

Preserving ecological value in the landscape of the Szprotawa River Valley,

Lower Silesian Association of Landscape Parks

The project allowed the promotion of the following: conservation of plant communities classified as *Molinion* and *Arrhenatherion elatioris*; conversion of a former Soviet airbase into wetland meadows covering 500 hectares; implementation of measures to raise and maintain groundwater level at the protected site; preservation of traditional land management practices on the protected site (polders); re-establishment of nesting grounds for aquatic and wetland birds; removal of Soviet military earthworks; suspension of the planting of weeping willows; establishment of an eco-agricultural programme and grazing by cattle, sheep and horses; re-establishment of the use of meadows for pasture to preserve low peat bogs; long-term vocational activity among the Roma population to counter poverty and exclusion; preservation of bird sanctuaries for species listed in Appendix I of the Birds Directive and in the Polish Red Book; conversion of the heating system from traditional coal-based to eco-friendly biomass-based in the headquarters of the Lower Silesian Association of Landscape Parks and in the village of Wysoka.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe conferred the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention for the 3rd Session of the Award 2013-2014 on the organisers of the project, considering that it meets the four criteria of the rules on the Award. The integrated approach goes beyond the single dimension of biodiversity and associates nature with culture and population. Thus the project offers a model that others might follow. It shows a good level of participation by the parties concerned in both decision-making and land management. The farmers and beekeepers are stakeholders; the project has also enabled apparently conflicting economic interests to be reconciled. The aesthetic dimension is present and enables the awareness of different generations to be raised effectively. The environment is also taken into consideration: the project relates to the rehabilitation of a former Soviet military base, as well as to increased use of biomass as a source of energy. The involvement of Roma in the decision-making process and, in future, in the management of the restored land is particularly favourable. In dealing with the issue of minority populations and their involvement in land management, this project represents progress in "living together" at European level which should be applauded.

