



**EUROPARC**  
F E D E R A T I O N

## **Study visit 2014**

### **Report to the Alfred Toepfer Nature Heritage Scholarship and Europarc Federation**

**Topic:** Implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy in the European Protected Areas

**Proposal:** Linking policy and practice: The EU Biodiversity Strategy in management of the transboundary Alpine Protected Areas

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## **Summary**

*The study visit to the transboundary protected areas, Prealpi Giulie Natural Park in Italy and the Triglav National Park in Slovenia aimed to explore links between political objectives (EU biodiversity strategy) and day-to-day implementation and management in these protected areas. The visits to two parks demonstrated that day-to-day practices in these institutions comply with the general European approach, especially, in regards to public engagement and searching the way to balance between biodiversity conservation and social welfare tasks.*

## **Background**

Protected areas (PAs) all over the world is one of the key mechanisms for biodiversity conservation. The loss of biodiversity, in turn, is one of the most severe global environmental problems. Despite existing efforts worldwide to address this problem, progress is rather slow and marginal. The accumulated experience provides insights that relative success is possible when the policy objectives are supported by comprehensive local actions, as well as essential funding.

The European Union (EU) biodiversity policy is an interesting example to scrutinize since it aims to approach the issue of biodiversity not solely from conservation perspective, but includes other sectors directly impacting biodiversity in the policy framework as well. Another characteristic feature of the EU policy is that it operates at several governance levels. Thus, the decisions taken for all twenty eight member states must be transposed into the national law and implemented locally, allowing for a certain degree of adjustment. The overall success or failure of the policy implementation at large extent depends on the day-to-day work of protected areas all over Europe.

The EU wide network of PAs Natura 2000 has been established as a key policy mechanism, although other forms of national nature protection, national parks, nature reserves etc. also constitute the architecture of protected areas in Europe. Furthermore, Natura 2000 sites in some countries are still under construction in terms of their management and restoration, whereas, national parks throughout Europe accumulate a lot of experience related to the nature and biodiversity conservation and policy implementation.

Therefore, the project aims to explore links between political objectives (EU biodiversity strategy) and day-to-day implementation, i.e. management activities of the transboundary protected areas in the Alps (Prealpi Giulie Natural Park, Italy and Triglav National Park, Slovenia).

For this, the following aspects of PAs work were examined:

- *The Management Plan*: covered topics, structure, key aims and objectives, main foreseen activities and measurement indicators;

- *Implementation of Management Plan*: including park's human and resource capacities, day-to-day activities, key source of financing, collaboration with local stakeholders as well as encountered obstacles and issues;
- *Monitoring and reporting system*: key mechanisms used for wildlife monitoring and exchange of information;
- *Transboundary cooperation*: documents regulating the cooperation, joint programs and actions, to date outcomes of cooperation.

The trip to Prealpi Giulie took place from 5th to 13th of October 2015 and was directly followed by the visit to Triglav National Park from 14th to 20th October 2015. On the course of study visit I had a chance to conduct interviews with park employees and local stakeholders, as well as learn about field activities in both parks.

## **Introduction of the EU biodiversity and nature conservation policies**

The EU biodiversity and nature conservation policies provide a common framework for all twenty eight Member States. There are various types of policy documents that are relevant for understanding key priorities and mechanisms of the given policy. Such documents often include both more general program policy documents, defining common goals and targets, and legally binding directives that must be implemented by all Members States.

*"Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020"* is a current program policy document for biodiversity. It is based on common recognition that "biodiversity is essential to the existence of human life and the well-being of societies..." Therefore the main aim of the EU policy is to halt biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restore them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss. For this six policy targets are identified, including full implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives, maintenance and restoration of ecosystems and their services, increasing the contribution of forestry and agriculture in enhancing biodiversity and others (EC, 2011).

The political framework is supported by the legal one, which is set in two Directives: *The Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds 79/409/EEC* (The Birds Directive) (EC, 1979) and *the Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora 92/43/EEC* (The Habitats Directive) (EC, 1992). Following the policy targets in the legal framework, the European Union sets preservation, protection and improvement of quality of the environment, including the conservation of habitats and species, as one of its key objectives (92/43/EEC). Therefore, the Habitats Directive aims to promote the maintenance of biodiversity, taking into consideration economic, social, cultural and regional requirements. The Habitats Directive is concerned with wide conservation agenda, whereas the Birds Directive focuses mainly on the protection of bird species. The Habitat Directive describes the main principles in the field of nature conservation employed in the EU, such as prohibition of the deliberate capture and killing of wild animals and plants, conservation of the typical natural habitats and endangered species. It also sets policy and management tools for this policy area, such as establishment of the

monitoring system, adoption of the management plans for designated sites, and compensatory measures in case of negative impact assessments for the site, financing mechanisms etc. The Directive, as the majority of the EU Directives, is based on the subsidiarity principle and the key responsibilities for its implementation are in the hands of the Member States. The “hard” regulation of the framework defined by two Directives is rather generic and goal-, not process, oriented which in effect brings variety in to actual policy execution.



One of the key mechanisms of nature conservation established in these documents is the so-called Natura 2000, a network of protected areas, which currently covers around 18% of Member States territory (EC, 2013 a). It is based on the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). SACs include sites designated under the Habitats Directive, referred to as Sites of Community Interests (SCIs) and others designated under the Birds Directive referred to as Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Together, they form the EU wide ecological network named Natura 2000. The main goal of this network is to contribute to the maintenance or restoration of favorable conservation status for the targeted habitats (231 different types) and species (over 900 taxa). Conceptually, Natura 2000 sites are seen not as a system of strict nature reserves where human activities are systematically excluded. Instead it recognizes that man is an integral part of nature and that the two work best in partnership with one another (EC, 2013b). Consequently, a majority of sites continues to be privately owned. In turn this requires contributions from owners of the land into the conservation through respect of the applied restriction and in some cases certain restoration and management activities. Emphasis of the management in this case is on ensuring future ecological and economic sustainability, rather than preservation of the “wild” nature (EC, 2013b). In many countries territories of already existing protected areas have been designated as Natura 2000 sites. Thus, most of the protected areas designated under the national system also part of the Natura network. On the one hand, it gave existing PAs an access to available for Natura 2000 resources. On the other, these double mandate brought certain changes and sometimes confusions in management and monitoring of PAs.

The EU Commission provides various co-financing mechanisms for nature conservation and protected areas across the EU. In accordance with the principle of policy integration, i.e. when finances for nature conservation are incorporated in other policy sectors to ensure better coordination. The financing of Natura 2000 is done through various funding streams of different EU policy sectors, such as Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), Structural and Cohesion Funds, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), European Social Fund, LIFE+ (EC, 2011). The LIFE+ fund aims directly at financing nature conservation initiatives in Member States, however it is relatively small compared to other streams. Thus, the access to especially CAP and Rural Development funds is crucial in order to achieve significant results in nature conservation.

The sections below examine the implementation of this defined EU framework in the operation of chosen transboundary protected areas and demonstrate key trends and challenges.

## Julian Prealps Nature Park

### *Area description*

The Julian Prealps Natural Park (*Parco Naturale delle Prealpi Giulie*) is situated in the



Italy's northeast region Friuli-Venezia Giulia at the border with Slovenia. The park was established in 1996, under the governance of this autonomous region. It has a territory of about 10 000 ha and comprises territories of the six communes: Chiusaforte, Lusevera, Moggio

Udinese, Resia, Resutta and Venzone in the province of Udine. The commune of Resia has the biggest share of its territory, about 50%, inside the park. There around 6 600 people live in these six communes. There are no permanent residents inside the park. The park mostly includes highest parts of mountains Plauris (1 958 m), Musi (1 869 m), and Canin (2 587 m).

The specific natural conditions of the area are created due to the contact of three different biogeographic areas: Mediterranean, Illyrian, and Alpine leading to high biodiversity richness. The plant life of the park accounts for about 1 200 species and subspecies of plants with around 40 endemic such as *Campanula di Zoys*, *Gentiana di froelichii*, *Geraneum argenteum*. As regards fauna, all the Alpine ungulates (roe buck, deer, chamois, steinbock and wild boar) as well as mammals, such as wild cat and various rodent species can be found here. In the last years the presence of lynx and brown bear was confirmed in the area. Finally, there is a rich variety of the avian species in the park, including birds of prey (eagle owl, tawny owl, golden eagle, goshawk, buzzard, griffon), teatronidis (capercaillie, black grouse, snow grouse) and other species. Most valuable habitats inside the park are included in Natura 2000 SPA areas, the entire territory of the park is also included in the larger SCI territory.

Traditionally, this area was used for pastoralism and associated cheese production, forestry, and subsistence agriculture. Thus, it was rich in meadows and grassland habitats. However, due to a large scale abandonment of rural, agricultural and sheep-breeding practices some of these habitats were lost. Nowadays, only few of such grassland habitats formed due to sheep grazing remained higher up in the mountains. The local ethnic group of Resia Valley – Resians are of Slavic origin and managed to preserve their unique culture and language. Their interesting folk culture is especially practiced during the carnival called here Pust.

The strategic frontier position has greatly influenced the history of the territory. It was an important battle-field during the First and the Second World Wars. During the Cold War, being one of the borders between Eastern and Western blocks the area hosted a

great number of military troops and associated infrastructure. Consequently, it was not easy accessible and tourism was not developed.

The area was greatly affected by two waves of the earthquake in 1976 in May and September, which lead to a complete destruction of some villages and about 1 000 casualties. Despite the great effort and speedy reconstruction of the villages, the process of depopulation, occurring in rural areas across Europe, speeded up during this period. People were leaving the area in search for safety and better employment opportunities.

At the time of its establishment the project of Natural Park enjoyed great support of various local stakeholder groups, including hunters, as initially the Italian legislation allowed hunting within protected areas. The national legislation that prohibited hunting inside protected areas was passed right during the negotiations process on park establishment. This turned hunters into the opposition group. After the intense negotiations the compromise has been found and the Park established in 1996, however, in reduced borders. Up to date, the relationships between hunters and conservationists over certain matters remain tense.

Currently, the park, along with its key goal – nature conservation, offers recreational and educational activities. For this the park administration collaborates with local municipalities and entrepreneurs involved in provision of tourist services. The engagement into the local development is seen as essential part of the park's agenda.

### *Visit description*

During my visit to Julian Prealps Natural Park I conducted 8 interviews with the park director and president, representatives of the local interest groups (e.g. hunting association, tourism entrepreneurs, representatives of the communes and NGOs, promoting local tourism). Additionally, I had a chance to participate in the number of events organized by the park, which gave me a better understanding of day-to-day practices. Namely, I participated in the public consultation with local stakeholder, organized by the park administration, regarding their feedback on the application for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism that was in preparation during my visit. I have also participated in the joint workshop between the Triglav National Park and the Julian Prealps Natural Park devoted to bear management, organized by the university of Natural Resources and Life Science, Vienna, Austria. I had a chance to visit local school in Venzone. Every year park administration organizes field day for school kids during, which they explore the park and learn more on particular topic (e.g. edible plants, fauna in the park). The park administration also supports annual exchange among school students of nearby protected areas from Slovenia and Austria. I joined Resia school on such excursion to UNESCO "Man and Biosphere Reserve" Nockberge, in Austria. I was also invited to learn about private initiatives in restoring existing old infrastructure in the park, i.e. mountain huts (*alpeggio*) to host educational visits and camps. Lastly, I had a chance to visit several park infrastructure objects, including mountain huts, as well as several trails. Finally, I visited several villages and towns of the park's municipalities.

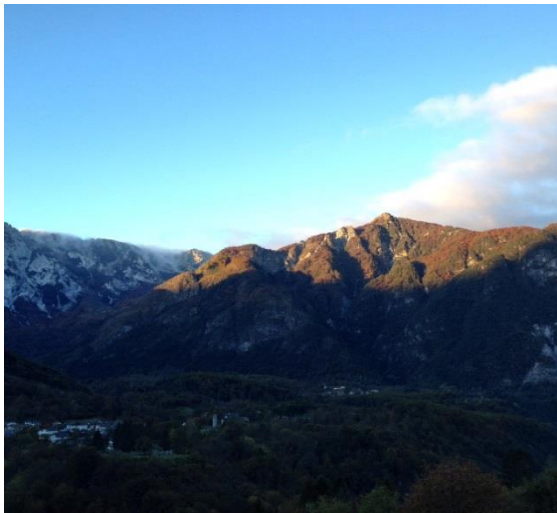




*Participants of the joint WS on brown bear management*



*Visit to Nockberge*



*View on the Val Resia*



*Sheep grazing in the park*

## **Management and policy in Julian Prealps Natural Park**

Interviews and document analysis revealed following results on policy and management processes employed in the Julian Prealps Natural Park. The park has adopted Conservation and Development Plan that defines key long-term priorities for the park work and stresses the importance of sustainable development of the area. The plan was adopted in 2015 and is valid for ten years with the possibility of revision and extension. The park administrative and management bodies include – the park administration and the park Executive Council (10 people) that consists of representatives of the six park's municipalities, the head of the Council (the park president) is also involved into day-to-day management.

*The Management Plan.* There are three key objectives defined in the plan: 1) to conserve, restore and improve the natural environment and resources; 2) to promote social, economic and cultural development of the area and living conditions of the local

residents; 3) to promote environmental education, awareness raising, and scientific research in the area. The plan is structured accordingly to the defined objectives and provides a set of concrete measures to achieve these objectives. For example, in order, to maintain a good condition of grassland habitats it is foreseen to support local sheep grazing. For most of the natural habitats in the area non-intervention is defined as one of the principal measures. For the second goal of local economic development, the tourism promotion and tourist management is specifically addressed in the plan. The park administration actively cooperates with the local tourist promotion NGOs (*Pro Loco*) that tasked specifically with this goal by local municipalities. Under the third goal on environmental education, park administration cooperates with local schools, as well as organizes various educational excursions for general public during the high season. The park employees also collaborate with universities and various scientific projects to promote research in the area. As for example, the ForAdapt study aiming to learn the best management options for bear population in the area, I attended during my stay in Prealpi Giulie.

In a way all these goals fit with the EU policy principles, as their main idea is to preserve the good state of biodiversity. In relation to an idea of combination of nature conservation and promotion of the local sustainable development, the Prealpi Giulie Plan also fits into conceptual framework, as both of these are defined as long-term goals for the park administration. Better public participation and engagement is defined as practical measure to promote local development. As regards, Natura 2000 sites inside the park their management is addressed by the same plan, allowing to reach harmonization of the management efforts and consolidate available resources. Thus, the park administration has full authority to manage Natura 2000 sites inside the park, as well as define objectives for these sites.

*Implementation of Management Plan.* One of the major steps in achieving plan's goals and implementing defined tasks is allocation of proper resources. As other public entities, park administration receives annual contribution from the state to cover the basic running costs. However, all additional financing necessary for projects implementation are mostly obtained by the park from external sources. Among such sources are the EU funded projects, projects financed by other international and national funds, in kind contributions from local entrepreneurs and organizations (implementation of small-scale practical tasks in the park such as trails reparation). Besides, park earns certain amount of funds from the services provided to tourists such as accommodation, excursions etc. All in all, park administration is active in attracting these additional resources and seeks to apply for different sort of funding.

The park administration consists of the park director, administrative office and the conservation, education and promotion office. All in all, nine people are employed in these offices. The modest manpower of the park administration often limits the tasks they can undertake, including practical activities in the field. In addition to the conservation tasks, the employees are responsible to answer public enquires, maintaining web site, running information center and park's museum. The annual number of recorded visitors to park facilities vary from 20,000 to 30,000 tourists. However, it was noted by all

interviewees that the area has a great tourist potential. Thus, attracting more visitors is defined among key priorities.

The park administration also seeks to maintain contacts with number of local stakeholders involved in the nature related sectors, including tourism, forestry service, hunting and others. Thus, the stakeholders include representatives of the local municipalities, entrepreneurs, working in tourism, hunters, researchers, alpine clubs etc. It is often challenging for the park administration to include the interests of all involved stakeholders in the key decisions regarding nature conservation and park management. As all of them have different opinions and often even within one group (e.g. tourist entrepreneurs) these opinions vary greatly. Practically, this means following certain line leads to compromising other interests. From outsider's perspective based on the interviews with the park employees and various stakeholders it was clear that they all know each other well and often exchange the opinions even outside formal settings of organized meetings. However, the situation is very dynamic. Sometimes personal relations or long-standing conflicts will prevent a constructive solution in a concrete situation. On a related note, various interviewees noted that political and legal constrains often bring limitations to the development agenda. This is especially true in regards to the complex Italian regulation on access to public funds, employment in public institutions, construction of tourist facilities etc. Other problems include high taxation and the need to obtain permissions for various tourist services, which often limits private initiatives. Even if the park administration cannot solve these issues, it is sometimes seen by other stakeholders, as acting upon these constrains that further complicates the situation. As regards, research the park administration is open for collaboration on various matters, including innovative ways on approaching the public, as demonstrated the workshop on bear management.

All in all among major difficulties encountered by the park administration in everyday work, ever increasing bureaucracy related to implementation of their tasks was often mentioned. The absence of long-term financing and need to constantly search for extra project and financing to implement any development projects was also acknowledged among encountered difficulties. Finally, bringing together interests of many stakeholders is another challenge park administration seeks to address in order to successfully implement Management and Conservation Plan.

*Monitoring and reporting system.* There are various monitoring procedures adopted in the park. This include both annual species monitoring, routine observation in the field, citizens' reports, independent monitoring by scientists. The monitoring and reporting system of Natura 2000 sites is adapted to the EU requirements, where necessary, especially in some technical aspects on how to conduct monitoring. The park employees noted that one of the key problems with monitoring is an absence of unified database or information exchange system. This is especially true for the monitoring and research data compiled by various scientists in the park that often do not share or share this data with delay. The establishment of the joint database could be potentially beneficial especially given the transboundary status of the park and population of certain species.

*Sum-up.* The Julian Prealps Natural Park is rather small park with limited staff and resource capacities. The park administration is further constrained by existing policy and legal regulations, especially in regards to engagement in local development. However, within their capacities and responsibilities defined by the Conservation and Development Plan park employees implement wide-range of activities and willing to engage where possible. The Conservation Plan also brings transboundary collaboration and other international collaboration high up in the agenda. The section below will closely examine the experience of collaboration between Julian Prealps and Triglav parks.

## **Triglav National Park**

### *Area description*



The Triglav National Park is the only national park in Slovenia. It is greatly recognized and praised at the national level, as it contains the highest peak (2 864 m) and other symbolic, for all Slovenians, natural monuments. The initial protection of the area dates back to 1924, when first PA of about 1 400 ha was designated. In 1961 the area was enlarged by 1 600 ha. The second significant enlargement took place in 1981 and the national park was officially proclaimed in Triglav at that time. At this time the first national law regulating nature conservation and work of national park has been passed. To date the park covers the territory of about 84 000 ha or about 4% of the state territory. The park was proclaimed as UNESCO “Man and Biosphere Reserve” (MAB) in 2005. The entire territory of the park is designated as Natura 2000 site with such priority species as capercaillie, three toed woodpecker. Thus, the significance of the area for nature and heritage protection is recognized internationally.

Around 36 000 ha inside the park is strictly protected area (1 protection level), where no exploration activities, including hunting and forestry is allowed. Traditional use in the first protection zone is allowed only if it is necessary to support existing habitats conditions, e.g. meadows. In the 2 protection level traditional use is allowed. Finally, in the 3 protection level forestry and agricultural use is allowed. Traditionally, sheep grazing was among key activities in the area and famous Bovec sheep originated here. Other cattle, e.g. goats and cows were also grazed in the area, however, to less extent as the mountain terrain is very steep and only few areas are suitable for these animals. Consequently, sheep grazing brings a long-standing tradition of cheese production. Conditions for agriculture were rather poor, as the soil cover is thin. Currently, traditional land use modes, especially in high mountain meadows, are in decline.

There are 8 municipalities that lays partially within park borders: Bovec, Bohinj, Kranjska Gora, Bled, Tolmin, Kobarid, Gorje, and Jesenice. As park occupies significant territory there are about 2 400 people live permanently inside the park borders, mostly in the small settlements of about 50 – 90 inhabitants. However, additionally, area hosts significant number of holiday houses. Thus, in Trenta valley around 90 houses are inhabited permanently, whereas there are additional 400 houses.

The Julian Alps mountain range covered by Triglav National Park mainly consist of limestone, which results in the formation of high-altitude karst forms such as karren, potholes and the system of connected karst lakelets. The park is a border area between watersheds of the Adriatic and Black seas. From the Southern part the water goes to Adriatic and from the Northern to the Black sea. More than 60% of the park is forested land. On the Southern side the beech is predominant tree species, whereas on the Northern spruces and larches are spread. The area is especially famous for the diversity of the mountain flowers species, including a number of endemic, such as Triglav Hawksbeard (*Crepis terglouensis*), Julian Poppy (*Papaver alpinum subsp. ernesti-mayeri*) and Silver-leaved Cranesbill (*Geranium argentum*). Among typical animals in the park are chamois, ibex, red deer, brown bear, lynx, eagle, numerous bird and reptile species, as well as endemic Marble trout.

The area of the Triglav National park was and till today is an important border and transit territory with an interesting mix of different cultures and traditions attracting scientists and nature enthusiast. Thus, the first scientific exploration of the area started in the 19th century by Julius Kuge from Trieste, who wrote several books about unique natural conditions of the area, which attracted first visitors. Ever since tourism is increasing in Triglav. The area also witnessed a great historic transformations. During the First World War most of the villages in the area were completely destroyed and devastated. Furthermore, it was assigned to Italy and stayed under fascist's regime for decades. This followed by the policy of Italianization and an attempt of cultural assimilation. It also brought a significant development of infrastructure in the area, including roads, military installations, water pipelines etc. necessary for stationing the army. During Yugoslavia times this territory was one of the key border points between the "East" and the "West". Interestingly enough the border was drawn right on the top of the mountains. During that time there was a project for the construction of the big hydropower station on Soca River that would have had a significant negative impact on its environment. Luckily, in 1963 this project was stopped and the government decided to leave this area undisturbed developing a tourist infrastructure instead. Thus, the slopes of the Canin Mountain were used for skiing, the number of Alpine trails expanded greatly and big hotels were constructed to host increasing number of tourists coming from all-over Yugoslavia.

Thus, in addition to unique natural and landscape characteristics of Triglav National Park it is also important area for the history and present of Slovenia. The park occupies significant territory of the country and has an important meaning for social and economic development of the local communities. The park has greater visibility at the national level and significance for the nature conservation policy in Slovenia.





*Educational trail along Soca river in  
Trenta valley*



*View on Trenta valley*

### *Visit description*

During my time in Triglav I conducted five interviews with park employees and had a chance to conduct two guided visits: one in Trenta valley along Soca trail, the most visited trail in the park, and the second one around Pokljuka Plateau and Bohinj lake. During visit to Pokljuka I saw the ski and biathlon sport center located in the valley. This center is known all over the world among winter sports fans. I had a chance to visit both headquarters of the park in Bled and field Information centers in Trenta, Bohinj and Kobarid. In Trenta valley the info point is also combined with the park museum that presents information about the park natural conditions and history, as well as conference and accommodation facilities. The Info point in Bled also hosts thematic exhibitions about the park. Additionally, to the mentioned facilities the park administration restored the old farm house in the village of Radovna near Bled, which currently host a small museum and tourist information point. However, I did not have enough time to visit it.

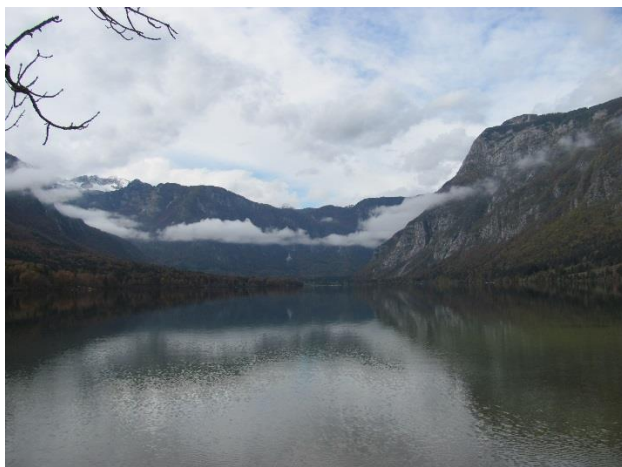
This combination of visiting various park structures gave me a better understanding of the work of this national park, both mostly related with policy and management in headquarters, and day-to-day practices of the employees mostly dealing with field tasks.



*Information center and museum in Trenta*



*Exhibition in Information Center in Bled*



*View on the lake Bohinj*



*Educational trail on Pokljuka Plateau*



*View on  
Bohinj valley*

### **Management and Policy in Triglav National Park**

The park administration is a relatively large institution, employing 52 people. The park administration consist of the Director and his office, Nature Conservation, Spatial Planning, Water Management, PR, and Event Permission departments and Ranger Service. The info point in Kobarid employs 2 people, the info center in Trenta – 8 people



and 18 people are employed with ranger service, the rest is distributed among departments in headquarters. For management reasons the park is divided into five areas coordinated by respective rangers. In the high season of summer months, rangers and other field structures are assisted by volunteers, mostly students, as otherwise, 18 people are not enough to cover such vast territory. The park, as in Prealpi Giulie also have a Consultation Board consisting of representatives of interest groups mostly local municipalities and scientists. This is one of the key decision-making mechanisms for the park, as it adopts all the principal decision about park management. The Board meets in average 4 times per year.

During my visit the park entered in the final stage of negotiations of its Management Plan with relevant stakeholders. The park administration hoped to adopt the plan in near future. To date, park operates based on annual plans and available financing. Shortage of funding was mentioned by several interviewees as one of the key constrains. Following the economic crisis, the state financing of the park was reduced by 50%. In turn, this cut affects the administration ability to apply for extra funding, as in most of them the expenses should be first paid from available funds and then reimbursed. As the park management already had a negative experience with delayed payments from external funds, they are reluctant to risk with the new ones. Thus, many projects, especially, related with the development of new infrastructure in the field are postponed. The park does not have entrance fees and earn moderate sums from provided services (e.g. accommodation, guided tours). Below the draft Management Plan is scrutinized in more details and reveal certain outstanding issue in the park.

*The Management Plan.* The current plan under discussion is the first plan to be adopted since the park establishment in 1981. The adoption of the management plan is seen as important step towards common guidelines defining park tasks in a long run. The work on the plan development started in 2011 and series of extensive public consultation, workshops, and expert consultations were undertaken over time to prepare a final draft. This final draft passed an approval of the Ministry of the Environment and currently is under consideration of the park's Consultation Board.

The plan is a complex document made of 8 chapters. First two chapters provide analysis of all the present activities in the park (e.g. forestry, agriculture, hunting, fishing, water management, tourism), whereas chapter 3 supports it with SWAT analysis. Chapter 4 is the most important one and defines long-term operational objectives and actions, as well evaluates necessary financing. There are 5 thematic fields in this chapter: nature conservation, cultural heritage, local development, visiting and promotion, and tasks for Triglav public administration and some overarching tasks, like public awareness. All in all around 150 tasks are defined with corresponding actions and activities. There are also permanent and temporary tasks and financial evaluation of this activities, i.e. how many hours estimated will be spend on this task and how much will it cost. The last three chapters provide concrete recommendations for various sectors (forestry, fishing, spatial planning), address question of implementation and monitoring and revision of the plan implementation. Thus, all in all it is thorough document providing clear guidelines for actions for the park administration and detailed recommendations for others.



The plan seeks to better regulate the activities allowed under different protection levels. Given that the park is attractive for tourism and is already visited annually by about 2 mln. people there is a strong demand for more development from tourism. The park administration conducts thorough evaluation of such projects in regard with compliance with existing conservation measures. The park administration recognizes that the certain degree of development where appropriate is necessary for the well-being of local communities.

Examples of objectives under education and promotion include, attraction of more school groups to the park's exhibitions from all-over Slovenia, as well further, environmental education of visitors. As to date, only about 70 000 people out of total 2 mln. tourists visit park's info points annually.

All in all the nature in Triglav is well-preserved, especially compare to the areas around the park. However, there are number of conservation priorities that are addressed by the plan. Among such priorities measures to combat invasive alien species that are especially detrimental for the remote mountain lakes, as well as conservation of peat bogs and forest management in Pokljuka Plateau.

The plans for the Natura 2000 are prepared separately at the national level for all the sites existing in Slovenia. The Triglav administration is responsible for the implementation of this plan. The plan is prepared by the National Institute for Nature Conservation and the park administration has a chance to provide an input for their site. Furthermore, administration provides its inputs to other conservation-related documents e.g. forestry, fishing, spatial planning guidelines.

The process of adoption of the park management plan was particularly complicated by the fact that Triglav National Park is the manager of the land, but for most of the area is not an owner. Thus, most of the land is either privately owned or belongs to the church and municipalities. Therefore, certain agreements needed to be made before the process can go ahead. Another matter that currently present an obstacle is reduced financing of the plan following the overall budget cuts. As was noted by interviewees there were 2-3 municipalities that objected the plan mostly demanding more funding for local development and in some cases arguing for the preparation of the separate management plans for their areas, which is, however, not legally possible and plan must be adopted for the whole park.

*Implementation of Management Plan.* Tourist management is among key day-to-day activities of the park employees both in the field and in various park information points. There are various questions such as transportation and parking, mountain safety, compliance with park rules and regulations that need constant attention, especially during the high season. The park seeks to implement projects aiming at development of better infrastructure in the field such as information boards, educational trails, and other activities to better inform tourists about rules of behavior in the mountains. For traditional practices, support to the traditional sheep grazing and associated cheese production is important for maintenance of good state of the high mountain meadows habitats. Thus, the park rangers help local stakeholders to maintain high meadows where necessary and provide other support, e.g. helicopters to deliver goods up to the

mountains. Maintenance of the road, especially during winter is another area where park employees are involved.

Wide-array of stakeholders is involved in various park matters. From the national level rapports with the Ministry of the Environment is essential for the park administration. Generally, the Ministry supports park administration even in some controversial cases in regards to enforcement of conservation measures. At the local level important stakeholders are – local municipalities that are engaged into the park work through the Board, as well as various interest groups: foresters, tourist providers and entrepreneurs, alpine clubs, volunteer services etc. Despite of existing disagreements on various matters with these groups of stakeholders they assist park with certain activities. Thus, mountain trails are done and maintained by the Alpine Association Club. Almost each commune has a local Alpine Club section and each section maintains certain trails. Each Alpine Club section has also a mountain rescue team that work on volunteer basis and assist in case of emergency. The extensive network of mountain huts is divided among Alpine Club Sections. They are responsible for huts' maintenance, but also derive their income from providing accommodation to hikers. Mountain huts open up at the end of June till the end of September. Another important stakeholder is the local tourist board is greatly engaged in the promotion of the area and collaborate with the park PR department on this matter. Tourism is a special case, it is rather difficult to make long-term planning for this sector. There are usually many more actors involved in providing services in this sector from big to small-scale companies and entrepreneurs. Besides, it is much more fluctuating in response to weather conditions and customer demands.

The park is a wanted partner for joint project proposals for these local stakeholders, as it has greater visibility and solid reputation. However, currently due to financial restriction its engagement in external projects are rather limited. Furthermore, financing was promised by authorities to the local municipalities when they became part of Natura 2000, but to date no major contributions came from the government. In turn this, bring certain hostilities between municipalities and the park, as it is seen as governmental institution.

There are more stakeholders engaged in the work of the Triglav National Park from various levels and sectors from national to local and from NGOs to business enterprises compare to the Prealpi Giulie. Thus, one of the key challenges for the park administration is to bring this stakeholders together to agree on a solution that will satisfy everyone's interests. The park offices try to involve interested stakeholders in negotiations on the early stages, which is not always an easy tasks as all of them have different interests and goals. Furthermore, such open processes are often time and resource consuming. At the same time, it is evident that without broad engagement long-term policy implementation will not be possible as park administration itself has only limited resources and manpower. From the early days of nature protection in the area various stakeholders and common people interested in Triglav nature were involved in assisting official efforts e.g. through trail maintenance, research and exploration of the area. Thus, it has been proven overtime by practical experience that working together brings better results.

*Monitoring and reporting system.* The park conducts routine monitoring of habitats and species, as well as day-to-day observation in the field in order to comply with national and international requirements. The occasional joint monitoring is also conducted by two parks, Triglav and Prealpi Giulie, together. Additionally, various research projects are conducted both by park employees and external researchers. The information exchange system is in place both online and offline.

The current necessity in monitoring is related to introduction of a proper tourists monitoring and counting system, as well as system to define the routes of tourist traffic. The later will help to define the busiest trails in the park and possibly mitigate ever increasing pressure from visitors.

*Sum-up.* The prominent role of the Triglav National Park in Slovenia and unique natural landscapes allows to attract a great number of visitors every year. In turn this results both in certain commercial opportunities for local people and the park administration, but also in significant pressure on the environment. Locally, there are many stakeholders with varied interests involved in the park work and it is often not easy for the park administration to find a compromise. The negotiations on the Management Plan serves as a good example of this challenge.

### **Transboundary collaboration between Triglav and Prealpi Giulie**

Two parks have a long history of collaboration starting from the establishment of the Julian Prealps Natural Park and is rather unique case of transboundary collaboration as despite their recognized status they share just a small part of an actual border. From early on both park recognized the potential for such collaboration. The benefits of such transboundary approach are evident both on policy and management, natural-ecological, educational and cultural levels. Management and policy level encourage direct sharing of practices and experiences and allow to search together for better solutions of common challenges. Ecologically, it is beneficial for the joint monitoring of flora and fauna and addressing common threats. The transboundary approach is widely promoted by other international organizations and donors, including the EU, mostly through funds distribution. Not least it is encouraged by the Europarc Federation. Thus, Triglav and Julian Prealps parks hold the Europarc Transboundary Certificate that acknowledge the compliance with the Europarc Basic Standards for transboundary collaboration that among other criteria include e.g. joint work plan between parks, staff cooperation in different areas. At the moment of the visit two parks were preparing the joint application for the certification under European Charter on Sustainable Tourism. Furthermore, the Julian Prealps Natural Park is preparing an application to become a UNESCO “Men and Biosphere Reserve”, which Triglav is already. Afterwards this will allow two parks to apply together to become transboundary MAB area, which will further institutionalize the collaboration. These and other formal processes demonstrate the advanced level of transboundary collaboration among two parks.

On more practical level parks run several projects together in various fields. One of such long-term collaboration project is Junior Rangers Programme. This project started in

2002 as a pilot project of the Europarc Federation to promote environmental education and intercultural exchange in transboundary protected areas. The idea is to attract interest of the young generation to nature conservation and prepare them to potentially become a future employees in this area. The program is open for school kids from the municipalities of the park and include various thematic lectures, excursion, camps etc. first in each park separately and then joint events between two parks. It is usually run several years for each generation and conclude with the international Junior Ranger Camp. Additionally, there are number of projects aiming to improve ecological connectivity of the area, study effects of the climate change, and conduct the joint monitoring of species and many other.

It has been noted by interviewees from both parks that collaboration also meet certain problems, including language barrier, lack of financing and some others. Despite these bumps parks' administration manage to stay in contact and discuss relevant matters almost every day. It has been also noted that over these years this formal collaboration grew into friendship and hopefully will strengthen over times.

## **Conclusion**

The visits to two parks demonstrated that day-to-day practices in these institutions comply with the general European approach, especially, in regards to public engagement and searching the way to combine the conservation and local sustainable development. The latter is recognized both on formal level, thorough inclusion into Management Plans of both parks, and informal level, as the importance of this was acknowledged by interviewees from both sides of the border. The same goes for transboundary collaboration, of which Triglav and Julian Prealps is a recognized good example. Two parks seek to further strengthen their collaboration despite existing challenges. In both parks, historic legacies and frontier position to date pose various challenges. The development on both side of the border was rather constrained as it was a borderline between two regimes. Furthermore, the process of designation of protected areas brought certain dissatisfaction to local people and in both parks the consequences of this are still present. This often complicate task of public engagement, as some stakeholders are against any parks initiatives.

Both parks are also included in the Natura 2000 network, thus formally and directly have to comply with number of EU requirements. This is especially true for the conservation of number of priority species and habitats of the European importance. The Natura 2000 network also opens up additional opportunities for the parks to apply for funding from the EU to finance various activities, including local development.

There are number of differences in policy and management of two protected areas. Thus, Prealpi Giulie is relatively small and young protected area that search for innovative ways to implement policy and maintain relations with local stakeholders under tight manpower and financial constraints. The adopted detailed Management and Development Plan provides basis for integrated management of the park and Natura

2000 site on its territory. The park administration has a proactive approach for participation in various projects and collaboration with interested stakeholders.

The Triglav National Park is the only national park in Slovenia and has a special meaning to Slovenian people. This brings significantly more attention to the park politically, ecologically and on a personal level, as almost any Slovenian has been to Triglav. The park covers around 4% of the whole state territory, which obviously brings involvement of many stakeholders in its work. In turn finding common grounds is even more difficult than in case of Julian Prealps, as there are more interests at stake. The lengthy negotiations over park Management Plan is a good example of this challenge. As the park administration is a bigger entity in Triglav it is slower in its bureaucracy. Besides, park management has more conservative approach to participation on new project, following the existing controversial experiences and financial constraints. Natura 2000 sites are managed directly by the park institutions, even though the plans are adopted at the national level.

All in all, these two parks are interesting examples of well-established, relatively independent institutions that have management rights over parks' territories. Despite existing difficulties they seek to closely engage in the local development processes and keep in contact with relevant stakeholders locally, nationally and internationally. The parks seek to closely engage in environmental education and extra activities for kids and youngsters from the park municipalities as a way to promote conservation agenda and build a solid foundation among those who will define the face of this area in the years ahead. Recognition of this common way for the parks and local communities is the first step towards successful long-term policy implementation that profit everyone.

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Triglav National Park [http://www.tnp.si/national\\_park/](http://www.tnp.si/national_park/)

### **List of Interviews**

#### *Julian Prealps Natural Park*

Chinese, Sergio, mayor of Resia

Beltrame, Andrea, park president

De Colle, Elena, school teacher in Venzone

Di Bernardo, Aldo, representative of the association for promotion of the local tourism (Pro-Loco pro Venzone)

Favalli, Marco, local entrepreneur

Filacorda, Stefano, researcher, University of Udine

Kaspar, Niklas, local entrepreneur

Pituelli, Valerio, president of the hunting district Tarvisio and director of the hunting reserve of Venzone

Santi, Stefano, park director

#### *Triglav National Park*

Albinini, Marietta, Triglav administration, Ranger Service

Arih, Andrej, Triglav administration, Nature conservation department

Markun, Tina, Triglav administration, PR department

Pretner, Marco, Triglav administration, Manager of Info Point Trenta

Smolej, Mojca, Triglav administration, PR department