

EUROPARC's 2nd TransParcNet Meeting

27 to 30 April, 2010 in Illmitz

(1) WORK PHASE ON CHALLENGES OF TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION

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Method applied: After Action Review (AAR)

This method was developed by the US army. It is neither best practice nor a criticism; it does not judge success or failure. It is mainly a feed-back process, a neutral reflection of what happened. The method balances the goals that were to be accomplished, the implemented activities and the actual achievements. It attempts to discover WHY there might have been a gap between vision (objectives) and reality (real outcome) and WHAT can be LEARNED from these findings for the future behavior.

Example for AAR procedure (not related to TB cooperation):

- ❖ What should have been achieved (goals)?
Some rare orchid species growing on a meadow should be protected from being trampled.
- ❖ What activities / measures have been taken to achieve the goals?
A sign was posted "Keep of the meadow, no trespassing".
- ❖ What happened instead? What was actually achieved?
People still entered the meadow as it was a popular picnic spot. The orchids were trampled.
- ❖ What are possible reasons for the gap between vision and reality?
The people did not respect the ban as they were used to enter the meadow and they did not want to give up their previous behavior just because of some plant species.
- ❖ What could I learn from this example to improve my performance and achieve my goals in the future?
As it is quite difficult to change people's habits you could use a trick to achieve your goals. You could post another sign, saying "Be aware of snakes". With that sign, probably almost nobody would dare to enter the meadow for a picnic.

The AAR method was intended to facilitate the exchange of experiences from the daily work (related to transboundary cooperation) amongst the participants.

(2) SUMMARY OF WORK PHASE RESULTS

2.1 MAIN CHALLENGES OF TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION

(according to examples given by participants)

- **DIFFERENCES** (different classifications, definitions, regulations, laws, time scales, priorities and authorities)
 - > Neusiedler See (AT) – Fertő-Hanság (HU): Joint core area, but in Austria strict hunting regulations cannot be completely fulfilled;
 - > Thayatal (AT) – Podyjí (CZ): Restrictions for fishery are less strict on Czech side than on Austrian side;
 - > Thayatal (AT) – Podyjí (CZ): Commission for European Diploma recommended that Thayatal

NP should remove or least reduce impact of dams; but Podyjí NP was not given the same advice with the result that the Czech part has currently different priorities than the Austrian part.

- > Krkonoše (CZ) – Karkonosze (PL): Different regulations with respect to safety regulations; Polish NP is responsible for safety of tourists, Czech NP not; Czech part was ready to open certain areas for climbers, Polish side not;
- > Krkonoše (CZ) – Karkonosze (PL): Different classifications for forest habitats; problems in using a joint database; for the harmonisation of the classification, experts were consulted from both sides of the border; this work needed a lot of money but it was quite important;
- > Maas-Schwalm-Nette (DE, NL): There are different definitions of what is a Nature Park in Germany and the Netherlands;

- **LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

- > Neusiedler See (AT) – Fertő-Hanság (HU): Austrians do not speak Hungarian;
- > Prealpi Giulie (IT) – Triglav (SL): Only few staff members speak English or the respective language of the neighboring country;
- > Inari-Vätsäri (FI) – Øvre-Pasvik (NO) – Pasvik Zapovednik (RU): Almost nobody speaks all three languages; English and Russian is spoken in the transboundary meetings;

- **BARRIERS IN PEOPLE'S MINDS**

- > Krkonoše (CZ) – Karkonosze (PL): Despite of belonging to the same Schengen area, still there seem to be barriers in people's minds; the area does not present itself as one mountain area;
- > Krkonoše (CZ) – Karkonosze (PL): Employees take transboundary cooperation less serious (national issues are considered more important). Possible reason: different structures and size of respective park administrations → different time capacities for cooperation;

- **SUSTAINABLE FINANCING**

- > Inari-Vätsäri (FI) – Øvre-Pasvik (NO) – Pasvik Zapovednik (RU): As there is a permanent lack of money, in Inari-Vätsäri park one full-time position was dedicated to raising funds.
- > Prealpi Giulie (IT): The budget was shortened; local authorities are only little interested in transboundary cooperation.
- > Maas-Schwalm-Nette (DE, NL): There is always a lack of time and finances because working across borders takes double time; people have to be patient; a key issue is the personal engagement of single persons;

- **OUTSIDE (POLITICAL) INFLUENCE**

- > Saxon Switzerland (DE) – Bohemian Switzerland (CZ): Both parks agreed on undergoing EUROPARC's certification process; however the procedure is not finished yet due to political constraints from the Saxon authorities; inflexible authorities have to be calculated.
- > Bavarian Forest (DE) – Šumava (CZ): By signing a joint Memorandum of Understanding both parks agreed on a certain percentage of unmanaged core zone (forest area); in the papers of the Czech authorities the goal of having unmanaged forest area was mentioned but the percentage of the proposed area was lower than fixed in the MoU;
- > Bavarian Forest (DE) – Šumava (CZ): In February 2010 there was a decision to have bilateral task forces, but two weeks later a key person from the Czech side was fired; as the key person who spoke English is now missing, a document which should have been already

signed is not finished yet;

> Inari-Vätsäri (FI) – Øvre-Pasvik (NO) – Pasvik Zapovednik (RU): Still there is a strict border between Europe and Russia; border crossing is only allowed with a visa; the proposal that within 30 km local people should be allowed to cross the border was still not approved; however more awareness for opening the border has been raised; the time has to be “right” to address such big issues; big goals shall be divided into little milestones;

- **HANDLING ADDITIONAL WORK LOAD**

> Kosterhavet (SE) - Ytre Hvaler (NO): The transboundary cooperation started just recently; the financial management of the first joint INTERREG project was quite difficult; it was a lot of work, they were not used to that instrument, too little priorities were set.

- **MONITORING**

Prealpi Giulie (IT) – Triglav (SL): Currently there is no joint monitoring process.

2.2 RESULTS OF WORKING GROUPS

HOW TO OVERCOME BARRIERS (BARRIERS IN PEOPLE’S MINDS, LANGUAGE)?

(presented by Michal Palka, Šumava NP)

Key message: Borders are essential elements for transboundary cooperation. This means that borders should be kept – however WITHOUT BEING AN OBSTACLE. Cultural differences are a driving force for people visiting cross-border areas. Only for ecological reasons cross-border areas should be managed as if there would be no border at all.

(Contribution of Alois Lang: The Biosphere Reserve Rhön is managed by three Federal States of Germany (Bavaria, Hesse and Thuringia). The transboundary cooperation within one country can be similar or even more challenging than between two countries. During a MAB meeting staff members of the biosphere reserve expressed their “regret” about the reunification of Germany as the border between Eastern and Western Germany was the most important combining element for all three parts of the Rhön. Without the border they have only little in common.)

The barrier in people’s mind can be tackled by

- Presenting the cross-border area as ONE natural area in the public;
- Organising informal events to build trust and friendship.

The language barrier was considered to be the easiest problem to be solved:

- Use English (commonly used language),
- Learn the language of the partner country (both parts),
- Organise exchange programs for the staff,
- Encourage staff of both parks to use the partner language (learning a foreign languages is not a problem, but daring to use it!!).

HOW TO INCREASE PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE?

(presented by Alois Lang, Neusiedler See NP)

Key message: In order to achieve public acceptance for your park and your cross border activities, the local / regional public has to be addressed. In your communication you should focus on the benefits provided by your cross-border park (economic development for marginalised regions, regional identity and a high quality of life).

The “public” can be divided into two important groups

- Local/regional public
- International public

Your park should be able to “survive the locals”. It is by far easier to gain the acceptance of foreigners than of locals. Normally the acceptance rises with the distance to the park area. Visitors are a quite important factor for building acceptance. Locals tend to perceive tourism as positive impact of a protected area as it’s a good source of income. So in order to gain added value for the local inhabitants, you have to attract visitors by providing good material, infrastructure and services (e.g. nice accommodation, tasty food, amicable people, sport and hiking facilities, information available in different languages). It should be considered that the image of park in the local and national media is also of great importance.

Measures to increase the acceptance:

- Inform local people about the benefits (esp. opinion-leaders, multipliers, journalists);
- Use appropriate arguments (economy, identity, health, etc.);
- Work together with local and regional authorities (even in projects);
- Participate in projects which are not only related to nature conservation but also to cultural values;
- Make local businesses your partners (wine makers, restaurant, hotel owners);
- Cooperate with the educational sector (schools, Non-Profit-Organisations).

HOW TO OVERCOME DIFFERENT LEGAL REGULATIONS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE A JOINT MANAGEMENT? (presented by Stefano Santi, Prealpi Giulie Nature Park)

Key message: So far no joint management plan exists for transboundary protected area complexes in Europe. Due to different regulations and laws this might also not be feasible in the near future. Maybe it is enough to agree on a common vision, on common goals and strategies. Each park is then free to achieve these goals within its own legislative background. However, a joint management may be important for certain zones (e.g. core zones). Thereby it is important to harmonise the time management of certain activities.

HOW TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE FINANCING?

(presented by Leo Reyrink, Maas-Schwalm-Nette)

Key message: Transboundary cooperation does not only need money, but also time resources allocated to cross-border issues. Therefore, the transboundary cooperation should be integrated into the annual work plan of both parks. Funding should be secured not only for short term projects, but also for long term activities.

Sources for funding:

- Interreg A is the main funding source for cross-border cooperation; the money is easy accessible as you deal with regional decision-makers whom you normally know.
- Interreg IVC is much more complicated, the success factor is quite low.
- Regional authorities may be addressed to provide funding. Focus on the benefits provided by your transboundary cooperation to assure their financial contribution.
- Funds can be raised by NGOs or companies (sponsoring).
- Fees can be taken for certain activities, such as excursions or visits of certain sites of interest. In Europe charging entrance fees for protected areas is controversially discussed; most people think access to nature should be for free (although they are willing to pay for other services, such as entrance fees for Disneyland).

(3) NEXT STEPS

3.1 QUESTIONNAIRE ON EXTERNALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

In cooperation with STEC Leo Reyrink will coordinate the distribution and analysis of a questionnaire on transboundary projects which have been funded externally. The knowledge on externally funded projects should provide more insight in funding opportunities and trigger ideas for new projects.

Questions which should be answered by the TransParcNet members:

- Which partners have done externally funded projects?
- How were the projects funded?
- What was the budget?
- Project name and duration?
- Partners included?
- Project leader?
- What have been the results?
- How much money, time invested into TB cooperation (estimation)?

3.2 THEMATIC TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETINGS

Two issues should be addressed in the next TransParcNet meetings:

- Sustainable funding (based on analysis derived from questionnaire)
- Communication strategies (in order to overcome the barrier in people's minds)

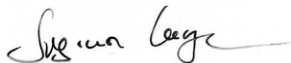
3.3 BROCHURE ON TRANSPARCNET

A brochure on the TransParcNet will be compiled and designed by Sigrun (funds provided by Heidehof Foundation). The main target group of this brochure will be the TransParcNet members and potential new members which are interested in transboundary cooperation. The brochure will display EUROPARC's principles, all certified cross-border complexes in Europe and some best practice example from each area.

A colourful picture book on the certified cross-border areas may be produced later on. It could be used for raising awareness on transboundary cooperation in the regional context (target group: mayors, regional decision-makers, etc.)

Minutes taken by Sigrun Lange

Munich, 6 May 2010

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sigrun Lange', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.