

The Lower Morava Biosphere Reserve

# ANNUAL REPORT 2013



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# INTRODUCTION

Dear friends,

2013 represented the tenth year since the designation of the youngest Biosphere Reserve (BR) in the country. Many of our supporters view the fact that we have succeeded in pioneering and sustaining a modern progressive trend of BR management based on equal participation of local authorities, stakeholders, non-governmental organizations and universities as a remarkable feat. It has turned out that the Lower Morava Biosphere Reserve, Public Benefit Corporation (PBC) with its own legal personality and a small team of professional employees is fully capable of meeting the objectives of the Man and the Biosphere Programme through high-level participatory management backed by a broad mandate.

Over the ten years of the Lower Morava BR existence we have implemented a number of projects. They focused on rehabilitation of old ecological burdens in the landscape, as well as on measures intended to enhance the characteristics of rural landscape, restoration of wetlands and aquatic ecosystems in floodplain forests, protection of cultural and natural landscape values and ongoing raising of public awareness in the form of lectures, seminars and publications.

*The best example is such which can be seen by one's own eyes and assessed by one's own judgement.* In this spirit we focused on the implementation of a number of demonstration projects and solutions tailored to the requirements of local governments and other entities. It is no coincidence that our BRDM initiated and designed, among other projects of landscape structure revitalization and restoration, the Mikulov Landscape Plan, Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape Management Plan, Hydrological Study of the Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape, World Heritage Site, aquatic ecosystem restoration in floodplain forests near Břeclav or Promoting Sustainable Tourism at the Confluence. Together with professionals and researchers we continue to look for a sustainable use of landscape and natural resources. We have become an informal

“sustainable development agency” which engages local government representatives and other stakeholders in direct cooperation with the objective to identify sensible and justifiable ways of flexible, dynamic and sustainable conservation of natural and cultural values through everyday human activities. We have never acted as a self-proclaimed “know-it-all”. On the contrary, we have always taken scrupulous care to promote expert arguments drawing on the knowledge of a wider context. This may be one of the reasons why we are, mainly internationally, regarded as representatives of modern, the so-called second generation biosphere reserves which set progressive management trends for BR operations worldwide.

We have established collaboration with a number of BRs, e.g. in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Ukraine, Canada, Slovenia, Sweden, Yemen, Chile, Costa Rica or Mauritius. We are fully aware of the importance of the “*think globally, act locally*” principle. We are actively involved in global programmes, such as the World Heritage Programme, International Model Forest Network or the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification. We understand the importance of sharing and acquisition of best practices within the global BR network.

We would not have been able to achieve all of this if it were not for the team spirit within our governing bodies and long-term financial and moral support of our numerous partners, colleagues and supporters, both from our region and other parts of the Czech Republic. I trust that the experience we have gained over the ten years of our existence will be put to good use to aid the further development of our Public Benefit Corporation and the Lower Morava BR territory and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves alike.

Jan Vybíral  
Executive Director, April 2014



# MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE (MAB) PROGRAMME AND BIOSPHERE RESERVES

Since the 1970s, when the international UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MaB) Programme was established, its primary objective has been to improve the relationship between man and the environment through sensible and sustainable management of natural resources and through the application of scientific knowledge and traditional practices.

The goals of the MAB Programme are met in specially selected areas called biosphere reserves (BR), which are associated in the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves. Unfortunately, the term “reserve” incorrectly stresses purely the conservational aspect of BR operation, which, despite its indisputable importance, constitutes but one of the many objectives of the MAB Programme. These, among other, include fostering partnerships for generating and sharing information, research and monitoring, education or participatory management. In practice, it involves **looking for ways of flexible, dynamic and sustainable protection of natural and cultural values through everyday human activities**. Thanks to these, biosphere reserves are sometimes referred to “living laboratories” or teaching laboratories for sustainable development.

As a rule, biosphere reserves do not represent primary tools for protecting natural and cultural diversity, since nature and historical monument protection as their sole objective is provided by other, highly specialized, usually governmental institutions in most countries. BRs may therefore remain more open to stakeholder participation, the scope of their activities is broader and more balanced and they can act more as “sustainable development agencies” rather than purely conservation-focused organizations. Every BR must conform to a specific set of criteria and has to be able to deliver a given set of functions. Its size must be sufficient to allow the fulfilment of tasks assigned, it must be sufficiently varied with respect to its natural and cultural diversity and must provide home and livelihood to enough people who will in turn participate in its protection and development.

All world BRs are bound to fulfil three equally important functions:

1. **Conservation of natural and cultural diversity**
2. **Economic development which is socially, culturally and environmentally sustainable**
3. **Support of research, monitoring and environmental education**

The territory of each BR should be divided into three functional zones. The *core zone* is an area designed solely to protect biological diversity. The *buffer zone* is an area surrounding the core zones to protect them from negative impacts. It is utilized for activities related to nature conservation and ecological procedures, including environmental research and education, recreation or eco tourism. The remaining area of a BR consists of the *transition zone* or the zone of cooperation. It is the most important zone where the MAB philosophy may be applied in full and where standard economic activities and other forms of land use take place, while promoting sustainable management.

It is imperative that every BR actively promotes participatory management, which requires equal collaboration and participation of all stakeholders, including local governments and inhabitants, state administration, representatives of local businesses and conservation groups as well as natural and social scientists. Lower Morava BR is the only BR in the Czech Republic to directly and equally involve various stakeholders in the management and decision-making processes on the platform of a Public Benefit Corporation. Biosphere reserves are nominated by national governments and designated by the MAB International Coordinating Council. The area of every BR also encompasses sites protected under the respective national systems or other internationally recognized areas (World Heritage Sites, Ramsar Wetlands, Natura 2000 sites, etc.).

In 2013, the World Network of Biosphere Reserves encompassed a total of 621 BRs in 117 countries, six of them on the territory of the Czech Republic (Krkonoše, Křivoklátsko, Šumava, Třeboň Basin, Bílé Karpaty and the Lower Morava BR).

# LOWER MORAVA BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The Lower Morava Biosphere Reserve was designated in July 2003 as an extension of the former Pálava Biosphere Reserve (designated in 1986), encompassing the Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape (LVCL) and the floodplain forests at the confluence of the Morava and Dyje Rivers.

In 2004, the Lower Morava Biosphere Reserve, Public Benefit Corporation, was established to procure fulfilment of BR functions on the basis of participatory management. The founding members of the corporation included Forests of the Czech Republic, State Enterprise, MND, a.s., Břeclav District Chamber of Commerce, the Czech Union of Nature Conservationists and the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic. In 2012, however, the Ministry of the Environment left due to internal reasons and has remained one of the partners of our PBC activities since.

Apart from the founding members, representatives of the Voluntary Association of Municipalities of the LVCL Region, Voluntary Association of the Mikulovsko Region Municipalities, Voluntary Association of the Podluží Region Municipalities, Břeclav District Chamber of Agriculture and Mendel University in Brno participate in Lower Morava BR management.

The territories of remaining Czech BRs are identical with those of the respective large-scale specially protected areas and owing to this arrangement, the fulfilment of BR tasks represents only a marginal part of the respective state nature conservation officials' worksheet. In the context of the Czech Republic, Lower Morava BR represents a unique concept of BR management in which representatives of municipalities, businesses and non-governmental organizations participate directly as well through the Board of Trustees. Moreover, the Lower Morava BR is the only Czech BR to give its employees full-time contracts.

**Lower Morava Biosphere Reserve, PBC, provides the following public benefit services:**

- organizational, institutional, factual and personnel provision of activities administered by the Lower Morava Biosphere Reserve (hereinafter BR) as part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves,
- participation in activities relevant to the Lower Morava BR, including the coordination of these activities with state administration bodies, municipal authorities, stakeholders, educational and scientific institutions, businesses, general public and other bodies,
- participation in mediating and procuring advisory, financial and coordinating services which relate to the Lower Morava BR and its development, in accordance with the UNESCO regulations on the World Network of Biosphere Reserves,
- safeguarding the commissioning, development and regular update of an open information database on the Lower Morava BR and on the scientific, economic and development activities relating to the area or existence of the BR,
- participation in publishing both periodic and non-periodic materials and proceedings, including informative and methodological publications printed, electronic, audio-visual and multimedia, as well as their presentation, distribution and sale,
- participation in educational activities in a spirit of promoting the principles of sustainable lifestyle, in particular those of nature and landscape conservation and the rational management of natural resources,
- providing information services for the general public,
- participation in organizing scientific conferences, forums, training courses and exhibitions relating to the Lower Morava BR,
- establishment and management of model facilities,
- fostering international cooperation in matters relating to the Lower Morava BR and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves,

- promoting and enforcing activities aimed at economic and demographic development of the Lower Morava BR and the entire region,
- providing mediatory services in cases of disputes and conflicts arising from the existence and activities of the Lower Morava BR.

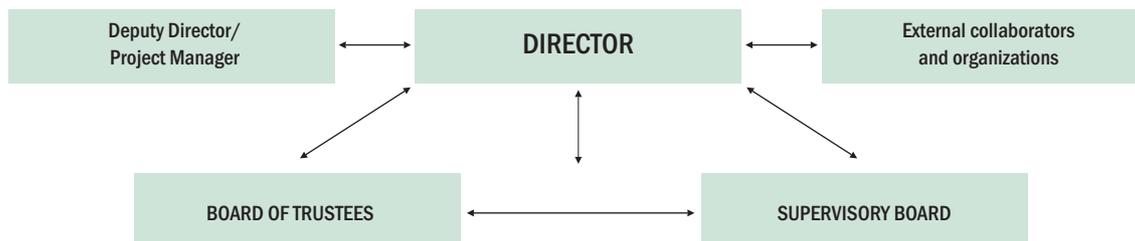
The corporation provides public benefit services under equal conditions with the objective to support all stakeholders and activities aimed at the

development of the BR territory in accordance with conditions and regulations stipulated by the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme.

All activities conducted in 2013 were in accordance with the 2005-2013 Action Plan and in concord with the conditions of the Man and the Biosphere Programme.

# ORGANIZATION CHART OF THE CORPORATION

Registered seat: Zámecké nám. 69, 691 44 Lednice  
Registration number: 269 38 171  
Legal form: Public Benefit Corporation



The governing bodies include the Board of Trustees, Supervisory Board and the Executive Director. The company body structure reflects the efforts towards the broadest participation of all stakeholders within the Biosphere Reserve.

The Executive Director acts as a statutory representative of the corporation.

### Composition of Lower Morava BR, PBC governing bodies in 2013:

#### Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is a nine-member managing body of the Biosphere Reserve which encompasses representatives of the founding members along with three municipality representatives of the regions whose territory the BR covers, a representative of the District Chamber of Agriculture and a representative of Mendel University in Brno, which simultaneously acts as the principal scientific advisory body of the BR.

<b>Libor Kabát</b>	Chairman	Municipalities of the LVCL Region
<b>Miroslav Svoboda</b>	Vice-Chairman	Forests of the Czech Republic, S.E.
<b>Petr Maděra</b>	2nd Vice-Chairman	Mendel University in Brno
<b>František Fabičovic</b>		Břeclav District Chamber of Commerce
<b>Ctirad Petrla</b>		Podluží Region
<b>Libor Ambrozek</b>		Czech Union of Nature Conservationists
<b>Ladislav Sečkář</b>		Břeclav District Chamber of Agriculture
<b>Pavel Kotásek</b>		MND, a.s.
<b>Vladislav Moravčík</b>		Mikulovsko Region

As of 2012, Mr. Stanislav Koukal, Head of the Pálava Protected Landscape Area Administration and the Regional Office of the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic, has been acting as a permanent guest of the Board of Trustees.

#### Supervisory Board

The Supervisory Board is a six-member supervisory body of the corporation. It includes representatives of the founding members, a joint representative of municipalities of the three regions whose territory the BR covers and a representative of Mendel University.

<b>Libor Opluštil</b>	Chairman	Czech Union of Nature Conservationists
<b>Zbyněk Parma</b>		MND, a.s.
<b>Miroslav Volařík</b>		Břeclav District Chamber of Commerce
<b>Vladimír Krchov</b>		Forests of the Czech Republic. State Enterprise
<b>Alena Salašová</b>		Mendel University
<b>Luboš Krátký</b>		Podluží, Mikulovsko and the Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape regions

In 2013 the Board of Trustees met six times and the Supervisory Board held one meeting.

In 2013 the Public Benefit Corporation employed two employees full-time.



## IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES IN 2013

The core of our activities in 2013 focused on continuation of projects launched earlier with the main objective to enhance biodiversity in the agricultural landscape of South Moravia. These projects aim to partially restore the landscape structure, create territorial systems of ecological stability (TSES) through planting of trees and establishing meadow communities in biocentres, biocorridors and interaction elements. Our PBC was in charge of preparation of project documentation on behalf of municipalities as projects holders, preparation and submission of applications for funding from the “Environment” Operational Programme, along with other implementation-related activities.

### Restoration of landscape vegetation in the Lužice u Hodonína cadastre

The key objective of this project was to establish a natural site in the vicinity of the municipality, which would provide a pleasing space for leisure time activities of local residents and children as well as an interesting forest steppe ecosystem enhancing the development of rare plant, animal and fungi species. The area in question had been partly degraded by illegal building material dumps and under threat of becoming overgrown with non-native tree and herb species.

The project aims to establish a forest steppe site of a natural character with mowed cultural “butterfly meadows”, interwoven with soft field roads and trails and groves of forest trees and native shrubs. Establishment of this element based on TSES biocentre principles will trigger a number of positive ecosystem changes in the surrounding cultural landscape. The proposed and implemented measures will enhance the biodiversity of all groups of living organisms. Succession processes will create ideal conditions for the enhancement and stabilization of populations of many species and will open possibilities for occupation of the newly established

ecological niches.

In 2013 the project obtained a firm funding commitment from the State Environmental Fund of the Czech Republic and tender procedures were launched. The implementation stage will be open in 2014 and the project is to be completed in 2015.

### Establishment and restoration of biocenters and TSES elements in the Pohořelice and Nová Ves cadastres, Brno-venkov District

A follow-up of a project launched in 2011, whose recipient is the Pohořelice municipality and which our PBC initiated and processed. Our PBC successfully applied for funding from the “Environment” Operational Programme in 2011. The interest area comprises vast stretches of arable land intersected by linear plots of land used as access roads, usually devoid of complementary linear greenery. The entire area shows a minimum ecological stability and is susceptible to wind erosion, which is why the establishment of two TSES biocenters was proposed, complementing the existing bio-corridors (a windbreak and the Jihlava River) with new interaction elements in the form of tree alleys and groves, where natural plant communities currently missing in the interest area will be established. Vast stretches of farmland will be divided by the interaction elements. The poly-functional role within the local TSES will then enhance the aesthetic and hygienic functions of the landscape.

The project received funding from the “Environment” Operational Programme. In 2013 the implementation stage was launched and is to be completed in 2015. This project represents probably the most extensive implementation project focusing on the establishment and complementation of South Moravian TSES to date. The proposed area to be planted with trees and shrubs combined with grassy areas amounts to

approximately 54 ha and the planned implementation cost is approx. CZK 33 mil.

### **Establishment and restoration of biocenters and TSES elements in the Vlasatice cadastre**

The key objective of this landscape project, which obtained a funding commitment from the “Environment” Operational Programme in 2013, is the establishment and enhancement of the existing TSES system functions along with the restoration of a number of habitats in the originally diverse cultural landscape. The area has been subject to long-term intensive farming and particularly in the 1960s – 1970s it was transformed into a cultural steppe with limited biodiversity.

The proposed measures will decrease the amount of soil loss, reduce the dust burden and improve moisture retention characteristics of the landscape. It is expected that the newly established basic TSES structure will be supplemented by related measures in the rural landscape, such as the establishment of transitions between field crops and linear elements, bird watering places and wetlands. Among other things, the enhanced environmental characteristics of the landscape will result in an increase in hare and partridge populations, which are important bioindicators of environmental quality of the rural landscape.

In 2013 the project obtained a firm funding commitment from the State Environmental Fund of the Czech Republic and tender procedures were launched. The implementation stage will be open in 2014 and the project is to be completed in 2015.

### **Establishment and restoration of biocenters and Territorial System of Ecological Stability (TSES) elements in the Drnholec cadastre**

The key objective of this complex landscape project is the establishment of a basic structure of the TSES system along with restoration of a number of habitats in a cultural landscape with an originally high habitat diversity.

The territory, on which the project focuses, is subject to intensive farm management and its vast stretches have been transformed into a cultural steppe with severely limited biodiversity. The establishment of TSES elements will positively enhance the ecosystem character at the landscape level. The proposed and implemented measures will decrease wind velocity and desiccation, reduce the destructiveness of rainstorms, decrease the temperature sum in the growing season or improve the soil moisture regime. Radical biodiversity enhancement can be expected in all groups of living organisms.

Cultivation and harvesting measures taken in the municipal forest stands represent an important follow-up project. The municipality of Drnholec took the decision to eliminate the danger of non-indigenous tree species spread into the newly established TSES and to create refuges for the development of invertebrate and fungi species in ancient and rotting trees and stumps.

In 2013 the project obtained a firm funding commitment from the State Environmental Fund of the Czech Republic and tender procedures were launched. The implementation stage will be open in 2014 and the project is to be completed in 2015.

### **Revision of the Lower Morava BR zoning**

In compliance with the Statutory Framework, BRs should contain one or more core zones, a buffer zone and a transitional zone which will allow the BR to meet all its functions. The Lower Morava BR zoning in its original design does not reflect the real state of land use or the latest developments of the MAB Programme. Moreover, it had not been discussed with the owners, users or managers of the areas affected, whose involvement in the zoning process undoubtedly enhances the acceptability and sustainability of the created zoning scheme. Owing to the fact that none of the remaining Czech BRs has adopted stakeholder participation in their zoning process, we had to turn to our Austrian colleagues in 2010 for qualified and informed help in preparation of the new zoning scheme. Improvement of the Lower Morava BR zoning was

therefore on the agenda of an international project called “Transboundary Information Exchange for Revision and Functional Improvement of Zonation in the Lower Morava Biosphere Reserve (Czech Republic)”, funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The project was promoted by Austrian company E.C.O. - Institut für Ökologie and the Lower Morava BR and was partnered by Wienerwald Biosphärenpark (Austria). Following this project, we have been collaborating with stakeholders since 2011 with the objective to prepare a joint zoning proposal which would ensure that all proposed zones within the Lower Morava BR meet their required functions and objectives and are accepted by all the stakeholders. In 2013, negotiations were underway discussing the suitable sites for BR core zones. The project is to be concluded in 2014.

#### **Support of public benefit activities provided by MND, a.s.**

MND, joint stock company, is one of the founding members of the Lower Morava BR, PBC, and the biggest Czech company dealing with surveying, crude oil and natural gas extraction. Companies of the MND holding are aware of their position and the consequent social and environmental responsibility. Their activities are therefore driven by an awareness of the environment, principles of sustaining environmental balance and fostering partnerships. MND is one of the major private donors in the South Moravian region supporting projects related to nature conservation and its sustainable development. The funding for public benefit activities, which we received in 2013, was used for the following purposes:

- provision for activities of the Lower Morava Biosphere Reserve, as part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves,
- participation in activities related to BR, including coordination of the said activities,
- mediation and procurement of advisory and coordinating services related to BR,
- updating the information database on BR,
- participation in educating the general public, procurement of further education and training of young people,

- organizing conferences, forums and training courses,
- promoting international cooperation in matters related to BR and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves,
- promoting and implementing activities aimed at the economic and demographic development of the BR and its region.

Thanks to the financial support provided by MND, a.s., we were capable of procuring public benefit services in unchanged conditions to support entities and activities whose primary aim is the development of the area of our BR in accordance with the conditions and regulations of the Man and the Biosphere Programme, as well as safeguarding the daily operation of the BR.

#### **Programmes implemented in collaboration with Forests of the Czech Republic, S.E.**

Forests of the Czech Republic, State Enterprise, are the principal manager of forest land in the country and within the Lower Morava BR itself. Its management strategy stresses the importance of sustainable forest management which safeguards the fulfillment of production and other functions of the managed forests. The company also acts as the most important administrator of protected areas and a key partner of nature conservation bodies in the Czech Republic. Forests of the Czech Republic, State Enterprise, as one of the founding members of Lower Morava BR, have been traditionally supporting our activities both inside and outside the BR. The collaboration has the form of support provided to the following programmes:

- a) Conservation of the natural and cultural diversity of cultural landscapes
- b) Cultural landscape management
- c) Environmental education and training
- d) Information and cooperation with the general public

The said programmes cover a broad scope of activities, all of which are in compliance with the statutes and the founding agreement of our PBC. Among other things, the programmes allow the implementation of land-



scape projects in collaboration with municipalities or educational activities. Thanks to the financial support from Forests of the Czech Republic, S.E., our BR succeeded in fulfilling the three principal functions stipulated by the MAB Programme and UNESCO binding documents.

### **Landscaping of the historic greenery on Hlohovecký Fishpond south bank**

This project may serve as an example of practical cultural landscape management. Its aim is to restore the habitat diversity of a park landscape on the bank of Hlohovecký Fishpond. Restoration of a well-kept nature park with ancient solitary trees, groves of young and old forest stands and herb-rich “butterfly” meadows will facilitate a number of positive ecosystem changes in the cultural landscape. The proposed and implemented measures will enhance biodiversity of all groups of living organisms. The biological function of permanent high and low vegetation as habitats interwoven with a number of ecotone zones will be restored.

Our PBC prepared the project and applied for funding from the “Environment” Operational Programme. In 2013 the project obtained a firm funding commitment from the State Environmental Fund of the Czech Republic and tender procedures were launched. The implementation stage will be open in 2014 and the project is to be completed in 2015.

This project is a follow-up of activities conducted under the Restoration of the Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape Structures” and should feature in several concurrent projects whose aim is the landscaping of the north and south banks of the Lednice Fishponds in collaboration with the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic and Forests of the Czech Republic. Sadly, the remaining projects could not have been implemented so far due to system and legislative reasons.

### **Interactive maps of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and the Lower Morava BR**

The aim of the object was to create two electronic interactive maps. The

first contains principal information about the MAB Programme, including the basic characteristics and a brief history of the MAB Programme, plus a description of all world BRs. The project drew on materials prepared under the MAB Programme in collaboration with the Autonomous Organization for National Parks of the Spanish Ministry for Environment and Marine and Rural Affairs and the Secretariat of the MAB Programme. The second map focuses on the regional level and depicts individual municipalities along with the natural and cultural highlights of the Lower Morava BR.

The maps were presented at the EUROMAB 2013 Conference in Canada, which was attended by representatives of European and North American biosphere reserves. The interactive map of world BRs received a particularly favourable response and was presented during events commemorating ten years since the designation of the Lower Morava BR and during presentations of collaboration with its partners. The feedback from those who had the chance to test it in practice was highly positive. The maps have also been successfully used as teaching and presentation tools during conferences, workshops, seminars, public discussions, during lectures for the general public and specialized expert groups, and they were also used to promote best practices in sustainable use of natural resources both in the Czech Republic and abroad.

The project received funding from Forests of the Czech Republic, State Enterprise.

### **Performing the duties of Site Manager of the Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape, World Heritage Site**

Lower Morava BR, PBC, treats the issue of cultural landscape management as a sophisticated system with numerous specific requirements, particularly in the area of the Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape. These requirements are inherent in the obligation to ensure protection, management and sustainable development upon preserving the outstanding value of the landscape inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1996. The complexity of the task and the necessity to ensure interdisciplinary coordination, communication and continuous

awareness of all the stakeholders in the area require a full involvement of a coordinator, or the LVCL Site Manager, as an objective moral and expert authority. Lower Morava BR, PBC, was nominated for this post by the Interdisciplinary Workgroup for LVCL in 2007.

In 2013 we provided all labour-law requirements for the LVCL Site Manager, secured the procurement of site-managerial tasks in collaboration with experts and participated in all the relevant activities in LVCL. As a legal entity we fulfilled the role of a platform intended for continuous interdisciplinary exchange of expert information and coordination. This principle was safeguarded through active participatory management in our PBC thanks to the fact that all key LVCL stakeholders are represented in the Board of Trustees and other governing bodies of our BR and thanks to our direct participation in the Interdisciplinary Workgroup for LVCL, which was established by a government decree in 2000.

Sadly, a system of basic (core) funding of LVCL Site Manager operations as a commissioned, long-term conceptual public benefit service for LVCL was not secured in 2013 either.

### **Lednice Chateau multi-functional centre**

The project “Lednice Chateau Riding Hall – multi-functional centre” focuses on the restoration of stables belonging to the state-owned Lednice Chateau and their new utilization. The rehabilitated building will come to life through a newly designed programme scheme, which will immediately follow restoration works concluded at the end of 2013. The new multi-functional centre will provide spaces for educational and cultural activities. These programmes will primarily focus on cultural landscapes, using the Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape, World Heritage Site, as a model example. Work meetings focusing on the “Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape” exhibition content and design continued throughout 2013. Their agenda focused on thematic areas and sources required for commissioning of the scenario of main exhibitions on the premises of the Lednice Chateau Riding Hall. Finishing touches related

to the Lower Morava BR, Man and the Biosphere Programme and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves exhibition, focusing on our partner biosphere reserves and presenting the programme in different parts of the world, were also completed.

Funding of the project is provided by European Structural Funds through the Integrated Operational Programme (IOP) “Bringing Cultural Monuments Back to Life”.

### **Educational trail in Starý Poddvorov**

An educational trail, which offers an interesting entry to the village from a bus stop, was created in collaboration between our PBC, MND a.s. and the municipality of Starý Poddvorov. The information boards provide information on the importance of organic viticulture for the environment and the natural highlights of the site and its surroundings. A small display on a hillock by the village presents MND mining activities.

### **EUROMAB Canada 2013**

The international EuroMAB network unites all European and North American Biosphere Reserves under the MAB Programme. A conference attended by representatives of biosphere reserves and national committees is organized every two years to evaluate the activities of the past period and set the priorities and further direction of the MAB Programme in the upcoming period. The EuroMAB 2013 conference took place on 15-19 October 2013 in the Frontenac Arch BR, Canada and was attended by over 190 participants from all around the world, making it the largest EuroMAB conference in history. The theme of this year's conference was “Engaging our Communities” to highlight the collaboration of a variety of groups in implementing the MAB objectives. Individual conference sessions focused on discussions related to the implementation of recommendations of EuroMAB 2011 in Sweden. A new procedure adopted by the MAB International Coordinating Council was presented as another point on the conference agenda. It concerns the exit

strategy for biosphere reserves which did not submit the mandatory periodic reviews or whose reviews revealed that they are either not fulfilling or only partially fulfilling the relevant criteria. This revolutionary step in the MAB Programme history will optimize the operations of all BRs worldwide. Lower Morava Biosphere Reserve, PBC, its founding members, partners and projects were presented at our “presentation stall” throughout the conference in the form of publications, annual reports, the “Man, Landscape, Forest...” DVD and a poster called “Lower Morava BR – a feasible model for cultural landscape management”. It was the only public presentation of BRs and the MAB Programme in the Czech Republic at the conference.

The official presentation of a new interactive map of world BRs, which our PBC prepared in collaboration with partners and with funding from Forests of the Czech Republic as part of events commemorating the 10th anniversary of Lower Morava BR designation, had a particularly favourable response.

### 2003–2013 periodic review of Lower Morava BR

UNESCO General Conference at its 28<sup>th</sup> session adopted a resolution defining the criteria for biosphere reserve designation. Article 9 stipulates an obligation to submit a period review every ten years to the MAB Secretariat by the state where the given BR is situated.

The form which is to be completed is provided to help the states to prepare their national reports and to update the data available to the Secretariat on the biosphere reserve concerned. The report should enable the International Coordinating Council of the MAB Programme to review how each biosphere reserve is fulfilling the criteria of Article 4 of the Statutory Framework, and its three basic functions in particular.

The information presented in this periodic review will be used by UNESCO for the following:

a) for examination of the biosphere reserve by the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves and by the MAB International Coordinating Council,

b) for use in a worldwide accessible information system UNESCO-MABnet, and in publications facilitating communication and interaction among entities interested in BRs throughout the world.

Lower Morava BR prepared the periodic review for the first time, notably in its new extended form which has been effective from the second half of 2013. The review was worked on and consulted with members of the PBC governing bodies throughout 2013. At the beginning of 2014, a workshop was organized for the Board of Trustees and Supervisory Board members, during which the document was finalized. The review was submitted through the Permanent Delegation of the Czech Republic to UNESCO, where it was reviewed by the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves. The outcome will be available in June 2014 upon its approval by the MAB International Coordinating Council.

### Mount of Olives in Mikulov

Within the Czech Republic, Svatý kopeček (or Holy Hill) in Mikulov represents a unique example of a cultural landscape blending natural and historical monuments, where human work resonates with respect for nature. Spiritually, the Holy Hill was composed as the Way of the Cross. Its south-western slope bears the name Mount of Olives. At its foot is situated a site known as Dolní palouček (the Lower Clearing), which has an interesting form of a former limestone quarry and where non-native shrub and tree species were planted at the onset of the last century.

Holy Hill houses rare remnants of native thermophilic oak forests with pubescent oak, European cornel and mahaleb cherry. The forests are notable for their open character, with sparsely stocked forest clearings and forest edges. This type of open forests, or Pannonian groves (commonly referred to as forest steppes), represent one of Mikulov landmarks and attract large numbers of researchers and visitors. Unfortunately, unprofessional interventions conducted in the past disrupted their natural structure. The municipality therefore established collaboration with a number of experts and institutions in their effort to at least partially restore the original forest-steppe character of the site.

The project of restoring close-to-nature conditions in a former limestone quarry took inspiration and information from a Diploma Thesis of Ms. Františka Šatná of the Faculty of Horticulture at Mendel University published in 2012. The thesis discussed possible changes in the said site under the title “Restoration of the Park under Mount of Olives in Mikulov”.

The project involved the removal of ill and unsuitable tree and shrub species, along with planting of new trees. In 2014 shrubs will be planted and grass-herbaceous formations corresponding to the natural habitat of the site will be established. In the long-term horizon the site is to acquire typical features of an open pubescent oak forest with admixed European cornel and mahaleb cherry on limestone outcrops with their unique steppe vegetation. Newly placed benches and information panels with important historical and natural science information will enhance the experience of people visiting this unique place.

The project called “Pannonian grove under Mount of Olives – Reminiscences of the Garden of Gethsemane” represents a joint work of a team of experts. The project is implemented by Lower Morava Biosphere Reserve, PBC, the Pálava Protected Landscape Area Administration and the Regional Office of the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic in collaboration with the Mikulov municipality and Regional Museum in Mikulov.

The project received funding from MND a.s. and the Mikulov municipality.

### **PEFC membership of Lower Morava BR, PBC**

Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC) is an independent, non-profit international organization registered in

Geneva, which represents a framework for creating and mutual recognition of independent national certification systems. The Czech Republic is one of the 11 founding member states which formed PEFC Council in 1999.

In 2012 our PBC accepted an official offer to become a member of PEFC CR, an interest association of legal persons acting as the national managing body of the Czech system of forest certification. PEFC CR unites representatives of forestry, wood processing industry and other interest groups. Individual members are divided into three chambers based on their respective dominant fields of activities.

The “other interest groups” chamber, of which our PBC is a member, unites PEFC CR members representing other forest management organizations, such as educational and research institutions, trade unions, environmental organizations, state administration and other. The current members include Forests of the Czech Republic, S.E., Faculty of Forest Management of Czech University of Life Sciences, Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology of Mendel University in Brno, Czech Forestry Association and the Trade Union of Wood-processing Industry and Forest Management. As a PEFC CR member, our PBC endorsed sustainable forest management and its contribution to enhancing biodiversity and the environment in 2013 as well. It also gained access to independent control of sustainable forest management, which could prove to have a positive effect particularly in the ongoing revision of Lower Morava BR zoning.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

Out of the activities which representatives of our PBC implemented or participated in throughout 2013 we would like to mention the following:

### **Participation in a workshop on UNESCO World Heritage Site Management Plans held in the residence of the Mayor of the City of Prague (7. 2. 2013)**

The event was attended by official representatives of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, National Heritage Institute Prague, ICOMOS and managers of all Czech World Heritage Sites. The presentation delivered by our PBC provided information about our experience related to the design and update of several LVCL Management Plans and the efforts to institutionalize the role of LVCL Site Manager as a coordinator of activities conducted within the largest World Heritage Site in the Czech Republic.

### **Meetings discussing the supra-regional biocorridor on the right bank of Nové Mlýny Reservoir in the Dolní Věstonice cadastre (8 and 11. 2. 2013)**

Following an initiative of the mayor of Dolní Věstonice, our PBC was asked for expert help related to a disagreement in the recreational zone in the Dolní Věstonice cadastre. The issue was addressed at an expert consultation at the Nature Conservation Agency office in Brno. We agreed on steps which should help to solve the problem by including the solution in the newly prepared spatial development plan to make sure that neither the development plans of the municipality nor biodiversity protection are jeopardized.

Our PBC initiated a meeting at the Department of the Environment of the South Moravian Regional Authority to discuss necessary changes and a possible solution to the problem within the South Moravian regional development plan related to a contradiction between the supra-regional

biocorridor on the right bank of Nové Mlýny Reservoirs as included in the plans and the reality. During the meeting the context of the case was explained and expert help from JUDr. Nesvatba was agreed.

### **Participation in the People and the Landscape II International Conference at the Moravský Kras Protected Landscape Area (4. 4. 2013)**

Our PBC delivered a presentation called “Collaboration of Lower Morava BR, PBC, with municipalities in 2011–2012 and examples of projects designed to improve the state of rural landscape”. The conference was organized by the Faculty of Horticulture of Mendel University in Brno.

### **Field excursion to Lower Morava BR for foresters from the Hořovice Division of Military Forests and Farms (11–12. 4. 2013)**

In collaboration with the Židlochovice Forest Enterprise we presented the issues of floodplain forest management and Lower Morava BR activities in the South Moravian cultural landscape (19 persons).

### **Presentation delivered for mayors of Bílé Karpaty municipalities and guests from Slovakia and Austria (6. 6. 2013)**

Upon request from Mgr. Antonín Okénka, mayor of Nová Lhota, we delivered a presentation introducing Lower Morava BR and its activities during an international conference on soil and the role municipalities play in its protection and sustainable use. In the discussion which followed, mayors of municipalities within the Bílé Karpaty region expressed their appreciation of our PBC activities and their interest to establish collaboration in joint projects which would focus on soil protection and proper cultural landscape management. The possibility of transboundary

collaboration with Austrian and Slovak partners was discussed. The event was attended by 45 people.

### **Lecture on Lower Morava BR for international students of the Mendel University Faculty of Horticulture in Lednice (10. 7. 2013)**

Our PBC co-organized a summer school under CEEPUS (Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies). This year's topic was "The Potential and Specifics of Landscape Architecture Monuments Management". In this respect, LVCL provides an ideal landscape space where the sometimes conflicting requirements of cultural heritage and nature protection as well as recreation mingle, which students were allowed to experience first-hand and solve in the course of their projects. The summer school was organized in a form of workshops, where 20 students worked in four mixed-nationality groups.

### **Final presentation of future garden and landscape architects attending the "MENDELU Summer School in Lednice" (17. 7. 2013)**

Four international student teams presented their projects of landscaping of spaces in the vicinity of Lednice Fishponds, whose aim was to propose solutions of tourism and leisure activity development upon respecting the nature and cultural monument protection in the area. Our PBC designed the major theme and individual concepts in collaboration with research assistants of the Faculty of Horticulture in Lednice. The creative solutions and graphic visualizations of the assignments were highly inspirational for all the present parties. The area of LVCL and Lower Morava BR proves to be ideal for this type of education and for testing the skills of future landscape and garden architects through experiential field training. Our PBC and Mendel University established a long-term and mutually enriching collaborative relationship in this field.

### **Presentation of PBC activities in Skalica in Slovakia delivered for mayors of municipalities from the Slovak part of the Bílé**

### **Karpaty Mts. and for guests from the Czech Republic and Austria (18. 7. 2013)**

As part of an international conference and the SONДАР project (soil protection) information day, lectures and information materials were prepared to raise public awareness about the importance of soil and with the help of scientific information to enforce good practices in territorial planning with the objective to improve soil protection. ELSA, or the European Land and Soil Alliance, is an association of cities, towns and rural districts with relevant local authorities whose aim is to make an active contribution to sustainable soil and landscape use. Extensive information on this subject was delivered as part of the agenda.

Our presentation "*Examples of collaboration between Lower Morava BR, PBC, and local municipalities in the field of environment and cultural landscape management*" was well received by representatives of the Skalica municipality and other organizers. They came up with the idea of a transboundary biosphere reserve, as the PBC philosophy of promoting amiable collaboration with local municipalities and landscape users appeals to them. They are willing to meet and discuss the issue further. As stakeholders they are prepared to become actively involved in transboundary collaboration in the form of international projects. The event was attended by approximately 55 people.

### **Meeting in Hohenau (Austria) discussing the possibilities of coordinated collaboration and a joint project of preventative mosquito control measures (12. 8. 2013)**

Following an extensive preparation, our PBC initiated and arranged a meeting with a potential partner regarding a project of international coordination of preventative measures against outbreak mosquitoes in the floodplain of the Dyje and Morava Rivers. The meeting was attended by Vybíral (PBC), Šebesta (KHS Brno) and Smečka (Mikulov Development Agency) representing the Czech side and by Hans Jerrentrup (biologist and coordinator from Verein Biologische Gelsenregulierung, a company focusing on biological mosquito control along the Dyje and Morava Rivers) and Ruth Trinkler (March-Thaya-Auen) from the Austrian side. Upon

receiving information about the situation on the Austrian side, where the system of monitoring and controlled measures in nine municipalities along the Dyje and Morava has already been incorporated in everyday practice, partner and expert collaboration under a Small Project Fund was pledged. A well-established town or municipality (Břeclav, Lanžhot,...) would be the optimal project holder, with RNDr. Oldřich Šebesta, a professional entomologist from the Regional Public Health Office (KHS), as the future expert coordinator. Our PBC could act as a subcontractor within the project, organizing expert events or other required activities. Our PBC is prepared to submit an application for funding in collaboration with RNDr. Šebesta and the Lanžhot municipality in the new EU planning cycle, i.e. in 2014 at the earliest.

#### **Off-site meeting of the Czech MAB National Committee in Třeboň (12. 9. 2013)**

Information about the position of the Czech MAB National Committee within the Czech Academy of Sciences was delivered – it is evaluated as one of the best among the 38 existing committees and is considered as multidisciplinary. It was noted that the MAB Programme has an important position within the world structures of UNESCO and UN.

#### **International conference of the Friends of Socotra Association in Lednice (13.–16. 9.2013)**

The Friends of Socotra Association is an international non-profit organization promoting the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources of the Socotra Archipelago. Its other goals include support of sustainable improvement in the standard of living of the archipelago inhabitants. It is based in Great Britain but has members from many different European countries, the Middle East, Africa and America. The group was formed in 2001 in order to bring together people with a scientific background and those with a more general interest in the Archipelago of Socotra. The Association holds regular general meetings in countries where its members come from. This year's 12th Annual General Meeting was held in Lednice. It was co-organized by Mendel University in

Brno, its Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology and Faculty of Horticulture and our PBC. Apart from organizational issues and provision of presentation materials for 35 conference participants, our PBC organized two field excursions.

#### **Field excursion for four-grade students of the Czech Academy of Forestry in Trutnov (18.–19. 9. 2013)**

A two-day field excursion in the area of Lower Morava BR – Pálava PLA, LVCL and floodplain forests, including a lecture and presentation on our BR and PBC. Attended by 35 people.

#### **Presentation “Landscape projects – sharing Lower Morava BR experience with collaboration with municipalities” (29. 10. 2013)**

A requested lecture delivered to mayors of the Malé Karpaty region in Budmerice in Slovakia. It was accompanied with a presentation under SONДАР, European soil protection project. Attended by 45 people.

#### **Presentation “Think globally, act locally” (31. 10. 2013)**

Presentation about Lower Morava BR activities focusing on TSES projects in South Moravian municipalities. Delivered as part of a European project of Mendel University in Brno studying the possible impact of climate change in Europe. Attended by 38 people from the scientific and university community from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Kyrgyzstan.

#### **Workshop “Zagreb – Brno” (22. 11. 2013)**

A work coordinating meeting of representatives of Mendel University in Brno, Zagreb University, Palacký University in Olomouc and Lower Morava BR discussing international collaboration in the field of “Floodplain forests and their universal importance”. This activity is a follow-up of a workshop on Central European floodplain forests organized in Lipovljany (Croatia) in 2012. Ing Vybíral attended the workshop on behalf of the PBC.



## COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITIES, TRAINING AND EDUCATION

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Environmental education and training at Lower Morava BR, PBC, take the form of individual lectures, excursions or long-term projects in collaboration with partner institutions. University students and professional associations, along with representatives of state administration and local governments are our principal target groups. Within the BR, training both of Czech and international students of Mendel University in Brno takes place and our PBC is involved directly in these events. Upon request PBC employees organize specialized field trips for students of other Czech or foreign universities and for professional groups. In 2013 our lecturing activities focused on local government representatives both on the Czech and Slovak sides of the state border, as well as on the general public and visitors to the region.

Following an agreement with the town of Břeclav, lectures organized under the patronage of our PBC took place every Monday in July and August 2013, delivered by specialists from different fields and accompanied with slide shows. The lecturers were carefully selected to present Lower Morava BR from their different but complementing perspectives: an entomologist, ornithologist, health inspector, historian, landscape architect, nature conservationist, ichthyologist or a landscape manager. The lecturers were designed for the general public and promoted well ahead of their schedule in the cultural event calendar and in electronic media. Each lecture was concluded with an open discussion.

## EXPECTED DEVELOPMENT OF OUR ACTIVITIES IN 2014

In 2014 Lower Morava BR, PBC, will focus on expert and logistic help provided to municipalities in the course of implementing projects which were prepared in collaboration with the municipalities in 2011–2012, were applied successfully in the State Environmental Fund of the Czech Republic and obtained funding for implementation in 2013–2015. Their scope covers tree planting in restored territorial systems of ecological

stability (TSES – municipalities of Pohořelice, Vlasatice, Drnholec, Novosedly, Lednice, Hlohovec) and a small-scale nature park (Lužice). 2014 will be marked with increased PR activities focusing on the 10th anniversary of the establishment of Lower Morava BR, Public Benefit Corporation.

## DONORS AND PARTNERS

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With respect to its management, the Lower Morava Biosphere, Public Benefit Corporation, as a non-profit entity is striving to secure long-term funding for all its activities.

Our activities and projects implemented both in the Lower Morava Biosphere Reserve and outside it would not be possible without the

funding of grant and support programmes, nor without the contributions from individual donors and project partners. We wish to express our thanks to all those without whose financial support we would not be able to fulfil our mission.

**MND, a.s.**

**Forests of the Czech Republic, State Enterprise**

**Alca Plast, s.r.o.**

**Rocknet, s.r.o.**

**Zahrada Olomouc, s.r.o.**

**Voluntary Association of Municipalities of the LVCL Region**

**Vojanovy sady, spol. s r.o.**

**Petr Maděra**

**and Miroslav Volařík**