agreed among the concerned parties is the implementation of a national biodiversity monitoring system.

Objectives

The monitoring of biodiversity is a precondition for taking decisions on suitable measures to minimize or stop the loss of biodiversity or even to improve the situation of threatened species. The biodiversity monitoring data, together with other environmental data, form an important basis for the future nature conservation policy and for other policy areas that have a significant impact on biodiversity such as agriculture and forestry, road construction and land-use planning. The results of biodiversity monitoring are therefore relevant information to the Government and policy makers in various sectors.

Implementation

The establishment of the NBMS is a governmental initiative under

the guidance of the Ministry of Environment Protection (MEP). With the establishment of the NBMS, the MoE would like to offer its close collaboration with national organizations (universities, governmental as well as non-governmental organizations) in the field of biodiversity protection. The NBMS is inspired by the realization, that the challenge of biodiversity protection and the sustainable use of biodiversity need a pool of all knowledge, experience and resources available in Georgia:

Ministry of Environment Protection
Within the NBMS the MEP is represented by the Biodiversity Protection Service (BPS), which has the co-ordinating role and is recipient of recommendations related to the improvement of policies and the legal framework for biodiversity protection. It will play an active role in the intra-ministerial collaboration as well as in the preparation and acquisition of projects and the design of measures to implement actions in the field of biodiversity protection



and its sustainable management. The BPS is in charge of reporting on the results of the NBMS to the public.

The Task Group on NBMS

The Task Group on NBMS consists of representatives of different units of the MEP as the BPS and the Agency of Protected Areas (APA), further involved Ministries, Universities and NGOs. The Task Group on NBMS works in close co-operation with the BPS and manages the process of the implementation of the NBMS.

National organizations

National organizations and entities dealing with biodiversity protection and being involved in biodiversity monitoring are invited to participate in the NBMS. This includes governmental and non-governmental organizations, consulting companies and scientific institutions. All participating organizations are invited to register for their involvement in NBMS at the BPS. The participating national organizations form a non-formal consultative group on NBMS and will be invited for consultations by the task group on NBMS.

Indicators

The conceptual basis of the NBMS is built by 26 biodiversity indicators, which have been selected according to the internationally accepted and widely used

OECD Model. Through the regular assessment of these 26 indicators the overall status and trends of biodiversity can be monitored as well as the threats of biodiversity in Georgia can be identified. The effectiveness of nature protection and conservation measures will also be made visible. The NBMS is built on the following three types of indicators:

Pressure Indicators describe the various factors which affect species diversity. This set of indicators includes aspects like fragmentation of landscape, agriculture, hunting or fishery.

The *State Indicators* give a firsthand description of both the state and the development of biodiversity. State Indicators are covering the following three levels of diversity: genetic diversity, diversity of ecosystems and habitats as well as species diversity.

Response Indicators measure the trends and the development that

contribute to maintaining biodiversity, e.g. change in number and size of adequately protected areas, change in financial resources for nature and landscape conservation, change in the total area under organic farming.

Current Status

In 2011 a description and a suitable methodology for the measurement has been developed for all 26 biodiversity indicators. Currently, the individual indicator descriptions and methodologies are in process to be approved by the MEP. For 7, already approved indicators, the first monitoring results are available.

Based on the monitoring results, the BPS and the Task Group on NBMS will jointly elaborate recommendations for the improvement of policies laws and regulations or for the establishment of new international cooperation projects to address identified problems in natural resources management.



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