PRESS RELEASE 30

Date: November 2015

Final Congress of "ILMM-BSE Integrated Land-Use Management Modeling of Black Sea Estuaries" Project
5 November, 2015 – Istanbul, Turkey

The Steering Committee Meeting of the "Integrated Land-Use Management Modelling of Black Sea Estuaries (ILMM-BSE)" project was held on 4 November, 2015, while the Final Congress of the project was held on 5 November, 2015, at Koç Holding Conference Hall in Istanbul, organized by TURMEPA. Project activities, results, budget, and the implemented activities were discussed at the PCU, FCU and JRCU Meetings, attended by the Project Partners. The Final Congress, on the other hand, provided a venue to share the research results pertaining to deltas/estuaries, as well as the Ecosystem Education Program with local administrators, academicians, representatives of government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and a substantial media presence. In the Turkish side of the project, data on the Ergene river mouth was uploaded onto the Geographical Information System to create a risk map. Even the environmental impact of future investments in the river mouth was modeled. The results from the pilot area of IPA Partners are used as comparison between the river mouths in Aegean Sea and Black Sea, as long as Ergene is tributary to Aegean Sea. Through the Ecosystem Education Program developed within the framework of this project, TURMEPA was able to reach out to approximately 200 thousand students. Other project partners in the Black Sea Basin also implemented similar trainings in their areas. Local administrators, university chancellors and NGO representatives from Turkey, Bulgaria, Georgia and Ukraine signed agreements to maintain the cooperation which began with the project.

The general objective of the project is the building, development, and extension of the management tools to ensure sustainable land use in the deltas/estuaries of the Black Sea, while its specific aims include the development of an integrated database system containing existing studies and programs implemented in Europe; developing communication and cooperation opportunities regarding land management in the deltas or estuaries covered in the project; developing land use models for the deltas or estuaries covered in the project; developing an organizational structure to facilitate cooperation; and fostering cooperation opportunities and networks between the scientists, land-users, and decision-makers in the Black Sea Basin. The target groups of the project include academicians, researchers and experts from local universities and research agencies, while the final beneficiaries are the representatives and members of local NGOs, as well as representatives and officials of local administrations and governments.
In the opening speeches at the congress, Akşit Özkural, the General Director of TURMEPA voiced his gratitude for the contributions of and cooperation by the stakeholders and talked about the activities of the association, while Mr. Gia Salukvadze, the Governor of Guria region of Georgia, Prof. Dr. Osman Şimşek, the Rector of Namık Kemal University, and representative of Prof. Dr. Merab Khalvashi, the Rector, Shota Rustaveli - the Chancellor of Batumi State University of Georgia noted the significance of the project’s outputs for the areas around the Black Sea, and the importance of cooperation in terms of finding solutions to shared problems in the Black Sea Basin.

In his speech, Haluk Nadir, Deputy Governor of Istanbul said, “I really appreciate this comprehensive international project carried out to protect the Black Sea Basin and to prevent pollution. I would like to congratulate the esteemed academic staff of Namik Kemal University, which is among the stakeholders of the project, as well as the Deniz Temiz Association which has played a leading role for 21 years in the efforts for clean seas, for their contributions to the project, and their voluntary services for the environment.”

Sonya Enilova, the Director and Project Coordinator of Bourgas Regional Tourism Association (BRTA) of Bulgaria presented extensive information about the project: The Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme (Black Sea JOP) 2007-2013, which supported the “Integrated Land-Use Management Modeling of Black Sea Estuaries (ILMM-BSE)” project, is executed under the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The aim of Black Sea JOP is to contribute to “stronger and more sustainable economic and social development in the regions in Black Sea Basin”. The project applicant is BRTA (Bulgaria). The European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) partners of the project are Bourgas Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov University (BSU, Bulgaria), Ukraine Marine Environment Protection Association (UKRMEPA, Ukraine), and CIVITAS Georgica (Georgia). The instrument for the pre-accession assistance (IPA) part of the project, on the other hand, comprises the Hayrabolu Municipality as the IPA beneficiary, whereas IPA partners are TURMEPA (DenizTemiz Association) and Namik Kemal University (NKU). The total budget of the project is €1,344,782.42, with the European Union contributing 90 percent in the form of grant. The project is executed in 30 months, which began in May 2013 and is finishing in November 2015.

The analysis of results achieved through the project was presented at the Final Congress, by the Joint Research Coordinators: Prof. Dr. Valentin Nenov from BSU made a presentation on the Ropotamo and Veleka estuaries in Bulgaria, whereas Igor Karpenko from UKRMEPA provided information on the Danube, Dniester and Dnieper deltas in Ukraine. Dr. Mamuka Gvilava from CIVITAS Georgica made a presentation about the Guria Region of Georgia, while Prof. Dr. Fatih Konukcu from Namik Kemal University summarized the important findings regarding the Ergene Basin of Turkey. Furthermore, Prof. Dr. Selçuk ALBUT, the Data Management Coordinator from Namik Kemal University provided information about the web site and integrated management systems.
Prof. Dr. Fatih Konukcu noted that a web-based data management system containing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software as well, with a view to establishing networks among the experts and stakeholders involved, and added that, through the development of models/software on GIS, information and data concerning the basins under the limelight could be integrated on a permanent basis. Prof. Dr. Konukcu said, “land maps, topographic maps, forest areas, geomorphology, the Digital Elevation Model (DEM), hydrologic network, land use model and changes in land use, land cover, population distribution, biodiversity, sensitive areas, erosion risk maps, toxic substances storage area models for the Ergene Estuary were developed in a GIS. Furthermore the environmental impact of various future utilization scenarios of the Ergene Estuary (i.e. the change in land for agricultural, industrial, settlement, forest, grazing-pastures purposes or water resources) or of investments to be effected within the estuary (roads, industrial plants etc.) were modeled for the short, medium and long term.”

The Ecosystem Education Program, one of the crucial outputs of the ILMM-BSE project, was presented by Akşit Özkural, the Director General of TURMEPA. Özkural said, “Our aim is to promote the project before future generations and the wider civil society, as well as among the administrative and academic community; to share the project outputs with participants and the target audience; and to increase awareness of the project in the eyes of the civil society throughout the Thrace region. Work to implement the Ecosystem Education Program has been completed. A 40-minute video has been produced for adults and school-age children. In the months September-October 2015, trainer training was completed, whereupon the promotion program was implemented throughout the Thrace region. We hope that by the end of the project, these organizations will continue to make use of the bridge of friendship built through the project, and will seek opportunities to partner in other projects to be developed in the coming years, with the same level of goodwill.” [http://e-blacksea.com/ergene/index.html](http://e-blacksea.com/ergene/index.html)

The final session of the congress congress was a project assessment meeting under the moderation of Ali Sirri Ören, ILMM-SE Project Coordinator, followed by a Q&A session.