



## Interregional workshop on how to manage emerging conflicts of interest in IAS management practices

**Bucharest, Romania, October 02<sup>nd</sup> – 03<sup>rd</sup> 2019**

**Hosted by:**

**Bucharest – Ilfov Regional Development Agency (ADR-BI) at Snagov Club, Ilfov & Radisson Blu Hotel, Bucharest**



The interregional workshop on how to manage emerging conflicts of interest in IAS management practices was hosted by Bucharest – Ilfov Regional Development Agency and it lasted 2 days. The first day of workshop, 02<sup>nd</sup> of October 2019, was held at Club Snagov, Ilfov County and the second day of the workshop, 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2019, was held at Radisson Blu Hotel Bucharest, gathering both project partners and their stakeholders.

The 2 days interregional workshop were based on an input paper delivered by ADR-BI among project partners which contained guidelines on how to identify the situations in which the implementation of policies on IAS management will lead to conflicts of interest, whilst suggesting ways of dealing with such conflicts (e.g. awareness raising, compensatory measures, regulation).

The first day of workshop was divided in 2 sessions, the first session was dedicated to stakeholder presentations addressing all aspects of the activities foreseen by the INVALIDIS Application Form (AF) in terms of conflicts of interest in IAS management practices, the second session was dedicated to the workshop on the spot that consisted of a round tour in Snagov IAS infested area.

Mr. Daniel Popescu, Chef of Technical Assistance Department of Bucharest Ilfov Regional Development Agency and project manager of INVALIDIS delivered the opening speech of the workshop. He thanked first to local partners and the project partners as well to local stakeholders and partner's stakeholders.

The first presentation was held by the local stakeholder Constantin Turmac, the representative of The Snagov Foundation, that revealed the situation of invasive species from three protected natural areas in northern Ilfov County and mini-case study: *nelumbo nucifera*. All natural protected areas have an approved Management Plan and internal regulation which have, theoretically, power like national / UE laws but the content / structure is not similar. Most of them focus on protected species.



Regarding management practices on invasive species for Northern Ilfov County, authorities still do not appreciate nature, preservation and biodiversity, don't perceive natural capital as changeable/manageable, forest and lakes are perceived as endless resources, self-regenerating which can be exploited. Since 2007 none of the 4-5 existing administration authorities received any money/funding for operational preservation or monitoring.

Even if Snagov Foundation did not received money for management of the lake and protected areas surrounding the Northern Ilfov County, it organized in 10 years 12 events, with volunteers' help, focusing on cutting the invasive plants, including the nelumbo nicifera (indian lotus) presented as a case study.

The main barriers regarding management practices on invasive species:

- On the countryside there are no more specialists/people able to recognize invasive species
- Politicians don't see invasive species as problems so they don't allocate money for solving the issue

He presented also the biggest challenge in terms of invasive species for Snagov lake, which is nelumbo nucifera (indian lotus). Nelumbo nucifera is a plant from India, planted locally (illegally) by flower lovers and have expanded very fast ( it expand with 7m/year around its base having 3 layers of leafs during summer and can grow even 5-6 meters deep in a lake with an average depth of 6 meters).

Main negative aspects of nelumbo nucifera:

- Negatively affects the water chemistry (due to the surplus of nutrients generated by the plants that remains to decompose slowly in the lake)
- Accelerates the eutrophication of the lake ( mainly because it compromises/ eliminates few species with a positive role in reducing lake's eutrophication)
- Decreases the ecosystem value – direct and indirect ways – (quantities of fish, crayfish, shells, snails and some plants and also reduces some traditional activities (tourism for sports such as : swimming, kayaking, fishing)



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Over 30 local plants disappear, together with associated fauna and over 100 species are in danger.

More than 10 hectares (on a lake of 600ha) with a fast growing speed are affected of this IAS. Despite of existence of laws, awareness and procedures, authorities ignore this topic.

Concluding, a number of measures are required to solve the IAS - *nelumbo nucifera* :

- Reduction – elimination by cutting with the aquatic motocross by local public administrator of the lake which doesn't care about this situation
- Financing the mandatory measures by authorities
- Stopping and sanctioning those who bring allochthones plants
- Local campaigns – information – education – awareness of citizens about the risks, behaviors of this IAS

The second presentation was held on behalf of Lombardy Region partner' stakeholder, by dr. Vincenzo Ferri from WWF Italy regarding Lombardy Regional Plans for the control and management of exotic pond turtles ( *Trachemys scripta*) and also about conflicts of interest in their management.

Due to its widespread distribution and low cost, this exotic pond turtles became the most common pets in Italian households. Unfortunately, there was no awareness of the animals' biological and breeding needs. As a consequence, followed a growing lack of interest and an increased abandonment of these turtles in all aquatic environments, the Italian native pond turtle (*emys orbicularis*) is on the verge of extinction throughout Northern Italy due to a number of causes and in particular to the irreversible alteration of its habitats because of the ecological competition with individuals of abandoned *trachemys scripta*.

Starting with 1994 until 1997 was carried out the first project that aimed to reduce the abandoning of exotic turtles, also studying the groups of abandoned exotic turtles and developing a health monitoring program and try to limit trade in exotic chelonians. Even if some results have been achieved (such as withdrawing a large percentage of abandoned



trachemys scripta in Lombardy, organizing the first public collection centers, informing citizens and different local administrations concerning the situation) the abandonment of individual of trachemys scripta in artificial and natural wetlands has unfortunately continued in Lombardy and all over the European countries, causing one of the largest phenomena of faunal introduction with a reptile as its protagonist. This led to be considered among main invasive alien fauna species and was included in the List of Invasive Alien Species of European Union.

In 2018 WWF Italy and Lombardy Region developed the “Plan for the control and management of exotic pond turtles” as part of Action A7 of Life Gestire 2020. The main purpose is to contribute to the conservation of Emys orbicularis (the European pond turtle which in Lombardy has a limited presence in a few residual habitats where they suffer the ecological competition) by eradicating abandoned trachemys scripta and raising awareness among citizens.

In terms of conflicts of interest, there are different approaches on different levels of interest:

- Media – information disseminated by media is unjustified with unrealistic and shamelessly slanderous descriptions of biology and behaviors of exotic pond turtles
- Fishermen – adopting of a voluntary code of conduct could contribute to raising awareness if IAS by reducing the risk that fishermen cause new accidental or voluntary introductions of IAS
- Exotic animal dealers – see every program of containment – eradication of IAS – related to actions to limit sales – as a detriment to their economic activities
- Animal right associations – criticize the overall strategy of the Plan
- Local committees of citizens – convinced by the media of the dangerousness of exotic turtles and in particular by the periodically spread news on possible salmonella infections
- Environmental associations – look with interest at the monitoring and management activities planned for this exotic pond turtle.



As a conclusion, it is necessary to spread among, as more citizens as possible, an awareness of the ecosystem risks deriving from the abandonment of exotic pets in any environmental context and acceptance of programmed containment strategies, in order to achieve for the Trachemys Plan of LIFE Gestire 2020 all its objectives with best results.

On behalf of Lead Partner's stakeholder, Mr. Keramidas Ioannis from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, school of Biology, Laboratory of Ichthyology, Greece had the third presentation on investigation of the biology, distribution and possible exploitation of four IAS in the Greek Seas.

There are 726 alien species in the Mediterranean and 221 alien species in the Greek Seas and are expected 45 more species to appear in the future.

The four IAS presented were:

- devil firefish or common lionfish – worst marine invasion in history . Native competition: native reef species
- marbled spinefoot – an herbivore species causing marine vegetation stripping. Native competition: sarpa salpa and sparisoma cretense
- dusky spinefoot - an herbivore species causing marine vegetation stripping. Native competition: sarpa salpa and sparisoma cretense. It forms communities-fished in great amounts and is difficult in handling from fishing gears. Is sold more widely in the markets and has an increased price outside Greece (e.g Cyprus)
- small pelagic fish – have many gaps in terms of biology, reproduction, habitat and feeding habits .Their native competition are sardine pilchardus and engraulis encrasicolus

All of this IAS fishes can be exploited and consumed, even if some have venomous defenses or are hard to catch. Exploitation and giving consumer value for this species seems to be a great measure/ solution for ecosystem removal.



The last presentation of the 1<sup>st</sup> day of workshop was held by local stakeholder - professor PhD Ioan Rosca, from Research Development Institute for Plant Protection Bucharest who presented viewpoints regarding the management practices on conflict of interest in connection with the invasive alien species management within agroecosystems. He reported about the project that Ministry of Environment is implementing regarding adequate management of invasive species in Romania, in accordance with EU Regulation 1143/2014 regarding the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species, a project of 9.778.498 euro. Its general objective is to create the necessary scientific and administrative tools for efficient management of invasive species in Romania. He pointed out that, in the specialized literature, there are different interpretations of the “invasive species” and the introduction of a new species followed by acclimatization and extension of its area, affecting the structure and functions of the trophic chains, in general cannot be stopped. The main problem is the answer to whether invasive, competing species can coexist in biogenesis and if it can be identify and quantify the main factors that influence their coexistence with existing species in the “invaded” ecosystem.

Regarding the situation of invasive species with implications in agroecosystems in Romania, he pointed out that is regulated by the directive no.29/2000 and transposed in the Romanian legislation by the Government decision no.563/2007 and is going to be amended on December 14<sup>th</sup> 2019.

He spoke about some particular cases of invasive species with importance for agriculture in Romania, such as:

- south American tomato moth (*tuta absoluta polovny*) – a south American origin species present in Europe since 2006 and reported in Romania in 2009. Despite the legal provisions, the pest has continued to spread the damage caused to the vegetable growing
- *Cydalima perspectalis* ( *diaphania perspectalis*) recorded in Romania in 2010 – pest control is difficult because its attack is identified with delay, mechanical control is difficult to achieve and in the public places is forbidden to apply chemical treatments. It feeds with leaves, attacking the bark of box trees resulting in defoliation which can kill the trees
- *Ceratitis capitata* – one of the world’s most destructive fruit pest



- *Drosophila suzukii* – damages ripe fruits of soft-skinned fruits (cherries, strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, grapes)

In terms of conflicts of interest in connection with the invasive alien species management within agroecosystems, the current situation in Romania can be characterized by:

- a low degree of awareness of the public opinion and consequently a civil society opposition to the interventions of the government administration;
- extremely low degree of accessibility of scientific information, especially in relation to species identification, risk analysis, etc;
- the absence of a priority approach to the actions regarding the control of invasive species;
- unintentional introduction of invasive species - often by the way of the post - as inadequate inspection and quarantine measures;
- inadequate monitoring capacity;
- lack of effective emergency measures;
- outdated or inadequate legislation;
- poor coordination between government agencies, local authorities and local communities.

The second part of the day was dedicated to the workshop on the spot that consisted of a round tour trip in Snagov IAS infested area where the participants were taken by boat to see the IAS *nelumbo nucifera* spread all over the lake. Mr. Constantin Turmac, the representative of The Snagov Foundation, assured the guide tour for the participants.



## Second day of the workshop

The second day of the workshop started with the presentation of Mr. Francisco A. Hueso Fernandez, the representative of Ministry for Ecological Transition and Sustainability – General sustainability management – Government of Extremadura, on current competencies and conflicts of interest, in the management of IAS.

He pointed out that the authorizations of competent administrations from confederations hydrographic, autonomous communities, spanish constitution and concurrence of competition are required, without having one of them exempts.

From 181 species in the Spanish EEI catalog, there are 47 species in Extremadura. He presented cases of IAS presented in their region, such as :

- ludwigia (ludwigia peploides) – as consequences they face problems related to fishermen and farmers, sport activities leisure and bathing activities
- water hyacinth - eichhornia crassipes –

In the control of IAS, conflict resolution is a pending issue, as important as the development of programs, protocols etc.

The second presentation was held by Mrs. Astra Garkaje from State Plant Protection Service in Latvia regarding Latvian experience in managing emerging conflicts for invasive alien plant management practices. She structured her presentation in 3 parts:

- European invasive regulation and situation in Latvia, plants, specific case with invasive plant;
- Through containment and eradication of *Heracleum sosnovskyi* Manden. - practical experience in emerging conflict management;
- Lessons learned



She recalled that, as a country of the European Union, Latvia is subject to EU Regulation 1143/2014. In this regulation, we find the list of Invasive Alien Species of Union concern. This list contains 66 species of plants of which 36 are found in Latvia but officially so far they work with one invasive alien plant – *Heracleum sosnowskyi*. This IAS produces skin burns, decrease landscape authenticity, quality, the value of properties and reduce biodiversity.

She talked about different ways to eradicate and isolate the IAS such as:

- Talks, enthusiasts, volunteers;
- Through governmental legislation;
- as projects (e.g., Rauna, Dāvidu mill);
- local governments can make their own legislation;
- Programm for action, real experience;
- Main responsibilities - Plant Protection Law;
- Punishments in Administrative Violation Code;
- Specific regulation for *Heracleum sosnowskyi*;
- Local governments laws;
- EU Regulation

Currently, a complete national regulation is in place for a single species: *Heracleum sosnowskyi*. The process to adjust national regulation to implement provisions set in EU regulation is a slow and long process. EU level approach is abstruse for ordinary people and commercial sector. The quality of distribution data for some invasive species is low and the resources for the implementation of all necessary actions are insufficient. But IAS are one of the priorities for funding of projects by the government, the national regulation prevent conscious release/establishment of non-native species in the wild and promote eradication of them. Existing legislation can provide lessons and help eradication of invasive species and



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implementation of regulation such as tax reductions where invasive species have been eradicated or special payment for management practices devoted to eradicate invasive species

As a result, Latvia faces challenges and is already preparing future measures to combat IAS such as the National list of IAS of Latvia, Regulations Regarding Restriction of the Distribution of Invasive Alien Species or Procedures for developing Invasive Alien Species control and eradication plans.

Some lessons learned thru IAS management:

- Need to inform society often
- For local governments individual approach works better than legislation
- People are willing to do eradication for themselves, when they understand and accept that others will not do it for them and nobody will pay for that;
- Media helps a lot. They are also interested, so you just need to provide good information
- Easy understandable materials play a big role;
- And again speaking and explaining things to people work.

No questions were asked.

The last presentation was held by Varelidis Petros, Director of National Center for Environment and Sustainable Development, Greece that talked about the management of rising conflicts of interest related to IAS management practices in Greece.



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Greek public authorities do not have a comprehensive picture of the status and distribution of invasive alien species as there are no “official” records about the number of IAS established in ecosystems. There are several things Greece has to do in this field:

- Develop institutional framework for detecting, preventing entry, controlling or eradicating
- Achieve a better understanding of pathways and causes of introduction as well as the impact of such introductions on biodiversity and the economy
- Develop a comprehensive inventory of IAS observed in natural ecosystems and classifying them
- Raising public awareness

To sum up, on national level few things have been accomplished but many actions have been launched in the form of projects for inventory and mapping IAS, continuous monitoring systems and identifying management measures.

Conclusion of the 2 days interregional workshop

Following this workshop, it appears that actions are being taken by all the regions involved in the INVALIDIS project to fight against the introduction of invasive species. But they face a lot of issues such as lack of human and material resources to make the fight more effective.

Early detection has to be the first step in IAS management. Networks involving academics, scientists and users need to be put in place to ensure the finest possible follow-up.

Following this early detection, control and monitoring protocols must be put in place quickly, taking into account the environmental characteristics, the costs and benefits of the actions and the feasibility of the methods.

To achieve these goals, local regulations need to be drafted to enable environmental actors to monitor and control as efficiently as possible.

Participants



No.	Organization	Name and Surname
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7	Joana Ribeiro	ICETA - Institute of Sciences, Technologies and Agroenvironment of the University of Porto
8	Luís Reino	ICETA - Institute of Sciences, Technologies and Agroenvironment of the University of Porto
9	Evija Erkske	Zemgale Planning Region (INVALIS partner)
10	Astra Garkaje	State Plant Protection Service of Latvia (Stakeholder)
11	Santa Rutkovska	Nature Conservation Agency of Latvia (Stakeholder)
12	Daniele Paganelli	Lombardy Foundation for the Environment
13	Vincenzo Ferri	WWF -Italy-
14	Petros Varelidis	National Center for Environment and Sustainable Development
15	Ioannis Keramidas	National Center for Environment and Sustainable Development (stakeholder- Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, school of Biology, Laboratory of Ichthyology)
16	Constantin Turmac	The Snagov Foundation
17	Daniel Popescu	Bucharest - Ilfov Regional Development Agency
18	Roxana Oprescu	Bucharest - Ilfov Regional Development Agency



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