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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL ENVIRONMENT
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ENV.E.3 – LIFE Nature
Deputy Head of Unit

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**Subject: LIFE09 NAT/HU/000384 Falco cherrug B-H-R-S
Visit to the project of 6 - 7 June 2011 and Inception Report**

Dear Mr. Duska,

Thank you for welcoming Mr. Andrej Bača, representative of the external monitoring team in Hungary, during the visit to your project on 6 and 7 June 2011. Thank you also for the Inception Report that I received on 18 July 2011 and for the Output Indicators tables that you sent on 18 July 2011 by e-mail.

I appreciate the progress achieved despite several administrative obstacles, in particular the problems to transfer funds to non-governmental organisations and the new tendering procedure in Hungary, which have contributed to further delay several project actions. I am glad that all administrative problems have been solved and that finally on 8 July 2011 you were able to transfer the LIFE co-financing to the non-governmental organisations that participate in the project as associated beneficiaries.

I value your engagement in implementing the preparatory actions and baseline surveys, monitoring the Saker falcon, and developing the project website, despite administrative problems. I am confident that now that these problems have been solved, the project will start progressing at a good pace. I encourage you to increase your efforts to recover all delays.

I note that several project beneficiaries are involved in the KEOP Operational Programme project(s), which includes actions that are similar to those foreseen under this LIFE+ project. Please remember that costs associated to actions that receive funds from other EU funding programmes are not eligible under LIFE+ (Article 26 of the Common Provisions). Funds received from the KEOP Operational programme should be clearly differentiated from those received from LIFE and this differentiation needs to be adequately documented.

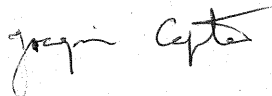
I remind you that all associated beneficiaries should put the LIFE logo on all of the project's equipment as soon as possible (Article 13.8 of the Common Provisions). The LIFE logo should also be included in the official correspondence, all reports and deliverables, press releases, Internet announcements regarding the project and in the project websites (e.g. on the associated beneficiary's web page) to better advertise the EU programme.

Please find further comments in the Annex to this letter.

After analysing the report and from the visit of the representative of the external monitoring team in Hungary, I conclude that the project objectives and work plan are still valid.

I wish you a successful continuation of the project activities.

Yours sincerely,



Joaquim CAPITÃO

cc.:

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ANNEX

A) Technical and administrative remarks

General comments

I appreciate the quality of the report. However, for the future, please always provide information on whether future milestones remain feasible. Please also report on and deliver all foreseen deliverables. In this sense, deliverables should be sent both on paper and electronic format. Merely referring to Internet links where the deliverable may be downloadable is not sufficient.

Specific remarks

1. Actions A1 and A2: According to the information provided in the report, the project team observed a Saker falcon pair nesting close to the ROSPA0069 Natura 2000 site (which is covered by the project). However, no Saker falcon was observed in ROSPA0015, which was the site originally foreseen for the implementation of Action A1 (assessment of impact of agricultural subsidies and practices on *F. cherrug's* habitat) and A2 (guidelines for suslik habitat management and for subsidies) in Romania. For this reason, you propose replacing ROSPA0015 site with ROSPA0069 for Action A1 and extending Action A2 to also cover ROSPA0069. As a consequence of the presence of this falcon pair, one juvenile has been radio tagged with PTT (Action C7) and the raven nest in which the pair is installed will be replaced by a proper falcon nest (Action C2).

I find these explanations sufficient and accept the changes proposed since the objective is to gather information on the use of agricultural subsidies in favour of the Saker falcon. From the information provided, I understand that the falcon pair is nesting just at the edge of ROSPA00069 site but that this site will soon be extended. I also understand that a wind farm is foreseen in this area. With your next report, please provide information on the process to extend ROSPA00069 and on the construction of the wind farm (maps, whether an impact assessment has already been carried out, if so, the results of the impact assessment and compensatory measures foreseen).

I also accept the replacement of ROSPA73 site with ROSPA47 site under action A2. The newly proposed areas lie within the project area and give the opportunity to achieve better project results.

2. Action A4: I was informed that another species of falcon started nesting in the box near Csakvar in Hungary where the video camera had been installed. To avoid disturbances, the camera was not moved to the nest occupied by the Saker falcon. In 2012 please ensure the nest with the Saker falcon is adequately monitored (either by moving the video camera or using the dummy cameras on both potential nests first), not to loose another year of observation.
3. Action C1: With the next report please send the copy of the list of participants and the summary of the minutes of the meeting on Rural Development Plan held at the Slovak Ministry of Environment in March 2011. Please report on the result of this meeting in relation to the project's objectives.

4. Action C3: I note that the repatriation of susliks started with problems in Hungary and Romania. Please increase your efforts to recover delays as soon as possible, especially since certain preparatory activities could have been done in advance (selection of sites, permissions etc.). I also note that repatriation in Romania is linked to the development of industrial installations. With your next report, please provide information regarding those installations. I remind you that according to Article 26 of the Common Provisions, any costs related to any action that can be considered as a compensatory measure shall be ineligible.
5. Action C4: Through recent surveys, the project team has discovered that some of the pylons foreseen are no longer high-risk pylons since they have already been insulated. I agree with your proposal to replace some of the pylons foreseen in the grant agreement with newly identified high-risk pylons. However, these should be in the project area, within or nearby the Natura2000 sites. The maps that have been submitted were in some cases not easily readable. Please provide with your next report adequate maps to clearly identify the newly selected pylons and their location.
6. Action C5: Regarding injured falcons, I agree that the alternative location of cages in the Zoo of Târgu Mureş in Romania would be a positive solution if it allows achieving this action's objectives. However, please provide a sufficient guarantee that these cages will continue being used for nature conservation purposes after the end of the LIFE+ project.
7. Actions D1 and D2: I note that the Romanian electric companies did not attend the information conference organised in Hungary on the problematic of power lines and the Saker Falcon. I encourage you to organise future meetings targeting Romanian electric companies in Romania, as foreseen in the grant agreement, to ensure the participation of this sector.
8. Action D3 and D5: Please improve the design of the information panels, by including the description of project objectives, project actions and additional interesting information as foreseen in the grant agreement. Please pay attention to the various language versions to avoid grammatical mistakes.
9. Action D6: In your future reports, please provide the deliverables foreseen.
10. Action E2: Please report on the guidelines for repatriation and monitoring of susliks, mentioned in the grant agreement.
11. I agree with the following modified schedule of the future project reports:

Mid-term Report	31/12/2012
Progress Report	31/12/2013
Final Report	31/12/2014

12. Output Indicators Tables:

The Excel version of Output Indicators that you sent by e-mail on 18/7/2011 is still not correct. The costs in Table 2 should be in line with those on Form FB of the Application, as follows: for C1-C2-C4-C6 the sum is 2.442.335 €, for C7 the sum is 26.824 € and the total is 2.528.751 €. Please send the corrected Output Indicator tables with your next correspondence (printed and in digital form).

B) Financial comments

13. In Annex E4-6 to the Inception Report, I have read about the involvement of project beneficiaries in the KEOP Operational Programme project(s), which include actions similar to this LIFE+ project and pursue similar objectives. Please explain in your next report which LIFE+ project beneficiaries, and to what extent, are involved in the KEOP Operational Programme. Also, provide information on how the activities foreseen in the KEOP Operation Programme may impact on the timely implementation of Action C4 (insulation of pylons). Please remember that costs associated to actions that receive funds from other EU funding programmes are not eligible under LIFE+ (Article 26 of the Common Provisions). Funds received from the KEOP Operation programme should be clearly distinguished and this distinction should be adequately documented.
14. With regard to the project-related invoices collected by the monitoring expert, I note that there is a clear reference to the project in the invoice, as stipulated in Article 6.2 of the Common Provisions. Please ensure that you and all your associated beneficiaries also include a clear project reference in all project related invoices received throughout the remainder of the project.
15. Concerning the timesheets collected by the monitoring expert, I note that they are of an acceptable standard and are in line with the provisions of Article 25.2 of the Common Provisions and with the recommendations of the Commission's circular note of 8 December 2010¹. Please ensure that you and your associated beneficiaries continue to keep timesheets of the same standard throughout the remainder of the project. As you and several of the associated beneficiaries are public entities, please be reminded that permanent staff working for the project must be specifically seconded to the project, i.e. the contract or personnel files of such personnel must show that they are instructed to work for the project for a certain period. Such an instruction does not exempt the staff in question from the obligation to complete timesheets.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/toolkit/pmttools/lifeplus/documents/100630_circular_note_time_sheets.pdf.

