

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	13020
Project Title	Conservation of Eastern European medicinal plants: <i>Arnica montana</i> in Romania
Country(ies)	Romania
UK Organisation	WWF-UK
Collaborator(s)	WWF-DCP, USAMV
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Project website	-

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

The project was approved by the Darwin Initiative in late April and started in May 2004. As all project partners wanted to make use of the first Arnica field season (June / July), the project start-up had to be organised quickly. For this purpose, a car (Landrover) was purchased and transferred to the project area and a first meeting was held in Cluj / Romania in May 2004. With the Arnica field season imminent and time short, decisions were made to develop 1) a rough 3-years project work-plan and 2) a detailed interim 3-month work-plan; the development of a full work-plan for the first year was postponed, and completed at a second planning meeting in September 2004. The annual work-plan is attached to this report. Against this work-plan, progress towards the objectives of the project has been made as follows:

- a. Field Activities: Many field activities were carried out during the reporting period, most of them rather successfully. Progress was achieved on the following items in particular:
1) Arnica inventorying and mapping - Arnica habitats that had not been inventoried before were mapped in the project area. 2) Arnica monitoring – Arnica populations in the main areas of collection around the hamlets of Ghetar and Ocoale were monitored. 3) Construction and initial testing of a demonstration drying house in Ghetar, next to the project centre. 4) Interviews with local Arnica collectors, farmers and intermediate traders to better understand the structure of the local trade and market. 5) Regular meetings with officials from the village in order to establish close co-operation and mutual support.
- b. Training and capacity building: Three young members of the project team (two are student trainees) were given constant training on the job by the project officer and the project coordinator. Training of Arnica collectors started on two levels: children were addressed by organising events, games and information sessions around religious ceremonies; selected women were trained in sustainable collection of Arnica flower heads in order to train others in the field.
- c. Research: Research, as specified in the work-plan, is mainly the scientific analysis of the results of fieldwork (see section a). As field work was ongoing, only few research activities were carried out during the first 5 months of the project, mostly by trainees. Two students were identified, who will write their diploma or master thesis within the scope of the project. Fields of research selected by the students with the assistance of

other project partners are 1) Arnica trade in Romania (including consumer behaviour) and 2) Arnica ecology.

- d. PR and media: Several articles about the project were published in local newspapers. The project team in Cluj attended every larger social event in the project area and tried to make use of festivals, where a considerable number of the inhabitants of the often rather remote hamlets gather in one place. WWF-DCP (Danube-Carpathian Programme Office) organised an international press trip in September 2004 to the Arnica project in Apuseni, as well as to other WWF projects in Romania. The journalists from the UK, Austria and Germany visited Ghetar and made several interviews. A short report will be broadcasted on BBC later this year.
- e. Communication / Reporting: Reporting lines were established and the project structure and purpose explained to all project partners. An internal bimonthly bullet-point reporting structure was devised to assist communication between the project team members in the field and project team members working on management and supervision levels. This type of reporting structure was new to most team members, but is being slowly learnt. An advisory group is being established; communication with the Apuseni nature park administration has yet to be properly developed (for communication problems see below). The basic layout and design of a project web homepage has been developed.

Summary: The project progress in the field has been remarkable during the first 5 months of the project. Most project partners are very enthusiastic. However, several problems have occurred relating to communication and to the lack of an agreed approach in how to tackle the conservation issues (see below). In spite of the successful fieldwork, further efforts will be needed to address these problems.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Internal and partly external communication proved to be the main problem the project has encountered during the first five months. Internal communication problems resulted from 1) a lack of common understanding of the objectives of the project and the various responsibilities of project partners, 2) different motivational interests of project partners, 3) personality conflicts, 4) overly dominant hierarchic structures within the project team, and 5) communication skills of some project partners below average.

To address some of these problems, a management meeting was organised in Vienna in July 2004. The project co-ordinator, project manager, project officer, project finance manager from WWF-UK and DCP Vienna, project leader and several other WWF staff attended the meeting, during which further internal tensions among the project partners became evident. However, the importance of a common approach was accepted by all project partners and steps were taken towards a clearer definition and wider acceptance of the project roles of individual project team members. At the second project planning meeting in Cluj in September 2004, tensions between the project partners were less and the situation seems to improve gradually. Nevertheless, one of the local project staff members gave notice in September and left the project.

A second source of conflicts within the project is external communication, in particular a lack of understanding of the participatory approach in project development. This becomes evident in

two major field fields of communication: 1) communication with the Apuseni nature park administration and 2) development of the resource management and trade association (RMTA).

1) The Apuseni nature park, which partly overlaps with Arnica habitats in the project area, could play an important role in ensuring and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. The park authorities are, however, not supported by considerable parts of the local population and by some project team members. Therefore, open communication with park authorities is avoided and the relationship is not developed. The project tries to help developing relationships between the local population and the park; WWF-DCP Romania could play a key role in this, if their activities are accepted by all project partners.

2) Development of RMTA: The project field team has been keen to make fast progress towards developing the RMTA, taking advantage of opportunities. Other members of the project team advise of caution and more consultation within the whole project team and with all stakeholders to be involved in the set-up of the RMTA, before important decisions are made. So far, only local officials have been involved in the process, but no farmer / land-owner nor any Arnica collectors. It will be important to improve on the structure of the RMTA, taking local sociology into account.

Summary: Communication problems within the project are serious and may pose a threat to the future success of the project. The situation will have to be observed closely and in case it does not improve considerably until the next project planning meeting in March 2005, structural changes may have to be decided upon in consultation with the Darwin Secretariat.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

None of the issue mentioned above has so far resulted in a change to the objectives or a substantial change to the activities agreed. For this reason, they were not discussed with Darwin. In case no considerable improvement on the communications problem is achieved during the next months, potential actions to be taken will be discussed with the Darwin Secretariat.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: no/yes, in..... (month/yr)

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

At present, there are no further issues we would want to raise.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme, stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk. The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**