Its first phase is to list and analyse government information requirements at national and intermediate levels and to identify the local information needs. It will then create a data-base of models suitable for bio-socio-economic predictions and see where there are gaps in the supply of models and data, compared with the demand for information.

Case studies of local communities will test how best to meet local decision support needs in exchange for local monitoring that meets central policy requirements. They will also examine whether local monitoring (based on schools, NGOs, local community groups or individuals motivated by use of wild resources) can supply the extra environmental data that are needed.

To identify current best practice for incorporating biodiversity and wider environmental information into decision-making on land-use across the EU, there will be a survey of government and local practices in all 27 EU member states plus some candidate states. It will assess how the use of biodiversity and environmental information in EIA, SEA and sustainability assessment has affected ecosystem services and biodiversity in both protected and cultivated areas. This survey will also identify priority areas for internet-based decision support and local monitoring to benefit livelihoods and biodiversity.

Coordinator

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Partners

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- **NERC-Centre for Ecology and Hydrology** (*United Kingdom*, www.ceh.ac.uk)
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- **ERENA, Ordenamento e Gestão de Recursos Naturais Ltd.** (*Portugal*, www.erena.pt)
- **Tero Ltd** (*Greece*, www.tero.gr)
- **European Sustainable Use Specialist Group** (*Belgium*, www.data.iucn.org/themes/ssc/susg)
- **Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU** (*Belgium*, www.face.eu)
- **Pro-Biodiversity Service** (*Poland*)
- **Centre for Cartography of Fauna and Flora** (*Slovenia*, www.ckff.si)
- **Szent Istvan University, Institute for Wildlife Conservation** (*Hungary*, www.vvt.gau.hu)
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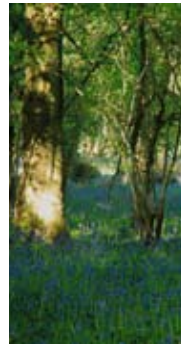
SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

TESS

Transactional Environmental Support System

Working with central policy and local activities to help livelihoods and biodiversity






TESS is an international research project supported by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission. It aims to assist the integration of information about biodiversity and related environmental matters from the local level into planning and land-use decisions, while at the same time encouraging local people to collect such information in order to maintain and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services. To achieve this, a decision support system will be designed to exchange information required in environmental assessments at all levels for information that benefits local recreation and livelihoods.

What is TESS about?

Computer aided predictive modelling to support environmental decisions

For 50 years, subsidies at continental and state level have successfully driven cultivation of a few species in Europe. Intensive monocultures, replacing the former diverse local land-use, continue to degrade ecosystem services that sustained Europeans for centuries. Species have disappeared locally through habitat loss, fragmentation and chemical inputs, so that biodiversity has declined at an unprecedented rate. Animals and plants that once fascinated or fed people have vanished from many communities.
Governments now require Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for land-use plans and programmes and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for specific projects, sometimes now also with sustainability assessments. SEA and EIA depend on experts to collect data and make predictions, and are therefore used for only a minority of the myriad decisions that affect our environment.

However, the ability to predict change and present options has now increased through the use of sophisticated computer modelling. Such models may incorporate behavioural mechanisms of key species and can be spatially-specific through linkage to habitat and socio-economic data. TESS argues that by making the computer models work for anyone, with environmental information gathered by local people, the principles of environmental assessment can assist decisions affecting development and management of land at all relevant levels right across the countryside.

What does TESS do?

Design a software tool to aid environmental assessments and encourage the wider public to participate in biodiversity conservation

TESS aims to design a decision support system related to environment and land- use that will make it easy for policy makers to integrate local knowledge into their decision making, while also guiding and encouraging local activities in ways that restore and/or maintain biodiversity and ecosystem services. The project runs from October 2008 to March 2011.

What will TESS deliver?

Developing policy guidelines, designing a Transactional Environmental Support System and disseminating results to those making and implementing policy.

Results will be provided to those involved in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies - at the European, national, regional, and local levels, which includes public authorities, legislators and citizens and their organizations. The following reports will be produced during the project:

- **A report will be available in 2009 (i) describing information flows from local and regional to central, (ii) assessing local decision making processes, including the use of participatory approaches, (iii) bringing these together for SEA, EIA and other environmental decision maki ng at all levels.**
- **A number of reports will be issued towards the end of the project (2011) to make available all the analytical evidence and results from individual case studies, together with the pan-European survey of assessment processes, including recommendations and guidelines based on how biodiversity trends relate to the different practices across Europe.**
- **A report at the end of the project (2011) will present a design for the proposed Transactional Environmental Support System, which will support government commitments in many areas of the Convention of Biological Diversity (especially the Ecosystem Approach) and will be accompanied by a booklet of simple policy guidelines to present all the results for policy makers.**