

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
Enabling Activity Proposal in Biodiversity

Country:	Republic of Moldova
Project Title:	Biodiversity Strategy, Action Plan, and National Report
GEF Focal Area:	Biodiversity
Country Eligibility:	Ratified CBD October 20, 1995
GEF Financing:	US\$ 125,000
Government Contribution:	In-kind
GEF Implementing Agency:	The World Bank
National Executing Agency:	Department of Environmental Protection
GEF Operational Focal Point:	Department of Environmental Protection
CBD Focal Point:	Department of Environmental Protection
CHM Focal Point:	Department of Environmental Protection
Estimated Starting Date:	April 1998
Project Duration:	14 months

Background/Context

Moldova, a small country (33,800 km² and 4.4 million people) situated between Ukraine and Romania, gained its independence in 1991. The geographical location, characteristics of the relief, and climate contribute to the richness of the country's biological diversity, which is represented by approximately 5,000 species of flora and 15,500 species of vertebrate and invertebrate fauna. The most threatened species are described in the *Red Book of the Republic of Moldova* (1997). This recently published *Red Book* includes 240 endangered, vulnerable, and rare species (131 plants and 109 animals), 185 more species than were included in the previous edition published in 1978. Among protected animal species, 9 mammals, 11 birds, 1 reptile, 1 amphibian, 3 freshwater fish, and 10 invertebrates are also included in the European Red List of Globally Threatened Animals and Plants.

European and Mediterranean woodlands dominate central Moldova whereas Euroasiatic steppe is the dominant natural vegetation in southern and northern Moldova. Forests cover only 9.6% of Moldova's territory. The aboriginal forests represent a mixture of deciduous trees dominated by oak species (51% of forested territories). More than 80% of existing forests are secondary, and with tree species composition different from the original forest. Nearly one-half of the forests (42%) have been heavily impacted and are in need of restoration. The diversity of species in forest ecosystems is decreasing, evidenced in recent years by the replacement of typical forest-forming species by other species. For example, hornbeam is gradually replacing beech and durmast oak in Moldova's forests. The forests are low in productivity and susceptible to human impacts, the most important of which has been unsustainable forest practices and over-exploitation. If current trends continue over the next 5–10 years, the decline of Moldova's native forest ecosystems could become irreversible.

Steppe vegetation covers approximately 11% of Moldova, and includes approximately 450 plant species. Unplowed steppe habitat still occurs in approximately 1,200 patches up to 300 hectares each. These fragments of steppe habitat typically occur where the land is unsuitable for agriculture. As in the case of forests, individual species and entire steppe ecosystems will be endangered if appropriate measures to protect them at the national level are not taken.

In order to conserve and restore threatened species and ecosystems, a national network of protected areas was created in January 1975. The network is comprised of forest and hydrobiological reserves and covers 1.4% of the country. In addition to these nature reserves, there are 30 landscape reserves totaling 22,436 hectares and a number of small reserves dedicated to the protection of special places. Although protected areas and forested lands have increased over the past 30 years, these positive trends have been inadequate to reverse the decline in forest ecosystems. This is partly because the protected forests are too small in area to ensure long-term ecological sustainability with regard to land use. Most wetland areas in Moldova have been drained, with the exception of small isolated areas bordering the lower Dniester and Prut Rivers. The river ecosystems also face degradation and habitat destruction, mainly due to water pollution and changes to natural hydrological regimes.

Moldova has also been developing legislation to address its biodiversity conservation needs. Two recent legislative acts of importance are the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law of the Animal Kingdom. Provisions relevant to biodiversity conservation are included in the Law on Protective Zones and River Belts of Water Bodies, the Land Code, the Water Code and the Forest Code. Recently the Department of Environmental Protection submitted the draft Law on the Fund of the State Protected Areas to Parliament. A draft Concept of Biological Diversity Conservation in the Republic of Moldova has been endorsed by some governmental agencies and NGOs and will be presented to appropriate state bodies for approval.

In 1996, the government approved the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP). The NEAP calls for, as a short term priority, the protection of existing natural resources and the extension of forested and protected areas. The necessity of initiating a public awareness programme for protecting scarce natural resources from illegal activities was also described. Beyond the national legislative agenda in the field of biodiversity protection, Moldova has ratified the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern 1979), ratified by the Parliament Decision No.1546-XII, dated June 23, 1993. By Decision No. 457-XIII, dated October 20, 1995, the Parliament also ratified the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992.

Project Objectives and Short Description

The main project objective is to assist the Republic of Moldova in implementing commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity through the completion of a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP), which will improve protection and sustainable use of Moldovan biodiversity. The first National Report to the Conference of the Parties (CoP) will also be prepared.

The Biodiversity Strategy will be formulated through extensive consultation with stakeholders, and represents a proactive approach to halt or reverse the degradation of biological and landscape diversity in Moldova. The strategy will reinforce the implementation of existing measures and will identify additional actions that need to be taken. The strategy will also provide a framework to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Action Plan will translate the strategy's objectives into practical, prioritized actions. This document will identify the responsible agency, schedule and cost. The roles and responsibilities of each cooperating agency will be specified and agreements obtained. In this plan of action, particular attention will be paid to the identification and description of the most important projects for biodiversity conservation in Moldova.

The BSAP will define the objectives, fundamental principles, and activity priorities in the short, medium, and long term. It will also describe the operational mechanism of implementation, including the

institutional framework, concrete proposals to improve the legal framework and harmonize it with international legislation, and the mechanism for integrating conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into sectoral programmes and policies. Examination of these sectoral programmes and policies will require the participation of representatives of the sectoral departments such as transport, agriculture, economy, finance, mining, and forestry in the working groups. The BSAP will develop plans for carrying out applied scientific research and strengthening the international collaboration in research. Actions for increasing the awareness by the decision-makers and the general public of biodiversity conservation will also be defined. BSAP development will be based both on technical and economic expert analyses and extensive consultation with project stakeholders. This process will contribute to the step-by-step development of the key elements in biodiversity strategy formulation.

Two workshops are planned during the BSAP process. The first will be devoted to identification of priority actions and options of biodiversity conservation. The second, a national workshop, will introduce the draft BSAP to stakeholders. The comments and suggestions expressed at the national workshop will be included in the final version of the BSAP. Prior to and after the national workshop, a public awareness campaign using national mass media will be held to inform the public about the goals and objectives of the BSAP project and report the results and findings of the BSAP.

The key elements of the BSAP process for identifying and defining priority problems and actions (i.e., developing a strategy and a plan of action) and ensuring effective implementation are as follows:

Identifying priority problems will consist of analyzing the extent of biodiversity concerns and ranking them according to their degree of importance. It will necessitate gathering and evaluating information on the status and trends of the country's biological resources, as well as laws, policies and organizations, programmes, budgets and human capacity. Currently, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Academy of Sciences, and branch institutes possess many data on the state of biodiversity. Unfortunately, this information is dispersed and is not organized for easy access. As part of the stocktaking activities, and to support the decision-making process, information will be organized into a simple, annotated database with corresponding maps.

Defining priority actions will comprise four major steps: identifying the causes of problems; setting goals; identifying gaps between the current and desired situations; and defining policy instruments to address the causes of biodiversity degradation and to ensure the sustainable use of biological resources.

Ensuring effective implementation will involve measures to integrate the proposed actions with the government's sectoral policies; encourage the participation of key stakeholders in the planning and implementation phases; find incentives that ensure clear assignment of institutional responsibilities and adequate implementation capacity; review and make proposals for an appropriate legal framework; define the mechanism of mobilizing resources to finance strategy implementation, and set up the mechanism of monitoring, evaluation, and revision of priorities during implementation.

The National Report to the Conference of the Parties (CoP) will be written based upon guidelines specified in the Decision II/17 of the CoP to the Convention.

Every stage of the BSAP and National Report projects will require extensive contribution by local experts. Involvement of international consultants will be needed, especially for defining priority actions and integrating them into the regional and global context, as well as in identifying measures for ensuring effective BSAP implementation.

Coverage Without Duplication

The BSAP will make use of existing information to the maximum extent possible. No actions that duplicate the BSAP are being pursued in Moldova. The stocktaking exercises will build on the Moldovan scientific and resource management literature, unpublished data, sector studies underway or approved by the government and other national and international sources. These include:

<i>International</i>	Convention on the Biological Diversity (Rio de Janeiro 1992) Agenda 21 Convention on the Conservation of Wild Life and Natural Habitats in Europe (Bern 1979) Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy and Action Plan Danube Strategic Action Plan
<i>National</i>	National Environmental Action Plan National Environmental Strategic Action Programme Environmental legislation of the Republic of Moldova <i>Red Book of the Republic of Moldova</i> (1978 and 1997) State of the Environment Reports Annual reports of the National Institute of Ecology, Institute of Zoology, Institute of Botany, and other branch institutes of the Academy of Sciences Monographs on flora and fauna

In addition, the BSAP will draw upon the results of the following completed, underway, or planned activities in Moldova:

- (i) Environmental Performance Review of Moldova. In the framework of this project, the UN/ECE environmental experts reviewed the current environmental policies and the degree of integration of environmental policies into the economic and social policies.
- (ii) Pilot Project on Developing Environmental Indicators in Moldova. To facilitate the evaluation and monitoring of the NEAP implementation process, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development supported the development of a set of environmental indicators. This project involved the participation of international consultants and experts from Moldovan institutions responsible for natural resource management and environment protection.
- (iii) Environmental Programme for the Danube River Basin. This regional Programme is designed to create a framework for the long-term solution of the problem of pollution and ecosystem degradation in the Danube River Basin, including the relevant part of Moldova's territory. In the framework for this programme, a number of projects were completed or are planned for the next years, including programmes to protect and restore biodiversity.
- (iv) Development of the National Strategy of Sustainable Forest Management. The project aims at the development of a strategy for the sustainable management of forests in Moldova. This strategy will serve as the basic document directing the activities of relevant institutions in the field of forest management. It will include a set of tools for short, medium, and long-term sustainable management of forests.

Time Plan and Sequencing

The BSAP process will span 14 months, starting with planning and consultation with national and international consultants. The data inventory phase will require 4 months to compile the extensive published and unpublished information on Moldovan biodiversity into a comprehensive summary. A Steering Committee and working groups will be established, followed by the preparation of a work plan and Terms of Reference (TOR) for consultants. These activities will overlap with initiation of the analysis and assessment of options, followed by the preparation of the draft BSAP. The schedule for completion of the various tasks is found below.

The time sequence of project activities is consistent with the *National Biodiversity Planning: Guidelines on Early Experiences Around the World* (WRI/UNEP/IUCN 1995), as well as the *Operational Criteria for Enabling Activities* (GEF 1996).

Best Practice

The development of the Moldovan BSAP is designed in accordance with the *National Biodiversity Planning* guidelines. The project will comply with all best practices (including those outlined in the *Operational Criteria for Enabling Activities* for biodiversity) and based on the lessons learned from similar GEF projects in other countries.

The Moldovan BSAP, particularly its goals, objectives, and actions, will be developed by local experts, will represent national priorities, and will be consistent with Moldovan biological, geographical and historical setting. The participation of different stakeholders will occur primarily through the consultations of the Steering Committee and the working groups, as well as the national workshop and public awareness component. Special attention will be paid to harmonize the national BSAP with the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy. The BSAP will be integrated with other sectoral and development programmes, and will identify the mechanism for cross-sectoral coordination and integration. The BSAP will address transboundary issues. The BSAP will be submitted to the government for endorsement and to the Parliament for approval.

Institutional Framework and Project Implementation

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is the principal state authority for policy making, management, and monitoring of the environment in Moldova. An important aspect of the department's responsibility is the preparation of environmental legislation. The Protected Areas and Biodiversity Division of the DEP deals exclusively with problems concerning biodiversity conservation. The DEP, including its Protected Areas and Biodiversity Division, will be responsible for planning and implementing this project.

The DEP will delegate coordination and monitoring of the BSAP project to a Steering Committee, composed of representatives of the main stakeholder groups. To establish this body, the DEP will consult with different ministries and departments, as well as with the scientists and NGOs. The Steering Committee will appoint working groups to complete chapters of the BSAP in the thematic areas of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, laws and institutions, tourism and recreation, environmental review, and protected areas. Representatives of the sectoral departments such as transport, agriculture, economy, finance, mining, and forestry will be included in the working groups.

Membership in the Steering Committee and working groups will be based on the following criteria:

- (i) *Government representation:* Because the BSAP will become official government documentation that identifies responsibilities of the various state agencies in this field, each of the ministries or departments to be involved in BSAP implementation will be invited to participate in the Steering Committee and/or working groups, in conformity with their mandate and responsibilities with regard to biodiversity conservation, including activities that impact biodiversity
- (ii) *Technical expertise:* experts in biodiversity, forestry, agriculture, hydrology, and other technical fields will be included in the appropriate thematic working groups
- (iii) *NGO representation:* at least one national NGO will be represented in the Steering Committee and in each thematic working group

Among governmental institutions, the state association “Moldsilva” plays a special role in biodiversity conservation, which includes responsibility for management of the national forestry and hunting funds, as well as state protected areas. In addition to this, the important centers of basic and applied biodiversity research in Moldova include the National Institute of Ecology, the Institute of Zoology and the Institute of Botany. The main directions of activities of the National Institute of Ecology are studies of the ecology of natural systems, biodiversity, estimations of the impact of economic activities upon environment, and ecological monitoring. Annually under the auspices of this institute "The State and the Protection of the Environment in the Republic of Moldova Report" is produced. The Institute of Zoology provides scientific expertise for the identification, control, and protection of fauna, inventories fauna, studies terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, and defines measures required for the protection of rare and threatened species. The Institute of Botany (including its subdivision, the Botanical Garden of the Academy of Sciences) researches conservation and sustainable use of flora and the introduction and acclimatization of plant species. Some additional scientific and research organizations that may be called upon to provide information for the BSAP and National Report are the Institute of Genetics, Institute of Animal Physiology, Institute of Plant Physiology, Institute of Biological Protection of Plant, National Institute of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary, Institute of Field Crops “Selectia,” Institute of Geography, and several university departments.

In addition to the state institutions, the country has a growing community of NGOs. Currently 70–80 NGOs target environmental protection, focusing mainly on education and information dissemination. Some of the NGOs that will participate in the BSAP are the Environmental Movement of Moldova, Ave Natura, National Academy of Ecology, Biotica, Fauna, and Foundation Pronatura.

Under the project, a Clearing House Mechanism will be established in order to accelerate implementation of the CBD through appropriate hardware, software, and technical support.

Activity/Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Establishment of steering committee and working groups	X													
Preparation of work plan	X													
Finalization of TOR	X													
Preparation of stocktaking chapters		X	X	X										
First workshop and analysis of conservation options					X									
Preparation of draft BSAP					X	X	X	X						
National workshop									X					
Review and revision of draft BSAP									X	X	X	X		
Publishing of BSAP												X		
Public awareness campaign			X	X				X	X				X	X
Establishment of Clearing House Mechanism	X		X		X		X		X		X		X	
Preparation of the National Report to CoP	X						X	X						

Activity	Product	Process	Total
<i>Stocktaking and Inventory</i>	<i>17,000</i>		<i>17,000</i>
national consultants	15,000		15,000
documentation	2,000		2,000
<i>Identification of Options</i>	<i>7,000</i>	<i>13,000</i>	<i>20,000</i>
national consultants	5,000	5,000	10,000
international consultant	2,000	3,000	5,000
1 workshop		2,500	2,500
travel, misc.		2,500	2,500
<i>Strategy and Action Plan</i>	<i>13,000</i>	<i>40,000</i>	<i>53,000</i>
national consultants	12,000	14,000	26,000
international consultant	1,000	3,000	4,000
1 national workshop		5,000	5,000
publication and translation		12,000	12,000
dissemination and public awareness		6,000	6,000
<i>First National Report</i>	<i>15,000</i>		<i>15,000</i>
preparation, translation, publication	15,000		15,000
<i>Clearing House Mechanism (Option A)</i>	<i>10,000</i>		<i>10,000</i>
Hardware	4,000		4,000
Software	1,000		1,000
Modem	500		500
Recurrent Costs	3,000		3,000
Set-up fees	500		500
Internet and email training	1,000		1,000
<i>Coordination and Management Costs</i>		<i>10,000</i>	<i>10,000</i>
Total	62,000	63,000	125,000

Annex: Activity Matrix for Moldova BSAP and National Report

Enabling Activity	Output	Capacity Building		Public Participation	Comments
Commitment	Planning, Execution	Institutional Strength	Training		
<i>Stocktaking and Assessment, based on existing information</i>					
biodiversity and biological resources	X				1,2
cross-sectoral issues	X				1,3
policy and regulatory framework	X				1
institutional and human capacity	X				1
analysis of root causes of biodiversity loss	X				1
technologies for conservation and sustainable use	X				1
activities with adverse impacts	X				1
existing measures and programmes	X				1
preliminary statement of objectives	X				1,4
identification of gaps	X				1,4
assessment of existing needs	X				1,4
<i>Identification and Analysis of Options to Meet the Objectives of the CBD</i>					
strategies for conservation	X	X	X	X	5
strategies for sustainable use	X	X	X	X	5
strategies for benefit sharing	X	X	X	X	5
<i>Planning and Preparation of a Strategy and Plan</i>					
national strategy	X	X	X	X	6
national action plan	X	X	X	X	6
<i>Clearing House Mechanism</i>					
establishment of Clearing House Mechanism	X	X	X		
<i>Planning and Preparation of First National Report</i>					
first national report	X				

Activity Matrix Comments

1. Expert consultants will manage all aspects of the work involved in BSAP preparation under the direction of the Steering Committee.
2. The stocktaking exercise will be based on existing information collected by the Department of Environmental Protection, the Moldovan Academy of Sciences, and other institutes associated with biodiversity conservation.
3. Cross-sectoral issues will be explored and integrated into the BSAP with the help of local and national technical and economic experts and consultation with project stakeholders. Because defining cross-sectoral issues involve communication between different branches of government, representatives from relevant ministries will be engaged in the BSAP process.
4. The Steering Committee, with assistance from the findings of the working groups, will take responsibility of the preliminary statement of objectives, identification of gaps, and assessment of needs.
5. In addition to its goals in meeting the objectives of the CBD, preparing this BSAP is timely now because a number of other complementary activities (e.g., the National Strategy of Sustainable Forest Management) are also underway. These other projects would benefit from the guidance of the strategies and plans defined by this Enabling Activity.
6. NGOs, research institutions, and the public will be given the opportunity during the BSAP process to discuss all aspects of biodiversity conservation.