



ALFRED  
TOEPFER  
STIFTUNG  
F.V.S.



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



# Communicating Protected Areas in Europe

Study tour report

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**Baiba Ralle**

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## SUMMARY

Communication of protected areas is one of the most important issues nowadays. Since society in its wider sense is the one who directly (decision makers) and indirectly (locals, visitors, different environmental organizations etc.) impacts nature conservation processes, only raising its awareness of importance of nature values can bring sustainable development for future generations. Therefore, managers of protected areas currently are in front of an important task to reach human minds in the most effective way to activate their care for ongoing local and national nature processes.

As Kemer National Park (Latvia), faces the same challenges, the aim of this tour was set to improve practices in public relations, nature education, society involvement and sustainable tourism by examining how four different protected areas on European scale – protected landscape area Central Bohemian Uplands, Saxon Switzerland National Park, Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park and Triglav National Park – are organizing communication process, what kind of actions they are proud of and what are the challenges they have to overcome dealing with this difficult topic.

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# PART I: INTRODUCTION

In the introduction part I am going to describe my curriculum, motivations and expectations, as well as study tour aim and objectives, make general overview of the topic, as well as give a review of the study visit, explaining what topics I have covered, what persons I have met and what impressions I have got during my trip. The last chapter of this part will be devoted to short description of visited territories, introducing with their geographical location, foundation year, annual visitor number and other important variables, as well as describing unique nature values and the main attractions they are offering for tourists.

## 1.1. Introduction of authors' curriculum, motivations and expectations

**Area of work:** communication of protected areas in Europe – public relations, nature education and society involvement

My name is Baiba Ralle. My educational background is communication science. I have obtained Bachelor (2011) and Master (2013) degree of Social Sciences in Science of Communications at University of Latvia. My previous job experience has been connected with the public relations in Riga Technical University and before I have worked as a journalist in different media, including newspapers, magazines, and news portals covering topics about politics, environment, law, lifestyle and education. That has given to me a lot of valuable experience communicating difficult topics in popular language.

In the year 2016 I decided to radically change my life, moved far away from the capital and tried to search my roots back to the nature and as a happy coincidence came the opportunity to start working as a nature education specialist/PR manager at Nature Conservation Agency, Latvia. Since then my everyday work is mostly connected with Kemeru National Park. My everyday duties include public relations of Pierīga Regional Administration territory (the most important communication is about Kemeru National Park), the leadership of Kemeru National Park Junior Ranger group, arrangement of the work of volunteers and interns, as well as public events.

The new job tasks haven't come to me easy and the deeper I have tried to explore the difficult topic of environmental communication the stronger I have felt the need to gain solid experience exchange with other protected areas around Europe. For me this job is continuous process of learning – HOW to make communication with different target groups of Kemeru National Park (tourists, school children, event participants, local communities) and overall with all society of Latvia - the best possible way. HOW to educate them, HOW to connect them with the nature, HOW to give them the feeling that specially protected territories are made for them, serve them and should be seen as national identity elements, something own and therefore guarded as a gemstone.

Therefore, during study trip my **aims** were to broaden my knowledge about communication of protected areas (strategic planning of public relations), collect new tools, best practices, and outstanding ideas of society involvement and learn new methods of nature education and interpretation, thus making Nature Conservation Agency of Latvia, as well as Kemeru National Park more successful in communication process. I also hope that the information and knowledge of the communication topic, gained during the study trip and described in this study report in a very detailed way, will be useful also to other professionals working on communication issues in their protected areas all around the Europe, on their way towards improvement of practices in public relations, nature education, society involvement and sustainable tourism. Therefore, **main study objectives** were:

To **collect, compare and exchange information** about communication of protected areas on:

- 1) **Strategies, plans or other relevant documents** aimed at managing communication work

- 2) **PA visual identity:** current work, main problems and perspectives with applying corporate design in the territories' communication;
- 3) **Public relations:** current work, main problems and perspectives in the work with mass media and public, the use of social media, media campaigns, development of different information materials and organizing environmental communication "tools";
- 4) **Nature education:** current work, main problems and perspectives in the work with different target groups – schoolchildren, adults, park visitors, people with disabilities, doing nature education classes and organizing different events and activities;
- 5) **Society involvement:** current work – different activities and projects to include society in the processes of NP and raise their awareness about nature conservation topic;
- 6) **Sustainable tourism:** current work, main problems and perspectives in the work of establishment of different activities and projects to implement sustainability of PA.

During the process of collecting and comparing information **select successful examples** that could be used in the work of my institution – established systems, programs, interesting PR ideas or any other expression of communication work in the spheres of PR, nature education, society involvement and sustainable tourism.

I am sure this experience and knowledge will help me and my administration boost the potential of Kemeru National Park and other Latvian Protected Areas in promoting nature and culture heritage conservation both for local communities through the new projects offering new connections; as well as national/international audiences through the new PR and marketing activities. Experience will be step towards effective improvement of public awareness and sense of ownership of our common natural and cultural heritage, which is the very basis for sustainability of any conservation efforts.

## 1.2. General introduction to the topic

“No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced”  
— David Attenborough

It is a well-known paradigm nowadays that there is no way of nature protection without appropriate communication. When talking about nature conservation it is far too less to focus only on the policy and scientific research in protected areas and ignore or forget about public awareness. **Most of environmental problems are caused by human behavior and therefore can also only be helped or solved by human beings.**

Protecting the environment and managing natural resources ultimately depend how people—government, decision makers, municipal leaders, private sector managers, non-governmental organizations (NGO), community groups, and individuals – treat their environment and natural resources. Long-term sustainable solutions to safeguard environmental quality and preserve the ecological integrity or productive capacity of natural areas depend only on human beings and their desire to act.

Therefore, when building local government and community support for protected areas, **70% of community-based protected area work consists of communication and education activities**, while only remaining 30% is technical, research and/or other functions. And also in the work with the protected area representatives – e.g. project staff, community organizers, biologists and Authority's leaders etc., who contribute to these 30%, it is very important to set development of their communication skills as a priority.

This is necessary especially because of increasing problems caused by economic development. Protected areas and biodiversity are under increasing pressure because of changes in various sectors, such as public works, water, transport, agriculture and tourism. Protected area (PA) managers are therefore constantly confronted with often-challenging changes, for instance the construction of roads, dams, wind parks, parking lots, expanding urbanization, and new active leisure pursuits. Changes in wider landscape around protected areas can affect the species, habitats and ecological progress in the protected area. Thus PA management has a great deal to do with change management which **means the process of changing attitudes and behavior of people.**

It is critical nowadays that public is made aware of the problems biodiversity conservation is facing. It is crucial they understand that the loss of biodiversity is irreversible and that is crucial to nations' wellbeing. There is a need to bring issues of biodiversity to the public and connect the topic with the people's everyday life: for example, to link flooding with deforestation or to link biodiversity loss to economical loss. Without these links people can't and will not value biodiversity and its conservation.

People, especially from urban centers, continually use resources from natural sources and yet do not realize that their very survival hinges on the protection of them. Therefore, it is **crucial to translate biodiversity concepts, issues and solutions into language that the public can relate to.** By doing this, major behavioral change can be brought. Thus, the challenge is to translate the very technical terms attributed to biodiversity to very popular terms.

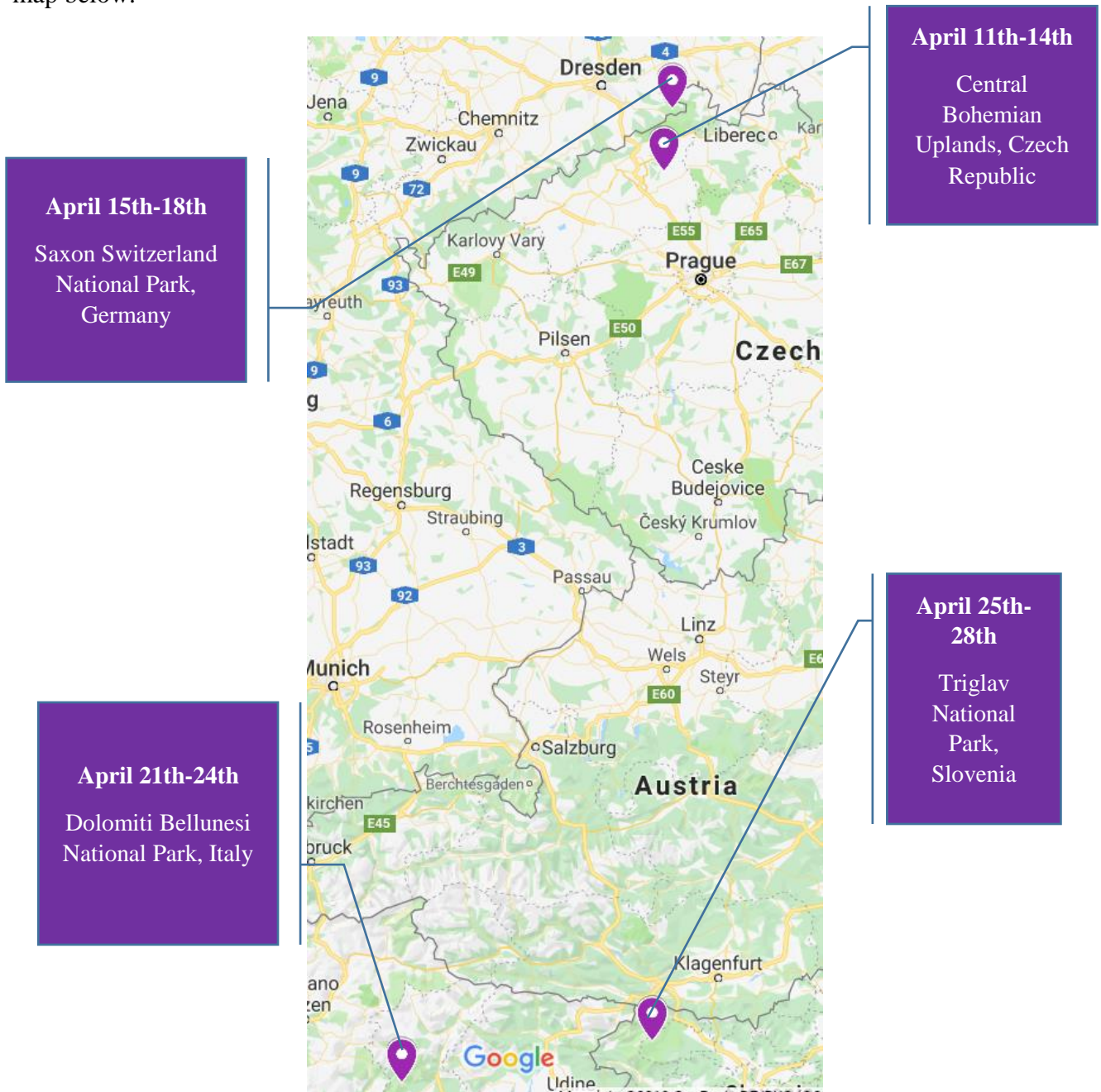
**Communication is a practical and essential tool for action.** Whether it is used to advocate for a policy, raise awareness, change behavior, influence public opinion, collaborate to address conflicts, pass legislation or challenge assumptions, the way we are communicating will affect our outcomes. Whether the aim is to seek technological, political, economic, behavioral or cultural solutions, there is strong need for effective communication to succeed.



### 1.3. Overview of the study tour

To gain the best possible experience, I was visiting protected areas with a great popularity as tourism destinations on European level – Central Bohemian Uplands in Czech Republic, Saxon Switzerland National Park in Germany, Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park in Italy, as well as Triglav National Park in Slovenia.

In each protected territory half of the time I was spending to meet with staff members and discuss public relation, marketing, nature education, work with society/volunteers issues, in some protected areas I had also a possibility to participate in nature education events or meetings with tourism stakeholders, volunteers. And half of the time I was discovering PA’s tourism sites and getting to know how administrations are using all the other nature communication instruments – tourism offices, nature education and community centers, infrastructure elements, information boards, other nature education signs – all environmental communication elements. To trace my study tour please see the map below.



### 1.3.1. Central Bohemian Uplands

I started my study trip with Central Bohemian Uplands (*České středohoří*) protected landscape area (PLA) in Czech Republic. All the PLAs in Czech Republic are governed by Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic (NCA CR; *Agentura ochrany přírody a krajiny ČR*), which is established by the Ministry of the Environment, therefore my visit was organized in strong cooperation with the staff from Regional Center of Central Bohemian Uplands PLA.

With the aim to explore as much as possible about environmental communication starting with public relations and ending with nature education and public involvement during my visit I had a chance to meet and make informal interviews with NCA public relations manager Ondřej Nitsch manager Gabriela Kubatova of the project LIFE České středohoří (LIFE16 NAT/CZ/000639) (see Figure 1) and nature education specialist Lenka Černá. Moreover, the Head of the Nature and Landscape Protection Department and manager of volunteers in the territory Jan Kyselka, as well as representatives from local nature NGO “*SEVER středisko ekologické výchovy*”.

To gain better understanding of everyday practices in nature education and work with volunteers I participated in events organized by NCA of Czech Republic and NGO. I experienced nature education event “SEVER Open day” (“*SEVER otvírá dveře*”) organized by NCA partner in nature education – “*SEVER středisko ekologické výchovy*”, where I had a chance to see how NGO is working with local society and which nature education methods they are using to reach the audience. I was able to take part in annual Volunteering ranger meeting with NCA members (see Figure 2). I had a chance to participate also in nature education event “Earth Day” (*Den Země*) (all of meetings more discussed in analysis part; see also Figure 3).

With the aim to get better understanding of how nature interpretation tools are used in the nature, I visited a couple of infrastructure objects and trails managed by NCA of Czech Republic and other partners. Among those were Nature Reserve of Holý vrch at Hlinná (*Naučná stezka Hlinná –Kamýk*), *Vetruše* Nature trail – *Vanov* waterfall and *Vrkoč* national natural monument, as well as *Naučná Stezka Boreč* nature trail and hill. I also had a chance to visit the Museum of folk architecture in Zubrnice and Zubrnice Railway Museum. Unfortunately, during the visit they turned out closed for visitors, but at least I could see the site and environmental communication elements – information boards, signs etc. I visited two visitor information centers, too – City Information Centre – *Municipality of the Ústí nad Labem* and *Dečín Information Centre*.

Due to the proximity of other PLAs and the willingness to widen my experiences of environmental communication I also visited some objects and trails in Elbe Sandstones PLA (*Labské pískovce*) – Labe (Elbe) Canyon (*Labský kaňon*) and Tisa rocks (*Tiské stěny*), as well as in Bohemian Switzerland National Park (*Národní Park České Švýcarsko*) – *Vyhlička Kvádrberk*, *Falkenštejn skalní hrádek*.



Fig. 1. The meeting with LIFE project “LIFE České středohoří” manager Gabriela Kubatova. ©M. Ralle



Fig. 2. Participation in volunteering ranger meeting at Nature Reserve of Holý vrch at Hlinná. ©M. Ralle



Fig. 3. Participation in nature education event “Earth Day”. ©M. Ralle

### 1.3.2. Saxon Switzerland National Park

My study trip continued with the visit of Saxon Switzerland National Park (*Nationalpark Sächsische Schweiz*) in Germany, which is property of the state and works under Saxon State Forest Enterprise (*Sachsenforst*). Therefore, I was welcomed by the staff of NP Administration. Here I had a chance to meet and make informal interviews with the coordinator of the National Park Ranger service Anke Findeisen, as well as National Park Press Officer Hanspeter Mayr (see Figure 4).

During my stay I participated in two events organized by NP Administration. Firstly, I was invited to cross-border meeting of Bohemian Switzerland NP (Czech Republic) and Saxon Switzerland NP rangers, where I could get better understanding of how both sides are working together towards developing a common major cross-border protection area (see Figure 5). In this meeting I saw how two cross-border parks communicate and solve common problems, mostly dedicated to ranger service work and tourism issues. The meeting was held at the Information Point of *Bergsport and Naturschutz*, therefore at the same time it was my first chance to introduce myself with the system of NP information centers.

I was able also to take a part in annual meeting for the tourism stakeholders of the [National Park Partners program](#). The meeting was dedicated to presenting NP topicalities and educating the participants on different nature topics. It took place at the central NP information point – Bad Schandau National Park Center (*Das Nationalpark Zentrum Sächsische Schweiz*). The Center is operated by the [Saxon State Conservation Foundation](#), thus this was also a chance to visit one more very important tourism infrastructure object of the NP.

Additionally, accompanied by J. Mayr I visited one more tourism center – Information Point *ZeugHaus* – good example to show how the information point is used to spread topical information for visitors about the “problematics” of the bark beetle (discussed more at analysis part) in the park and its impact to natural forests (see Figure 6). I also had an opportunity to visit actual site of bark beetle traces and monitor one legal overnight staying place for mountain climbers (see Figure 7). I was



Fig. 4. Discussions on PR and sustainable tourism topics with National Park Press Officer Hanspeter Mayr. ©B. Ralle



Fig. 5. Participation in cross-border meeting of Bohemian Switzerland NP and Saxon Switzerland NP rangers. ©B. Ralle

visiting also typical tourism objects and sites – NP’s top attraction object – Bastei rocks, as well as Lileienstein hill.



1 Fig. 6. The visit of actual sight of bark beetle traces nearby InfoPoint ZeugHaus. ©M. Ralle



Fig. 7. Monitorings to legal overnight staying place for mountain climbers. ©M. Ralle

### 1.3.3. Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park

Next stopping point was Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park (*Parco Nazionale Dolomiti Bellunesi*). The Park Authority is directly under the supervision of the Italian Ministry of the Environment. There I was warmly welcomed and accompanied by NP Research and Information Officer Enrico Vettorazzo (see Figure 8). During my stay he gave me an overview about PR, marketing, sustainable tourism issues, as well as the park's attractions, accompanying me to the most important communication and sustainable tourism sites – museums, tourism information centers, as well as community center.

With the aim to get better understanding of nature education methods we were visiting *'Il sasso nello stagno'* Visitor Center at Pedavena, as well as Information Centre “Val Canzoi”, where we had discussions on nature education, and I was introduced with the role of environmental nature guides of the *Mazarol* Cooperative Associations. Another very valuable visit was to Ethnographic Museum of the Province of Belluno and Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park (*Museo Etnografico della Provincia di Belluno e del Parco Nazionale Dolomiti Bellunesi*), where I was impressed by one project result – an exhibition about fruit harvesting traditions of local inhabitants of the territory of the Park (see more detailed information in Analysis part and Figure 9).

I also had a chance to be introduced with Naturalistic Museum of Belluno and Cultural Center Piero Rossi (see Figure 10), where I had a short meeting with Social Cooperative “Mani Intrecciate”, who is currently responsible for the Center's work and activities. Not less important were discussions on sustainable tourism development, while visiting factory/restaurant “La Birreria Pedavena” (*Carta Qualità* - Campanula d'argento site) and shop with the section of NP *Carta Qualità* products (see Figure 11).

During my stay I was visiting also a couple of most important tourism attractions and routes suggested by NP Administration: Val del Mis – Cadini del Brenton, botanical garden and Soffia waterfall, Val Canzoi, Antiche Strade Romane, Panorama Sul Pizzocco, as well as I took a field trip: Val Cordevole - Agordo - Duran pass - Forno di Zoldo - Longarone – Belluno-Nevegal.



Fig. 8. Discussions on PR and sustainable tourism issues with NP Research and Information Officer Enrico Vettorazzo. ©B. Ralle



Fig. 9. The visit of Ethnographic Museum of the Province of Belluno and Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park. ©M. Ralle



Fig. 10. The visit of Cultural Center Piero Rossi. ©M. Ralle



Fig. 11. The visit of factory/restaurant “La Birreria Pedavena” (shop with the section of NP *Carta Qualità* products. ©M. Ralle

### 1.3.4. Triglav National Park

The final destination of my study trip was Triglav National Park (*Triglavski narodni park*). The park's managing authority is Triglav National Park Public Institution, which operates under the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. There I had a chance to meet and discuss PR, marketing and nature education topics with NP Authority, as well as an opportunity to visit some of TNP information centers and look around the expositions they were offering for nature education and interpretation.

Firstly, I was visiting (1) Info Point Tourist Information Centre, Kobarid, where I had short introduction to TNP, discussions on sustainable tourism and nature education provided by NP Environmental protection service ranger Marjeta Albinini (see Figure 12) and The Head of Department for Sustainable Development Davorin Koren. Later I had a chance to visit three more information centers – (2) Info Centre Dom Trenta, where I had guided excursion on Information Centre and museum by Centre guides Barbara Kavs and Mitja Kravanja (see Figure 13), continued by a guided tour around NP most popular hiking trail – Soca Trail (*Soška pot*), (3) TNP Information Centre Bohinjka, Stara Fužina, where I had a meeting and discussion on nature education and other topics with NP nature education specialist Anže Krek (see Figure 14), as well as (4) TNP Info Centre Triglavska roža & TNP Administration, Bled, where I met and discussed issues with Public relations officer Tina Markun and marketing specialist Mojca Smolej.

During my stay I visited some popular tourism destinations – Tolminka Gorges (*Tolminska korita*), Lake Bohinj, Savica Waterfall and Lake Bled; on a special tour guided by TNP ranger Jernej Legat I also visited Martuljek Falls (*Martuljški slapovi*) in Gozd Martuljek and Triglavska Bistrica Trail (*Pot Triglavske Bistrice*) in Vrata Valley (see Figure 15). Additionally, I visited Slovenian Alpine museum in Mojstrana.



Fig. 12. Discussions on sustainable tourism and nature education provided by NP Environmental protection service ranger Marjeta Albinini. ©M. Ralle



Fig. 13. The visit of Info Centre Dom Trenta and museum, guided by infocenter education specialist Mitja Kravanja. ©M. Ralle



Fig. 14. The visit to Martuljek Falls, guided by NP ranger Jernej Legat. ©M. Ralle



Fig. 15. The meeting and discussion on nature education and other topics with TNP nature education specialist Anže Krek near lake Bohinj. ©M. Ralle

## 1.4. Short description of visited protected areas

### 1.4.1. Central Bohemian Uplands

Scenic mountains of the volcanic origin – Central Bohemian Uplands

Uplands – are located in the northern part of the Czech Republic. The area is more than 1265 km<sup>2</sup>. There are 25 Protected Landscape Areas (PLA) in Czech Republic and the territory of Central Bohemian Uplands is the second largest

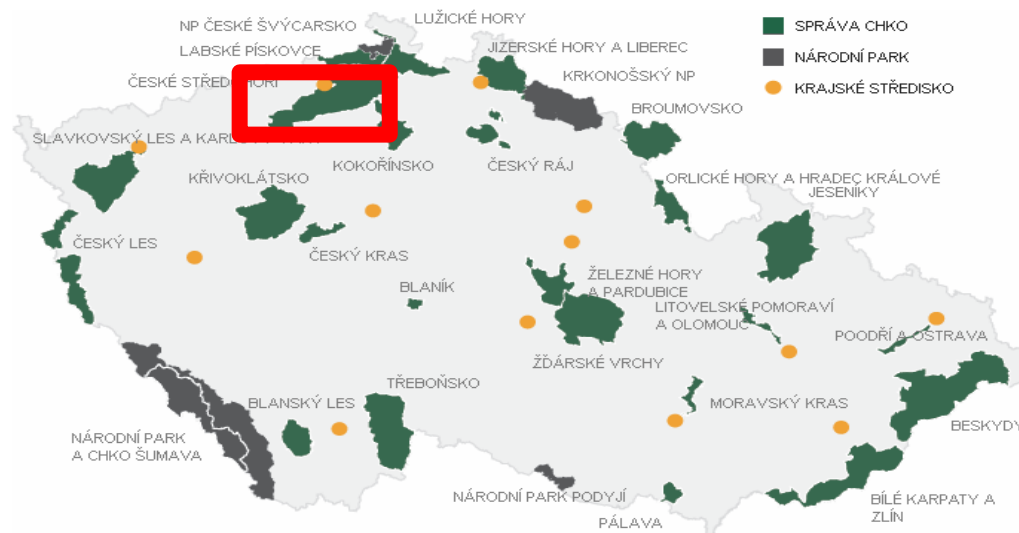


Fig. 16. The [map](#) of protected areas in Czech Republic. With the red square – PLA Central Bohemina Uplands

(see Figure 16). For its unique natural heritage, it was established in 1976. The whole Central Bohemian Uplands PLA includes 43 protected sites with stricter protection regime (5 national nature reserves, 8 national nature monuments, 12 natural reserves and 18 natural monuments). Territory includes 6 municipalities: Česká Lípa, Děčín, Litoměřice, Louny, Most Teplice and Ústí nad Labem.

Territory extends along both banks of the Elbe in northern Bohemia. The mountain range is intersected by the Elbe River and the difference between the lowest and highest elevations is more than 700 meters. The mountains have a unique cone shape, thanks to their volcanic origin, rising from the flatland. The highest mountain is Milesovka (837 m a.s.l.). The landscape is diverse, from fields in valleys to pastures, orchards, vineyards and forested hills.

The area displays extraordinarily rich flora and fauna – more than 360 specially protected species. Here man can find oak forests, dry grasslands or rock steppes. Several species have survived since the Ice Age and some plants are typical for South Russian steppes.

Reptiles are present in the territory such as Sand Lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Slow Worm (*Anguis fragilis*), Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*), as well as the more rare, Common European Adder (*Vipera berus*). This territory is also home to many bird species – from small songbirds to birds of prey and owls as Corn Bunting (*Emberiza calandra*), Stone Curlew (*Burhinus oedicephalus*). Indispensable role here is played by mammals, including small rodents and insectivores, small carnivores as well as large ungulates. Large colony of critically endangered European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*), also European Hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*), Common Shrew (*Sorex araneus*), Beech Marten (*Martes foina*), European Badger (*Meles meles*) live here, too.

There are good living circumstances also for such specially protected plants as Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus*), Calkhill Blue (*Polyommatus coridon*), Fly Orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*), Bohemian garnets (*Pyrop*), Small Pasque Flower (*Pulsatilla pratensis*), Squarrose Kanpweed (*Centaurea triumfetti*).

The territory is widely used for tourists. Every year the area is visited by thousand visitors. Among the most popular tourism destinations here are Raná, Boreč - educational trail, the highest PLA point Milešovka, Lovoš - Nature trail, Panská rock, Vanov waterfall.

### 1.4.2. Saxon Switzerland National Park



Fig. 17. The [map](#) of national parks at Germany. With the red square – Saxon Switzerland NP.

The National Park of Saxon Switzerland was founded in 1990, welcoming more than three million visitors every year. It is located in eastern Germany, south-east of Dresden and is one of sixteen national parks in Germany (see Figure 17) sharing its border with Bohemian Switzerland National Park in Czech Republic (*České Švýcarsko*).

The National Park itself covers an area of **93 km<sup>2</sup>** and is the most precious asset of a Landscape Conservation Area that stretches for more than 368 km<sup>2</sup> around the park on both sides of the river Elbe.

The area's strangely eroded rock formations, which date back to the Cretaceous period, are an unforgettable experience for visitors. With its chalky sandstone cliffs, deeply carved valleys, table mountains and gorges, this fascinating landscape is the only one of its kind in central Europe.

The national park's flora and fauna reflect the diversity of this unique habitat. It is still possible to catch a glimpse of rare species like the eagle owl, the otter and the fat dormouse. Ferns, lichens and mosses thrive in this confined eco-system.

The 93 km region between Pirna and the Czech border is one of the most beautiful landscapes in Europe. Territory is well known for such tourism sites and objects as Bastei Bridge, Königstein Fortress, Lilienstein, Brand Viewpoint, Schrammstein etc.

### 1.4.3. Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park

Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park was established in 1990. The Park Authority, managing the protected area – in 1993. The Park is situated in Italy's northeast Veneto Region, central-southern section of Belluno Province, less than hundred kilometers from Venice. It is one of twenty-five national parks in Italy (see Figure 18). Park includes 15 municipalities: Belluno, Cesiomaggiore, Feltre, Gosaldo, La Valle Agordina, Longarone, Pedavena, Ponte nelle Alpi, Rivamonte Agordino, San Gregorio nelle Alpi, Santa Giustina, Sedico, Sospirolo, Sovramonte, Val di Zoldo. Every year it is tourism destination for more than 120 000 visitors.

Area of NP covers **32 km<sup>2</sup>** – almost 60% are forests, 12% meadows and pastures, over a quarter - rocky environments and 1% water courses and lakes. Streets and built-up areas cover less than 1%

Park stands on the edge of the South-eastern Alps on the southern border of the dolomitic area. It develops at an altitude between 412 m and 2,565 m, therefore it includes a great variety of environments: from the riparian areas of the valley bottom to the high-altitude rocky walls, through broad-leaved tree and conifer forests, high-altitude shrublands, grasslands and screes.



Fig. 18. The [map](#) of national parks of Italy. With the red square – Dolomiti Bellunesi NP.

The Park occupies just a thousand<sup>th</sup> of Italy’s total surface area, but is home for half the species of nesting birds in Italy, a third of species of bats, 40% of butterflies and 25% of nocturnal ones. All the species of alpine wildlife live here (with the exception of the ibex). Here man can find chamois and deer, roe deer and mouflons, foxes and marmots, hares and squirrels. Among the carnivores bears, lynxes and wolves all live here, joined by wild cats since 2014, too. Birdwatchers can observe golden eagle (10 breeding pairs), peregrine falcon, grouse and black grouse, ptarmigan and black woodpeckers, several species of owls and the rare corncrake. The herpetofauna includes 12 species of amphibians and 13 reptiles, including black salamander, toad, Horvath lizard and horned viper.

Without doubt, the great richness and rarity of the flora has been one of the main scientific reasons of the establishment of the Park. 1,700 different species are present in the Park and surrounding areas : which is over a quarter of Italian flora. This heritage includes endemic and rare species and others of high phyto-geographical value such as the *Campanula morettiana* (symbol of NP), Alpine Larkspur and the Alpine Bells.

Among the most popular tourism sites and objects are Val Canzoi, Valle del Mis, Valle dell'Ardo, Val di Zoldo, Val Pramper etc.

#### 1.4.4. Triglav National Park

The Triglav National Park (TNP) is the only Slovenian national park and one of the oldest in Europe, every year bringing here more than three million visitors. The first protection dates back to 1924, when the Alpine Conservation Park was established. But the national park was founded in 1981. National park extends along the Italian border and close to the Austrian border in the north-west of Slovenia, that is, in



Fig. 19. The [map](#) of Slovenia. In the red colour – the territory of Triglav National Park, the only national park in Slovenia



the south-eastern section of the Alps (see Figure 19).

The main goal and purpose of the Triglav National Park is to preserve outstanding natural and cultural values, protect the autochthonous plant and animal world, eco-systems and the characteristics of the inanimate world. The TNP is a public body competent for the only Slovenian national park management.

The park is named after Triglav, the highest mountain in the heart of the park, which is also the highest summit in Slovenia (2864 m). Its territory is nearly identical with that occupied by the Eastern Julian Alps. The park covers **840 km<sup>2</sup>** or 4% of the territory of Slovenia. Park includes 8 municipalities: Bovec, Bohinj, Kranjska Gora, Bled, Tolmin, Kobarid, Gorje and Jesenice.

The territory is rich in vast, enchanting forests, deep-carved valleys, high-altitude pastures, and crystal clear waters that flow down from the slopes of the country's highest mountain, Triglav, into rivers, lakes, and brooks.

With its diverse climate and a wealth of landscape types, the TNP is home to around 7000 plant and animal species. The area is home to species of wide distribution as well as those endemic to the Park. Despite difficult conditions there are more than 1600 plant species. Between them – Alpine Eryngo, Hairy Alpenrose, Clusius' Gentian, Edelweiss, Alpine Toadflax, King of the Alps, Zois' Bellflower, Triglav Rose. The territory offers more than 250 springs, the only alpine (mountain) lakes and one of the largest natural lake in Slovenia.

Here live mammal species as alpine marmot, red deer, edible dormouse, red fox, brown bear, chamois, alpine ibex. As to the birds - white-throated dipper, Eurasian pygmy owl, capercaillie, Willow Tit, black grouse, rock ptarmigan, wallcreeper, golden eagle, Alpine chough and many more find their home here. The territory is important also for endemic Soča (marble) trout, caddishflies, Rosalia longicorn, alpine newt, common European adder and alpine salamander.

Among the most popular tourism sites and objects are Triglavska Bistrica Trail, Soča Trail, Mostnica Gorge, Tolminka Gorge etc.

## Part II: Analysis

In the first part of this chapter I am going to make a short overview of communication issues of all four visited protected territories in accordance with the study objectives mentioned before. I will apply the same structure for making overview of each PA and I will point out all the aspects I had a chance to discuss or got informed about. But since the information given and collected for each PA varies due to different circumstances, e.g.:

(1) due personal reasons – limited time of the visit itself restricting possibilities of gathering all the information needed, (2) very different time slots (sometimes very limited) and circumstances (sometimes with the presentation and all the samples; sometimes during some trip, walk, café visit without good possibility to record all the notes each PA's authority was giving to explain all the matters), (3) limited access to all important information and education sites and attractions (due to the dates of certain visits not all PAs could provide possibility to participate in some real nature education activity or excursion and provide access to different sites due to weather conditions or other aspects, as well as (4) no availability of all the documents and human resources useful to discover all the communication issues PA's authority is dealing with (perhaps some misunderstanding while organizing study trip or the language barrier, or simply lack of time raising unwillingness to meet and discuss the topic thus making this overview wider and more perspective)

**it can't be regarded as a comprehensive and complete description of territories' communication actions, but rather as a subjective and limited collection of information** with the main aim to enrich my personal work interests and directions. To explain the significant contribution of the study tour to improvement of the existing communication practices of Kemer National Park, I have created an additional part at the Annexes section, describing and analyzing experiences in Kemer National Park – my home area which my current work life has the closest relevance with.

The second part of this chapter will be devoted to comparative analysis between visited territories and home. First of all, I will make an overview on some measurable indexes between visited territories, afterwards, I will give conclusions on the aspects my home institution could use in the future work. Thus I hope this chapter will be useful and inspirational both for all my colleagues and other professionals all around the Europe.

## 2.1. Communicating Central Bohemian Uplands



Fig. 20. The view from *Naucna Stezka Boreč* nature trail, PLA Central Bohemian Uplands. ©B. Ralle

NCA of the Czech Republic finds communication of PLA's as very important on institutional level and claims that nature education is the main instrument (1) to impact people's minds and actions in the direction of sustainable development and (2) to raise people's awareness of responsible nature conservation in the sense of respect to all living creatures.

Employees of Central Bohemian Uplands PLA Administration use a big variety of communication forms – the most frequent and important way of acting on the public is the everyday work in which provision of information about the nature and landscape of the Central Bohemian Uplands, the reasons for its protection and the ways and importance of nature and landscape management is the most important. The administration also organizes educational and awareness-raising events, such as guided tours, lectures, small exhibitions, thematic seminars, festivals. Also environmental communication is important in their daily actions (information stands, etc.), as well as provision of published information materials distributed for public.

There are separate chapters dedicated to public relations in the [Management plan of České středohoří Protected Landscape Area \(2015-2024\)](#), as well as in [Analysis of the České středohoří Protected Landscape Area](#) proving the importance of the topic. Therefore, these documents are used to construct analysis part and examine my new knowledge about communication in this territory.

It is also important to mention that currently all the communication activities of Central Bohemian Uplands are covered by the project [“LIFE České středohoří”](#) (2017-2023). The main aims of the project are following:

- ▶ to improve the status of steppe habitats and Natura 2000 species using traditional farming management practices, especially sheep and goat grazing;
- ▶ to increase the area of steppes, stabilizing target species populations, increasing biodiversity in forest stands;
- ▶ **to raise the public interest in the problematic of thermophilous communities and species, care for them and sustainable use of them.**

Therefore, the story about communication activities in this PLA is a bit different from the situation in other NCA PLAs.

## 2.1.1. Visual identity

Since the PLA of Central Bohemian is under NCA supervision, visual identity matters for PLA is very complex. Territory itself historically has its own logo, created in the year 1976 (after administrative changes the new logo was design in 2008), but during the LIFE Project another logo has been created for project communication and is used currently for almost all information materials created within the Project (see Figure 21), therefore it is very difficult question, how to identify territory itself in the most acceptable and understandable way for locals and tourists. Currently it is a blend of the use of NCA visual standards and logo applied, for example, for work clothes and cars (see Figure 22, 23), historically created PLA logo and currently established project logo. Even more complexity of the subject is created by other organizations using their own logos and visual standards within the territory, e.g., information boards (see Figure 30 and 31).



Fig. 21. Logos in use of Central Bohemian Uplands PLA. From the left side first line: logo of NCA, logo of Ministry, logo of Project. Second line: logo of PLA, LIFE logo, NATURA 2000 logo



Fig. 22. NCA logo, applied to NCA car.  
©B. Ralle



Fig. 23. NCA logo, applied to NCA work clothes. In the photo: PR manager of PLA Ondřej Nitsch at the public event Earth day.  
©B.Ralle

## 2.1.2. Public relations

Long term goal of public relation work, explained also in the Analysis of PLA, is increased awareness of local people and tourists coming to the PLA, providing information about the importance of the protected area and the principles of nature conservation, raising public motivation to participate in nature and landscape conservation of PLA, cooperate and support activities of PLA Administration.

Mostly one person with the support from the main structures of NCA PR department works for public relations management in the territory covering such everyday duties as writing press releases, cooperating with mass media, providing content for the social media, creating new information/ nature education materials, as well as supporting nature education events and activities. But since there are also other workers in the Project and NCA team, sometimes the duties may vary from person to person depending on situation.

### **2.1.2.1. Webpage**

Currently there are various webpages communicating issues of Central Bohemian Uplands. Historically the main webpage publishing official information about all the nature territories in Czech Republic is webpage of Nature Conservation Agency [www.nature.cz](http://www.nature.cz), where separate chapter is dedicated to Central Bohemian Uplands – <http://ceskestredohori.ochranaprirody.cz/o-regionalnim-pracovisti/>. Unfortunately, it is hard to find it, because it is well hidden into the structures of the main webpage. Although, when found, it offers wide range of different information. Page provides news section, important information for visitors about hiking and biking opportunities in nature trails, information for builders and municipalities, different documents and project information, publications, photo gallery, as well as wide descriptions of nature values and other characteristics of the territory. The main information is translated also into English and Polish.

Within the above mentioned LIFE Project a new webpage [www.lifecs.cz](http://www.lifecs.cz) has also been created, which is specially dedicated to visitors of Central Bohemian Uplands territory and currently in strong use. In the nearest future it is planned to translate the webpage also into English.

Although the webpage is Project oriented, mostly pointing out all the Project targets and outcomes, it is useful information source also for the visitors of the area. Project implementers find it more suitable, attractive, simple and much more easy to find for the society to talk about environmental problems in the territory, as well as the species which are under strong protection need. On the other hand it is not telling much about the territory as a tourism destination – for example, it doesn't offer specific information about nature trails to visit or things to discover for tourists, therefore, in my opinion, it can't be used as a replacement or alternative to the already existing NCA webpage section.

### **2.1.2.2. Cooperation with media; press releases**

NCA sees cooperation with mass media as very important. Since the territory is not far away from the capital, both – regional and national – media coverage is possible communicating Central Bohemian Uplands. But there is evidence that during last years the role of traditional press releases decreases. Although NCA still finds press releases important tool to impact public opinion about nature conservation issues – annually the number of press releases sent out for mass media is around 40. In 2019. See examples of last press release [here](#) and [here](#). However, as states NCA slowly it is going to the direction of re-orientation to new communication tools and platforms – such as the strong use of social media.

### **2.1.2.3. Social media**

Facebook page for Central Bohemian Uplands has also been created within the current LIFE Project: <https://www.facebook.com/lifecskestredohori/> and basically it is the only social media used to reach the audience of territory. Since the main language used in communication is Czech, Project representatives use Facebook as a platform to communicate mostly with local society and tourists. Currently (July 2019), the page has reached almost 900 followers. First of all, the page is aimed to communicate different project issues, also the page profile is built up to highlight the project, but again – it is very useful tool to communicate the territory itself. Page is used to talk about management activities held in the PLA, highlight and promote the most endangered species, give tips about best

tourism routes and destinations, advertise events organized in the territory, as well as provides other visitor oriented information and discuss problematic aspects of PLA. Important part of all Facebook posts are the use of original pictures representing nature values, events etc., usually captured by the PR manager or NCA staff members.

Communication is held in a non-scientific language, easy understandable for everyone, texts are short. Different content is provided on a very regular basis – usually three times per week. Once per month some information is prepared and translated also in English thus attracting English speaking audience.

#### 2.1.2.4. Information and education materials

There are not very many materials focused on the territory as a tourism destination, for example, maps with the most popular trails or objects. It is only possible to find partial information in materials issued by other institutions. But on the webpage section of PLA, made by NCA, there is still some collection mostly dedicated to nature values: the guide to PLA giving main information on nature values, as well as describing all the national monuments and nature reserves within the territory. Material is combined in Czech, English and German languages. There is also a material on Sites of Community Importance in the PLA, a material dedicated to geology of PLA, a material about PLA as NATURA 2000 site. Two materials about nature trails are also given: Boreč educational trail, as well as Lovoš Nature trail, which are the only trails managed by NCA. All the materials can be found [here](#).

During the LIFE project plenty of useful information and education materials about the specific PLA conservation values have been created. Mostly they can be sorted in two categories: (1) Representative materials about the project, focused on any target group, but more to adults; (2) Nature education materials focused on children target group. Both of them strongly tend to represent endangered species of PLA. The latter set of materials are very attractive with coloring books, fairytales giving children new perspective and important knowledge about protected plants and animals. The main characters are the project symbol (also in the use of Project's logo) - European green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*), as well as European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*), Jersey tiger (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*), Lady's slipper orchid (*Cypripedium calceolus*), Pasque Flower (*Pulsatilla patens*) etc. (see Figure 24 and 25)



Fig. 24. Collection of different information and nature education materials – leaflets, fairytale and coloring books



Fig. 25. Comics depicting different nature values important for PLA



Fig. 26. Samples of souvenir line: woven bags, herbal tea, paper cup tray

During the project also a small line of souvenirs has been created offering very creative and inspirational perspective. For example, woven bags with inserted seeds of natural meadow plants to attract colorful

butterflies, as well as herbal tea from the Central Bohemian district. Also typical souvenirs are created depicting endangered species – paper cup tray, magnets, stickers etc. (see Figure 26).

### 2.1.2.5. Environmental communication

Overall there are more than 500 km of marked hiking trails in the PLA, most of them – marked with different colors (see Figure 34). Currently Administration takes care only about two of the nature trails – of Lovoš and Boreč (see Figure 27), but information about territory has also been provided in other places with the highest attendance – Raná, Milešovka, Panská skála etc. Information boards are widely used, when working with the public. The majority of information is displayed in Czech, but also translation in English and/or German is available at some points, thus reflecting the audience living in and visiting the area.

However, the extent to which PLA Administration has influenced the content and design of these boards varies. As mentioned in the Management plan, the problem is also subsequent maintenance and care, when the boards remain damaged and dysfunctional. Due to these problems, unfortunately the territory of PLA is not very clearly recognizable – there are no united visual standards applied to all information boards in the territory (see Figure 30 and 31), as well as there aren't special entrance signs or symbols of the territory, informing about the existence of exact PLA.

However, the boundaries of PA are marked with the sign of national natural monument (see Figure 29). The strict reserves are also well marked with one or two red stripes (see Figure 28). Sign post system (see Figure 32 and 33) for nature trails has also been established, showing directions, etc. It is well recognizable everywhere and doesn't cause any identity problems with a bit different design, thus functioning very well for the visitor needs.



Fig. 27. Information board at Boreč nature trail. Created by NCA using its visual guidelines. ©B. Ralle



Fig. 28. Two lines, which symbolizes the start of the strict nature reserve. ©B. Ralle



Fig. 29. The sign of national natural monument. ©B. Ralle

Great and outstanding sample of environmental communication within the framework of LIFE project is the use of temporary warning posters about the management activities planned to held in territory (see Figure 35), as well as short explanatory information on conservation aims of protected plants as Pasque flower, what I have observed at Ranger's visit to Reserve of Bare hill at Hlinná (see Figure 36)



Fig. 30. Information board at Vanov waterfall and Vrkoč national natural monument. Created by Ústí nad Labem Municipality within its own guidelines. ©B.Ralle



Fig. 31. Information board at Reserve of Bare hill at Hlinná. Created by Destination agency České středohoří within the guidelines of agency. ©B.Ralle



Fig. 32. Differently fixed sign posts at Boreč nature trail. ©B.Ralle

Fig. 33. Sign posts at Ústí nad Labem. ©B.Ralle



Fig. 34. Trail marking system using color codes: white-red-white; white-green-white. ©B.Ralle



Fig. 35. Temporary poster warning about management activities held at Bare hill. ©B. Ralle



Fig. 36. Explanation on conservation aims of Pasque flower at Bare hill. ©B. Ralle



### 2.1.3. Nature education

Nature education is considered as an essential part of the activities by the NCA, covering the issue of protection of the entrusted territory to the maximum extent. The aim of these activities is to promote nature conservation plans to all groups of the population, including the topics of basics of ecology, development of ecological thinking and feeling with special emphasis on the inhabitants of the region. For this reason, Central Bohemian Uplands PLA has been cooperating with entities such as schools of all levels, children's and youth organizations, clubs, museums, information centers, municipalities, etc. for a long time already.

Currently there is one half load nature education specialist directly working on the topic. Specialists of the Administration of PLA (zoologists, botanist, geologist and others) and volunteer rangers are also involved in the education process. But these resources are not enough to cover all demand, therefore currently there is cooperation with different NGO, who take part in education of schools and other audiences (discussed below).

Another aspect making it difficult to cover nature education topic is the lack of NCA visitor/ nature education center or information point at PLA, therefore staff members of NCA have to cooperate with other institutions e.g. libraries, centers etc. Main methods used by the NCA are nature classes for schools, public events and other activities.

#### 2.1.3.1. Nature education classes

Annually NCA staff provides up to 10 classical lectures for schools educating around 200–300 children. Topics are mainly dedicated to nature conservation, protection and help of wild animals (for example, how and when society should help injured animal or animal babies), as well as bigger story of Central Bohemian Uplands PLA (educating about typical plants and animals and teach about the protection and care of them). Special programs with standard offer for school children are not created.

In nature education NCA highly appreciates cooperation with NGO. [“SEVER středisko ekologické výchovy”](#) (“NORTH Environmental Education Center”) currently is a great partner covering nature education offer, mostly for kindergartens and schoolchildren, but also to other audiences. They have created approximately 60-120 min long outdoor [programs](#) with the aim to arouse interest about environmental topic in children in a very attractive way, trying to avoid the school atmosphere and have a lot of fun during outdoor classes. Usually they are working with 15-25 pupils in one group, optimal age from 5 years.

For kindergartens the programs are aimed at protecting and learning about nature, protecting the environment and sustainable way of life. They are designed especially for preschool children supporting general development in children and fostering desirable competences: independent thinking and action, ability to cooperate, tolerance, empathy, but also ability to experience and express their feelings. In terms of content and form, they correspond to several educational areas. Elements of drama education are widely used together with cooperative teaching, sensory and movement games and other activating means. Programs aim not only at informing children, but also encouraging interest in a specific experience.

To ensure quality and deepen understanding all the programs are offered in cycles from A to F, each of them explaining different topics: general environmental issues, importance of plants and animals, formation of soil and the functioning of the nutrient cycle, water resources, coexistence of humans with animals, issue of food relations, circulation of substances and energy flow etc. They are sorted to get children acquainted with the issue comprehensively and in context, and to balance the theoretical and practical experience. The cycle always consists of min. three tutorials and is intended for the same group of children. Programs in the recommended cycles can be supplemented by any outdoor program or from a special offer. It is paid service for schools.

### 2.1.3.2. Nature education events and other activities

During the year NCA staff organizes or participates at least eight different educational and awareness-raising events for the public of various ages and interests (for example for teachers, pupils and students, farmers or general public). Once per year is held Earth Day, where during my visit I also had a possibility to participate (see Figure 37). It was held next to the Dečín City Library, organized for Dečín schoolchildren. It was joint event, where activities were provided not only by *České středohoří* nature education specialists, but also by Bohemian Switzerland National Park, Dečín Zoo and other partners. In total more than 800 children attended event.

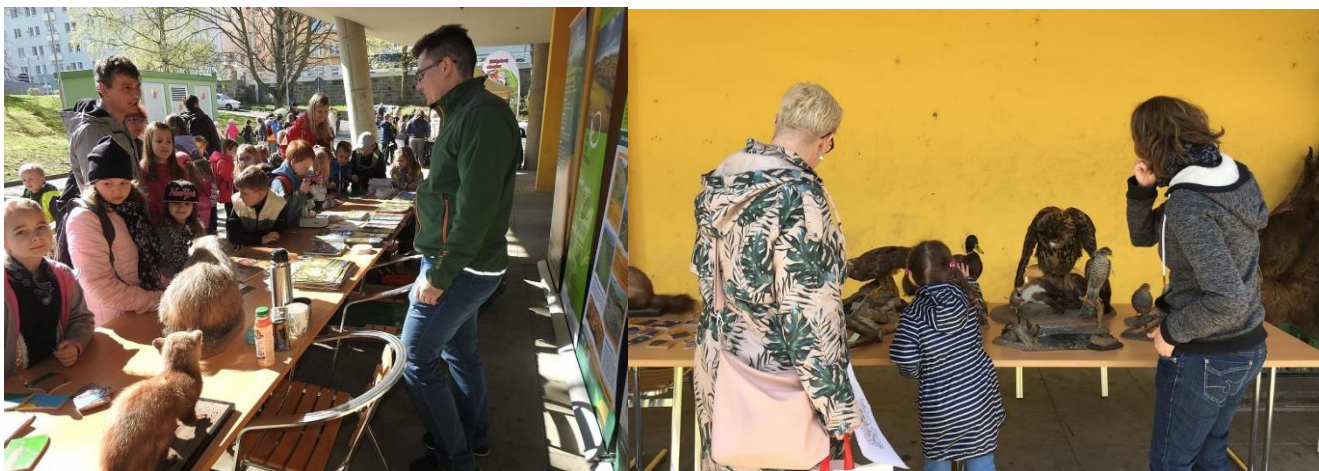


Fig. 37. Earth day event. Activities provided by PLA: puzzles, microscope, coloring books, animal, bird exposition, info materials, comic books, stickers etc. ©L. Černa; B. Ralle

NCA is organizing also two festivals – Festival of Steppes and Festival of Pasture, Rangers day on *Panská skála*, Agricultural exhibition *LIBVERDA* (in cooperation with School of Agriculture), Day of Animals in museum “*Česká Lípa*” (in cooperation with Museum and Eco centrum “*Orsej*”) and Fair Zubrnice (in cooperation with Zubrnice village). Additionally, every year NCA staff prepares 6 thematic seminars/ lectures about the science for public in Dečín Library.

NCA use wide range of different approaches in nature education, but as the most popular they find the methods where all four senses are used to experience nature. During the Earth Day, they were offering different educational puzzles for children, showed different animal skins, provided different printed materials about the project (coloring books, comics etc.), as well as used microscopes, too.

Additional offer to the region’s nature education sector is provided also by the already mentioned organization SEVER. It has strong traditions organizing special conferences and later on – seminars for school teachers on nature education topic providing them with information about non-formal teaching methods in environmental education and encouraging teachers after these lectures and seminars to go outside into the nature with their classes. During my visit I had a chance to participate also in their “Open day”, where they tried to show all the aspects they are covering during nature classes starting with simple games and ending with water exploration with specific tools (see Figure 38).

NCA finds this cooperation duplex. Time by time they are investing their human resources and knowledge in the NGO activities by helping with workshops and nature education activities and providing professional lecturers and information materials. The other NGO, with whom NCA has established ground cooperation is ČSOP (*Czech Union of Protectors of Nature*) and Rangers (*Association of Nature Guards*).

### 2.1.3.3. Nature education and information centers

As already mentioned above, NCA is currently not managing any nature education or information center, therefore for the purpose of educating and reaching PLA visitors they have to use other

structures made for tourists and managed by other institutions. Currently at the territory three different Municipality information centers are providing information also about the nature attractions and objects: City Information Centre – *Magistrát města Ústí nad Labem*, Dečín Information Centre, Information center Litoměřice. Despite this, while visiting these information centers it wasn't easy to find special information about PLA, it seemed they are more tended to represent overall tourism sites and objects without a good frame of being inside in PLA territory.



Fig. 38. Nature education activities at SEVER “Open day”: seed planting, waste sorting, game of environment friendly actions, paper recycling, water quality experiments, water animal research, cognition on tree cycle. ©B.Ralle

#### 2.1.4. Society involvement

Since NCA has not provided the PLA territory with their own ranger service (*Strážci ochrany přírody*) as it is in other territories for example in national parks, PLA has established successful society involvement program providing local inhabitants possibility to become volunteer rangers (nature protection guards) of the territory. Before they become members with legitimate rights to be rangers, they have to pass specific, NCA prepared exam, and every 5 years they have to repeat their knowledge and pass this exam again.

NCA is exchanging information with them via newsletters, but twice per year they have a common meeting, where all most recent topics are discussed face to face. During my visit I also had a chance to participate in such meeting. It was divided in two parts – first part consisted of a hike to Reserve of Holý vrch at Hlinná together with NCA flora expert explaining importance of protecting Pasque flower (*Pulsatilla patens*). The second part was conducted indoors in more formal way presenting the newest

information about PLA. At the end of the meeting there was discussion on problematic issues from volunteer ranger's everyday practice (see Figure 39).

Currently around 30 volunteer rangers of different age and profession are involved in the Ranger network. In their free time they are helping PLA's staff members with control (regulations on PLA), monitoring, nature education (see Figure 40), inspecting (illegal fishing, hunting, wood cutting at forests etc.) functions, they do patrols in the territory and they also have legitimate rights to give a penalty to offenders. PLA deals mostly with offenses of unauthorized entrances, illegal dumps, camping, unauthorized tree felling.



Fig. 39. Annual Volunteer ranger meeting with NCA staff. First part discovering Reserve of Bare hill at Hlinná. Second part dedicated to discussing news and problematic aspects of ranger work at PLA. ©B.Ralle

They assist also in the management activities, as well as they are also significantly involved in the mapping of plants and animals, the control and monitoring of breeding sites of specially protected bird species, the status of memorable trees, and the creation of photographic documentation. While doing ranger tasks, they wear the emblem of the protected area on their left sleeve, and a patch with the word GUARD on it. In addition, it has a metal oval badge with the inscription: Nature and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic.



Fig. 40. Educational activities together with PLA rangers with primary school of Děčín: cleaning Elbe river and Natural Monument Nebočadský luh and afterwards giving lecture about nature conservation and animal species living there. ©L. Černa

Overall, each of them has different functions and also the time spent for ranger tasks might vary, depending on ranger's personal abilities. Therefore, on the one hand NCA finds this Ranger movement as a very good tool for keeping territory

guarded by locals, on the other hand – since they are only volunteers, expectations can't be too high to find this support regular and constructive.

## 2.2. Communicating Saxon Switzerland National Park



Fig. 41. The view of the Bastei rocks, Saxon Switzerland National Park. ©B.Ralle

When establishing Saxon Switzerland National Park (see Figure 41), it was very important to declare that the national park is founded not only to safeguard a complex of naturalistic, historical, landscape and environmental values, preserve the biogenetic values of flora and fauna and the current geomorphological aspects, but also to communicate the aspect of nature awareness– in the sense of spreading idea about nature conservation in a meaningful way to wide range of audiences, educating them on very different aspects.

As stated in Park’s official communication, the most important aspect deserving permanent, objective and open dialogue between the National Park Administration and the locals, is that users of organized leisure and sports activities and other groups understands the matter of “wild nature”. It means that national parks are supposed to be places where nature is given back its freedom and dignity. National parks have the legally enforceable obligation to allow nature to develop according to its own devices while we consciously desist from utilization and protective intervention. The main principle NP has pointed out in their communication means, like leaflets and other materials (for example [here](#)) is “to let nature be”, explaining audience that national parks are created to preserve nature for its own sake as national and international heritage for current and future generations. Only then humans can have national parks for rest and recreation, inspiration and the enjoyment of nature.

Therefore, the key target which NP wants to reach in their difficult communication work with visitors is to let them realize that humans are the nature’s guests here, never opposite, and have to behave with this respect – only this can ensure that future generations can also experience the natural wonders of the national park.

NP Administration has made guidelines towards communication issues described in [National Park Program](#), which are used also below to examine the topic and give a framework of all the information collected during my study trip.

## 2.2.1. Visual identity



Fig. 42. Logos in use of Saxon Switzerland National Park: Logo of NP, logo of EUROPARC Germany, cross-border logo of Saxon Switzerland and Bohemian Switzerland national park, logo of Saxon State Forest Enterprise.

To achieve a unified appearance of the national park and its values in the public, united Corporate Design with the logo of the official protected area was created in the year 1990 and widely used until now. This corporate design particularly applies to all signs and markings in the environment, publications, the website, events, souvenirs, as well as working clothes of the employees of NP.

Additionally, also the logo of Umbrella organization of the large protected areas of

Germany, EUROPARC Germany, is used in some cases. Not less important is the use of cross-border logo of Saxon Switzerland and Bohemian Switzerland national parks, as well as logo of Saxon State Forest Enterprise (*Sachsenforst*), under which NP Administration operates (see Figure 42). Due to this big variety of logos and visual identity guidelines, NP Administration sometimes feels slight identity problems while preparing information materials, but overall environmental communication is not the subject of big “pain”.

## 2.2.2. Public relations

NP Administration declares that public relations’ work aims primarily to promote integration of the National Park into the region and understanding (credibility) and support for the work of the National Park Administration. In the work of public relations a variety of means and methods are used. Mostly three persons of NP Administration are working with all the public relation matters, but of course participation of all staff members in communication processes is highly appreciated for an active, objective and timely fulfillment.

### 2.2.2.1. Webpage

NP Administration has its own official webpage <https://www.nationalpark-saechsische-schweiz.de> mostly dedicated to different national park visitor groups, starting with tourists and giving the basic information they need about main tourism attraction sites, travel advices, sustainable tourism products and services, correct behavior while being in nature; and ending with special groups – offering special education programs for schoolchildren, youngsters, people with disabilities and families. The page is well structured offering topicalities, visitor information, nature education section, overall information about the park and other useful information. The webpage is provided in German, English and Czech languages. The content is well customized, but German content is more tended to topicalities for local visitors.

### 2.2.2.2. Cooperation with media; press releases

NP Administration regards press releases and special events organized for mass media representatives as the main tools in PR, because press, radio and television provide the chance of reaching a big audiences using little human and time resources. To reach the highest possible level of acceptance the Administration mostly focuses on the regional inhabitants and therefore the regional media. Currently there is cooperation with one regional TV, three radio stations, two daily newspapers and a couple of

webpages of municipalities. Time by time NP gets also national media coverage. Constant personal contacts have also been developed with six journalists, earning loyalty and respectful attitude to the topics of the national park agenda.

Yearly average number of press releases prepared for mass media is around 40. Mostly they are dedicated to the NP news, events organized here, as well as nature “problems”, like the bark beetle issue, fire, storm causing damaged infrastructure etc. However, NP Administration would like to focus their communication more on the topics of scientific research of NP flora and fauna, but this comes together with internal communication problems between the news distributors on the one side and researchers working in the field on the other, where the latter ones have to feel stronger connectivity with public interests.

Another aspect Administration has to face on the daily basis of PR is the work with media and film companies, book authors and photographers who come here with the aim to popularize NP. Administration has to evaluate their needs and impact they tend to make with their art or media reportage, intensively caring about Park’s needs, therefore redirecting their attention to the perspective of nature awareness, wisely compromising result as much as possible.

Since every year the territory of NP is welcoming more than three million visitors, NP Administration is not keen on developing social media accounts with the aim to popularize NP. They tend to avoid additional publicity of already existing tourism objects, which are already on the fine line of being loved until the death. Another aspect is limited capacity of Administration’s human resources. The work with social media would demand additional person keeping an eye on social networks non-stop manner to control the content and interact with audience and its needs.

### 2.2.2.3. Information and education materials

There is a great variety of different information materials devoted to tourists starting with the maps for hikers, cyclists and other specific tourist groups and ending with specific materials about tourism services in the region, nature education and guides offers etc. As well as there are specially made leaflets popularizing newest park’s problematics or philosophy which might be specially pointed out for tourists or other “park users”. For example, the leaflet “Give nature what it needs” concentrating on nature friendly actions, while visiting NP (see Figure 43). Information materials can be find also at the [webpage](#).



Fig. 43. Different information materials provided by NP and other partners: NP tourism map, information on information centers, flyers etc.

Therefore, for NP Administration there is a lot of infrastructure to care about. All the routes in national park are well marked using unified sign systems (see Figure 44), but the most important environmental visitor guidance “tool” through the territory are information boards and signposts available for visitors any time. Two officially established signs informing about entrances of NP territory are also available – the green one set up in the touristic places, the sign in stone – within the borders of NP (see Figure 44).



Fig. 44. Different information systems: sign posts, NP special signs – woden for tourism objects, stones – for Park borders. ©B. Ralle



Fig. 45. Different information boards: classical about NP and nature objects, always including section about park rules, newly installed drone ban boards on existing infrastructure elements, as well as additional information boards on actual environmental issues such as bark beetles. ©B. Ralle

According to the observations of the NP Administration, they are important means for orientation (highlighting the right way in the environment), discipline (focusing Park’s guests’ attention on allowed and forbidden actions while being in nature) and information (for example, information on dangers while being in nature, history and other aspects of natural and cultural values) . Among them ordinary boards (map with location and overall information), signposts (direction signs) as well as very special ones (warning about drone ban) can be found. All of them – retained in visual identity standards (see Figure 45).



### 2.2.3. Nature education

NP Administration sees the concept of nature education as an **education for sustainable development**. As it is pointed out at the webpage, it is important to understand environmental education as the “communication of information, methods and values to the acting and responsible person to deal with the consequences of his actions in the nature and the social environment enabling to act in an environmentally friendly way as a contribution to sustainable development”.

An important concern here is to make all people aware that all the matter and energy in the economy comes from nature. Before it is taken up again by nature, it goes through the social, cultural and spiritual world. It is all about understanding the role and responsibility of humans as part of natural cycles and to convey the knowledge that nature can exist wildly even without humans in a charming, exciting and beautiful way. To make this concept successful, first and foremost education is needed. Therefore, nature education in NP is organized to experience “nature wilderness” thus promoting personal engagement with the aim to change attitude and behavior respecting nature’s needs for sustainable future for both – nature and human beings.

#### 2.2.3.1. Nature education classes

NP Administration is offering wide range of different nature education programs (classes) for kindergarten, school children, families and people with disabilities (see detailed offer [here](#)). The programs are devoted to such topics as national park animals during the winter season, nature awareness experienced with all senses, holiday program with games in nature, the taste of NP – wild herbs, fairy tale heroes of the NP, ecological connections such as the water cycle, food chains and photosynthesis, balancing national park (economical needs vs nature conservation), experiencing wilderness (the use of the concept “Let the nature be nature”), forest role (man and nature relations in NP), time concept in nature (“nature system” vs “human system” in various cycles and rhythms), national park development (forest stabilization by “natural disasters”?) etc.

Very important while leading nature classes is to let audience experience “nature in nature”, therefore all classes are kept in nature using all possible senses and additionally – creative games and modern nature interpretation methods. All of the programs are free of charge for the children and adults coming from public institutions. This excludes the offers of the national park guides (discussed below). Currently the offer of nature education at NP Administration is managed by one person. Since 1990 protected territories in Germany have cooperation with German Commerzbank providing university students with the internship in environmental education (see detailed information [here](#)). The bank is providing interns with the salary and other useful support in the sense of living and working, whilst the park – an opportunity to test their ability in the work of nature education, carrying out daily programs for children, youth and adults.



Fig. 46. Training of students preparing them to lead educational programs at NP. Lead by programs manager of NP – Margitta Jendrzewski. ©B. Ralle

Annually approximately 20 students are working with these educational programs. 10 students start their internship in April, 10 – in August. At the beginning of the assignment, interns are adequately prepared during two weeks of training. During my visit in April started one of the trainings (see Figure 46) and I was present at the moment they were educated about NP basic questions at NP Headquarters. In total they learn to teach 8–9 education programs. Usually the programs are designed for 10 up to 30 participants, running from middle April until the end of October (depending on specific topic) thus approximately 4000-6000 people, mostly schoolchildren, are educated per year.

### 2.2.3.2. Nature education events and other activities

NP Administration is not organizing many public nature education events. The main during the year are following: April –Wool Festival in the National Park Center Bad Schandau, June – Annual meeting of 350 Junior Rangers from all over Germany at Hinterhermsdorf, September – Saxon Switzerland Market at the city Wehlen and the annual Mountain meadow festival at “Johannishof” near the Lilienstein.

Another offer for visitors is guided hikes, where NP Administration is involved. Although hikes are provided by [Certified National Park Guides](#), NP Administration here plays the strong role with support system. All of guides are authorized and commissioned to supplement the work of the National Park Administration, which means all of them are competent and qualified by the National Park Authority with certificate in the field of geology, flora and fauna of the Elbe Sandstone Mountains, history and culture of Saxon Switzerland. Mostly guides are locals or living within the distance of Dresden. Therefore, all the guides’ offers are advertised on NP webpage and also information materials are designed and created by Administration using Parks visual identity.

The offer includes regular discovery tours – guided hikes, lectures and excursions, usually taking place once a week on fixed dates and with fixed routes. It is paid service and any interested person can apply to them. All the events can be easily overlooked at webpage’s [event calendar](#) and there is also an overview in the flyer about [Discovery Tours 2019](#).

Another option is to choose individual guided tours. Guides offer walks on various topics. [The list of the topics](#) can be found at the webpage. They can arrange also personalized tours, but the topics and places to visit are already very various in the list.

In all the programs offered by guides emotional aspects are included promising “impressive, moving, sensual experience” at the same time covering current topics on tourism and nature conservation in the national park and landscape conservation area of the Saxon-Bohemian Switzerland. In the webpage there is also full updated guides’ [contact list](#) to contact any of them directly.

NP Administration works also with separate education activities for special groups of children. One of them are already mentioned [Junior Ranger movement](#), which is EUROPARC Federations concept program for schoolchildren with the aim to deepen their knowledge about national parks’ topics using informal education methods. Activities from the park to park are organized differently. Currently four groups of junior rangers are established – for three of them activities are provided in cooperation with local schools and NGOs, but for one of them, where primary school groups from Lohmen and Bad Schandau are participating, activities are provided by NP guard (“ranger”). Mostly they go outside on a weekly discovery tours, but at the bad weather – have educative and fun activities indoors.

The big role organizing both nature classes for schoolchildren, as well as excursions, lectures and educational seminars, workshops for public is played also by The Saxon Switzerland National Park Centre (*Nationalpark Zentrum Sächsische Schweiz*), managed by Saxon State Conservation Foundation (*Sächsische Landesstiftung Natur und Umwelt*). They offer not only wide variety of nature classes for schoolchildren, public events, excursions and lectures, but also a range of individual programs for groups and families. All the activities and offers can be easily found on their [webpage](#). Events – in webpage’s [calendar](#).

Educational programs for schoolchildren ([primary](#) and [secondary](#) school) is paid service, but the charge for different lectures, events and workshops depends on the source of finances. They host also different society education project events and lectures, which can be free of charge. Convenient for users is their online application system at the webpage, as well as they have a great mobile application called “Äugen App” to use for not missing any of events organized by Centre.

### 2.2.3.3. Nature education and information centers

NP Administration in nature education process wisely uses variety of different nature education/information centers. In their own management there are six different centers, each focusing on other topics (for example, see Figure 47), as well as already above mentioned The Saxon Switzerland National Park Centre, which is managed by Saxon State Conservation Foundation.

Six information centers managed by NP Administration was created in different years, but the system they work everywhere is the same. The centers are run more as information platforms or points, during the working hours there is no worker keeping an eye on exposition or spreading information. Centers run automatically with regulated doors opening and closing after re-scheduled timetable, depending on season and exact center specifics. As NP Administration states, mostly all of them are meant not to give all possible information about the sights around the centers, but some small inspiration and knowledge to grab before continuing the visit outside in the nature. They all also provide the basic information materials about tourists’ sites. All of these centers are free of charge. Annually approximately 500 000 visitors use their facilities. More information and descriptions about the centers can be found [here](#).

A different story is about The Saxon Switzerland National Park Centre (see Figure 48), which is the central visitor and information center of the NP. In the center there is a souvenir shop, wide variety of different information materials, as well as several permanent and temporary exhibitions and a large multi-vision show, which is paid service with good discounts for schoolchildren. And, as already discussed above, the center serves also as meeting and educational facility. The number of visitors here exceeds 50 000 per year.



Fig. 47. National Park information point Zeughaus, where special movie about bark beetle currently is presented, replacing traditional NP movie. © B. Ralle



Fig. 48. The Saxon Switzerland National Park Centre, where the small section is dedicated to NP information materials, as well as many educational materials on nature topics, souvenirs from region are on sell. ©B. Ralle

## 2.2.4. Sustainable tourism



Fig. 49. The logo of NP “National Park Partners” program

As NP Administration states, annually more than three million guests are coming to NP for active recreation, therefore for keeping the balance between sustaining nature in its variety, peculiarity and beauty and enabling tourists to experience the nature in its variety an intense

experience of nature there is need for cooperation between NP Administration, guests and hosts of NP region. Common hurdles can best be overcome by acting in partnership. That's why NP Administration has launched the project [“National Park Partners”](#) (see Figure 49). The offer is aimed to accommodation and catering companies, providers of holiday apartments, but also to transport companies and tourist providers within the region of NP.



Fig. 50. Issues on “National Park Partners” programm, marketing their offer

In this “NP Partners” program all the participants are perceived as “Ambassadors” of NP message. They identify with the region, work in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner and serve to the guests as a competent advisor. Currently in this network are 46 active members, but every year there is possibility to apply also for new members. There are specific criteria all interested partners have to meet, as well as terms and conditions to exist in the network, as well as benefits, all of Partners can gain from being in the network, e.g., publicity, information access and special bonuses. One of the Partner network benefit is special issue, where they can advertise their offers (see Figure 50).

Every year Park organizes also annual meeting for all the Partners, discussing actualities of the Park, as well educating about different nature issues. I have also a possibility to participate in the meeting. This year during the annual meeting special section to bark beetle “problematic” was devoted, thus raising tourism stakeholder awareness about bark beetle impact on NP territory, also problematic experiences of tourism was discussed and presented, as well as the previous years “hot” events, like fire on NP was on agenda (see Figure 51).



Fig. 51. Meeting about sustainable tourism issues, as well as educational part on different NP problematics about biodiversity saving challenges (fire, bark beetles etc.). ©B. Ralle

## 2.3. Communicating Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park



Fig. 52. The view on the mountain area of Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park. ©B. Ralle

Communicating Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park (see Figure 52) is stated as a one of the most important aims of this protected area. General policy law concerning protected areas sees NP as important place dedicated to preserve nature as well as anthropological, historical and architectural values and traditional activities, apply management methods to integrate man with natural environment and between all these functions – **educate** society, make scientific studies and organize recreational activities.

As stated in the report of Environmental Interpretation Plan (discussed more below), Belluno Dolomites National Park is not just a legislative “classification” or abstract entity. It is a set of landscapes shaped not only by time and natural phenomena, but also by the millennial presence of human beings. The Park is a literally infinite reservoir of “things to interpret”, stories to tell and discoveries to make and that must be communicated to be understood, appreciated and defended precisely for the reasons of its existence and may be called as communication area to work with.

While interpreting extraordinary landscapes and their transformations there is a need to raise public awareness not only about immaterial values, but also the need to rediscover compatibility lost. When interpreting animal species, trees and flowers, it is important not only to communicate the necessity of conservation of biodiversity, but also “assurance” it gives for human beings in the future. Interpreting rocks, canyons and rivers, there is not only the need to communicate the struck by the ingenuity of the forces of the Earth, but also necessity to invite people to treat them with caution and respect. And during the interpretation process of houses, villages, cultivated fields, it is important to explain preservation of the “roots” of the historic places, but at the same time to honor the memory of the people, so as not to lose meaning and value of identity, traditions and knowledge. Thus it is the mission, and perhaps the deepest meaning of the Park to interpret all of this with coherence and creativity, with capable seriousness.

To raise Park’s communication in the sense of nature education, public relation work and sustainable tourism relevant information and planning tools are included in two NP documents. First of all, one chapter dedicated to communication is included in the [NP Master Plan \(2009\)](#) – the updated and revised version of the first “Park Plan” issued in 2001, secondly, there is one special Annex called

[Environmental Interpretation Plan](#) of the “Master Plan” directly devoted to the issues of environmental education, communication and information. Both documents are used as the basis for following examination of Dolomiti Bellunesi NP communication aspects.

### 2.3.1. Visual identity

NP Administration sees park’s corporate design as a tool, which can guarantee the maximum effectiveness of communicating the territory, carefully following graphic standards and proper use of corporate colors. Administration has a rule – if there is always guaranteed attribution to the Park’s logo and the visual system is used correctly, it can help construct more effective public image of entire national park. The use of corporate design must be immediately “recognizable” as a signal used (only) in this protected area and this is direction NP Administration is strongly working with.



Fig. 53. The new NP logo established in the year 2008 vs old one, created in 1993

Nowadays park uses its historical logo depicting park’s symbol – *Campanula morettiana*. Logo was created in 1993, but to promote future improvements, in the year 2008 new identity guidelines were made, followed by Environmental interpretation plan in 2009 (see Figure 53). Despite modern times, there were no dramatic changes in the new identity concept – the logo was kept almost in its previous version. Only the font of letters in the name of national park was changed, as well as new characters for children education developed, currently widely used in environmental communication, as well as information and educational materials (see Figure 54).



Fig. 54. Parks new characters used for corporate design of NP work car. NP logo – for banner. ©B. Ralle

Updated corporate design is applied in a big variety of different communication tools – information boards, park’s border signs, flags, “Carta Qualita” information stands, building details, books, flyers, leaflets, cars, working clothes etc. The design is well noticeable

therefore reaching the aim to market the territory of NP on a very high level. There is very small amount of environmental elements, where the old identity is still visible.

### 2.3.2. Public relations

As NP Administration states, communication and dissemination activities have a fundamental role among those made by the Park. In fact, the establishment of almost all protected areas is accompanied

by the (non-random) birth of urban legends, false information, misunderstandings about the roles and skills of the Park.

The situation is complicated by the fact that NP has to talk to multitude people – public bodies, associations, and different authorities, each with different and often conflicting expectations. For this reason, being able to communicate “what the Park is” and “what it does” for NP is indispensable operation, but far from being simple and obvious. Currently only two people on NP Administration are dealing with all the issues attributed to public relations, nature education and sustainable tourism, therefore during the long-term experience many wise mechanism are developed to increase societies’ awareness of nature conservation in the NP.

### 2.3.2.1. Webpage

As already mentioned, Dolomiti Bellunese National Park is under the supervision of the Italian Ministry of the Environment, who has developed united webpage for all the national parks in Italy, where also [separate section](#) about this NP is created providing basic information about protected area, nature values, point of interests, visitor centers, eternities, facilities, education, news, accommodation, local products, event calendar, directions, contact information etc. But the park has also its own independent webpage [www.dolomitipark.it](http://www.dolomitipark.it), which has been online since May 1999 and therefore is the “oldest” website from all Italian national parks. But it has to be pointed out that the strength of communication on the network has been expanded by a strategic collaboration with [www.parks.it](http://www.parks.it).

For NP Administration currently this webpage is the main tool in everyday communication, providing visitors with the useful information on already pointed topics, as well as giving a deeper insight in all of them, more emphasizing everyday actualities, as well as providing webpage’s visitors visually more attractive and easier approachable and navigable content. Since 95% of Park visitors are Italians, the webpage version is more updated in Italian than the rest of the translated webpages, but it has to be highlighted that webpage is translated in more than 20 languages, for the most used (*English, French, German*) – the content is almost identical with local.

### 2.3.2.2. Cooperation with media; press releases

NP Administration mostly works with regional media focusing its work on local audience. In the NP region there are three daily newspapers, one weekly newspaper, two local radio and one local television. Couple of time per year also national media is interested to report about national park. Mostly the topics are attributed to actualities in nature conservation, as well as different excursions organized by local guides. The crisis communication usually is made by some accidents happening in the nature, for example, last October it has been a big storm, and therefore it was very important to warn Park’s visitors about possibly closed infrastructure objects.

Annually around 20–30 press releases are prepared for mass media, as well as this content and additional content is sent also around 2000 e-mail addresses to communicate Park’s news. Additional audience is reached via [www.parks.it](http://www.parks.it) webpage, where contact person list with 2000 e-mails is collected in news [subscription system](#).

Additional outstanding audience every year is reached also in cooperation with *Belluno Radici* network, which issues



Fig. 55. NP Advertiser at newspaper “Bellunese nel mondo” about summer educative program for park visitors. ©B. Ralle

special newspaper “*Bellunesi nel mondo*” (see Figure 55) communicating news (including information about NP) to all the Belluno Province generations – also those who emigrated from Italy long time ago. In total 10 000 copies are sent to 52 countries and approximately 30 000 people read them. The network has its own radio station “Radio ABM” reaching audience of 12 000 people, as well as webpage <https://www.bellunoradici.net/> visited by 20 000 people every month. Therefore, NP are promoted from different aspects – for local on-site living Belluno citizens, as well as for those all abroad in different countries popularizing NP as attractive destination for holidays.

The only social media NP administration currently uses for NP promotion is [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/), but because of lack of human resources last year’s communication work on it hasn’t been very active and planned. NP Administration admits the management of Facebook account has to be the job for special social media expert working intensively on it.

### 2.3.2.3. Information and education materials

There are great variety of information materials provided for tourists. Mostly they are issued in Italian and English language. Some of them, for example, about nature education is available only Italian language. The most important is the maps of tourism routes, some of them more detailed describing overall parks nature and cultural values, some – tourism facilities. There are also special materials dedicated to those tourists who are willing to discover NP by bike, specific issues dedicated to “Carta Qualita” specialties, as well as specific tourism objects – museums, Botanical garden, mountains, mountain churches etc. There are also some materials – comics – dedicated specially for children education, as well as scientific guidelines for Park’s sustainable planning (see Figure 56). Materials can be find also at [webpage](https://www.dolomiti-park.it/).



Fig. 56. Different tourism information materials, as well materials dedicated to nature education. ©B. Ralle



### 2.3.2.4. Environmental communication

NP Administration sees Park's infrastructure and its elements such as information boards, direction signs etc. as very powerful tools to support tourists during their discovery through the NP, especially, if the tours are made independently.

Currently all the top attraction sites are well marked and signed and easy to find even for foreigner tourists. There are two types of informative boards marking the park boundaries (see Figure 57), as well as sign posts, which helps easy navigate. In each attraction site there are also information boards providing information about nature trails and treasures found in the site, in many of sites also educational information about nature friendly behavior is communicated (see Figure 58).



Fig. 57. Two types of NP boarder signs – one with park's logo, other – more official. ©B. Ralle



Fig. 58. Typical information board, as well as separate board teaching the visitors about NP rules. ©B. Ralle



Fig 59. Corporate design applied also to buildings: Environmental Education Center “La Santina” is located in Val Canzoi, as well as at NP Office at Feltre. ©B. Ralle

All of environmental communication elements are created within visual identity standards and requirements (see Figure 59), even information boards, created by other institutions are created within the visual standards of NP, just adding their logo on it.

Since many NP paths were destroyed during the strong storm in October 2018, during my visit (April) also additional boards or additional notifications on already existing information boards were in place, informing about the trails closed or under reconstruction.

There is another interesting element of nature interpretation and environmental communication park has used in one of the most popular nature trails of the park - different characters created from wood adding useful, appropriate nature cognition for children audience (see Figure 60).



Fig. 60. Different animals created in wood and used as educative elements at Val di Canzoi nature trail. © B. Ralle

### 2.3.3. Nature education

NP Administration has to admit that nature education is one of the most significant activities carried out since the Park was established. But because of lack of human resources at NP Administration, the turning point for providing different educational activities for locals and park guests was given by the training course of official Park guides carried out in compliance with the provisions of the law framework. Since then the Park guides are very helpful to provide nature classes, special events and other activities.

Currently there are approximately 15 local guides (working directly for “*The Mazarol*” – Regional Nature Environmental Guides Cooperative), specialized in the variety of different topics. But only two of them work full time leading nature education programs for schoolchildren. All of them have to be certificated as environmental guides as well as to take special courses dedicated to nature values in Dolomiti Bellunesi NP. Courses are organized by NP Administration. Next year Administration plans to organize new courses to improve guide knowledge. During the training 50% of the content is provided by staff of NP administration, 50 % – by nature experts from the field (flora, fauna etc.).

#### 2.3.3.1. Nature classes for schoolchildren

Since school year 2002-2003 the Park guides carry out environmental education activities called [„School in the park”](#), which content is created by NP Administration. The educational offer is wide and articulated for the kindergartens, the primary and secondary schools of first and second grade. It is possible to choose from one-day hikes in the Park, half-day outings, lessons and workshops in the classroom, green stays lasting 2 or 3 days.

The [topics](#) covered during the meetings and excursions range from the biodiversity of the Park (ecosystems, animals and plants) to aspects related to geology and geomorphology; from the flora and vegetation of the Park to the study and observation of animals; there are modules dedicated to local culture, history and traditions. This year there is also a new module, dedicated to the natural return of

the wolf to NP mountains and to the strategies of coexistence between the predator and the traditional human activities.

Nature education activities are not free of charge, but in order to offer the schools the opportunity to add the environmental themes in the didactic programs, an economic contribution supplied by the Park Authority has been provided. In annual Park's budget there are around 20 000 EUR for school education support. If the school, who is taking part in the educational program, is located within the territory of NP (in one of the 15 Park Municipalities), NP Administration pays 60% of programs fee, but if the school is outside of park's territory, NP Administration pays 50% of programs fee.

To manage an application every year during the August NP Administration is sending the nature education program offer via e-mail to all the schools in the region. Application is simple using the registration form, which has to be sent via e-mail. The number of educated school children yearly is around 2000 – 2500.

### 2.3.3.2. Nature education events and other activities

In addition to traditional nature education activities for schools, the Park is promoting, organizing and financing numerous other nature education events (approx. 15 per month). The main goal is to give park visitors – from beginner to expert – various opportunities to explore nature and broaden knowledge about NP in any season of the year.



Fig. 61. Advertisement of “Mazarol” offer for tourists at “La Santina” education center. © B. Ralle

Mostly events are managed by Park guides from The Mazarol Cooperative – [The Mazarol Walking Guides Society \(MWGS\)](#) (see Figure 61). There are some programs they carry out on regular basis in different park's objects. For example, the program “At the Park with mom and dad” (“[Al Parco con mamma e papà](#)”) providing for park visitors guided excursions to the most popular park sites such as Valle del Mis, Val Canzoi, Valle dell'Ardo, Val di Zoldo, Val Pramper educational workshops at Val Canzoi, Environmental Education Center “La Santina” (*Centro di Educazione Ambientale la Santina*) etc., which are run from April to September. The programs activities are offered for everyone: families with children, the elderly, people with disabilities or those who have difficulty walking, and even for those who simply love to visit special places without having too much effort. The participation in these activities is free of charge because the cost of the guides is paid by the NP.

Without these regular educational events, NP Administration has encouraged opportunities to get to know the NP territory also in other various ways. The Park function as a partner in different projects aimed to visitor education on NP venues. For example, during the July within the project “We throw a stone in the pond: paths between nature and culture” (“*Lanciamo un sasso nello stagno: percorsi tra natura e cultura*”) in the Park was held female choir concert “On the peaks. The mountain: legends, emotions, prayer” (“*Quando le cime. La montagna: leggende, emozioni, preghiera*”). The initiative is carried out by the Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park and the Civic Library of Pedavena, in collaboration with the “Pro Loco of Pedavena”. Also photography exhibition by famous Italian nature

photographers “Beyond the enchantment: a journey through the mountains of the Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park” (*Oltre l'incanto*) was organized at Parks surroundings in cooperation of NP Administration.

Another activities Park is involved are connected with sustainable tourism development. With the aim to promote “*Carta Qualita*” products, as well as other tourism services, park participates in annual

exhibitions like “Artigiano in Fiera” (in Milan)”, also other national and international exhibitions, summer festivals at local communities (Feltre and Rivamonte), Mountain honey festival at Val Canzoi etc.

### 2.3.3.3. Nature education and information centers

NP Administration sees [visitor centers](#) as the showcase of the Park’s territory, a combination of culture and information both for tourists and residents. They can help to promote the local economy and be discovery points of cultural and environmental values. Large or small (but also thematic museums, and other centers, such as environmental education centers) they can play essential role in presenting the protected area to the public and communicating its identity.

They are not only useful for transmitting the characteristics and values of the territory, but can also serve as general information and orientation distributors, contributing to intercept and direct tourist flows, to favor a gradual knowledge of Park, and to preserve various sites. They also represent useful elements in the development of tour packages and interpretation and education programs.

Its agreed with local communities to develop information centers in three different geographically strategic areas of the Park: in Pedavena, in the area of Feltre, in Belluno, and in the mining site of Valle Imperina, in the area of Agordo. They deal with different aspects: the Visitor Center of Pedavena focuses on an interior journey to discover the ethical reasons for the conservation of nature (see Figure 62), the Visitor Center of Valle Imperina focuses on miners, chair makers, and the legendary wild man, while the Visitor Center of Belluno deals with the whole territory of the Park. In Belluno there is the Natural Museum, too, which focuses on the Park's flora, whereas the Environmental Education Center “La Santina” is located in Val Canzoi, is the reference point for nature education activities. The facility has laboratories complete with scientific equipment (microscopes and stereomicroscopes, a telescope, telescopes for observing fauna), small terrariums and aquariums, different games and tools for nature education, teaching room and a documentation center. It is used also for hosting different events, such as the annual “Mountain honey festival” in Val Canzoi.



Fig. 62. *Il sasso nello stagno* Visitor Center at Pedavena. ©B. Ralle

### 2.3.4. Society involvement

NP Administration states that one of the most difficult tasks for NP Administration is the work with local communities living within the borders of the national park or nearby to show them as the Park’s residents the importance, benefits and possibilities of NP. Therefore, Administration is working with this audience trying to reach their trust and credibility in communication level. One of the key to successful cooperation is the use of their potential of being the holders of unique knowledge and protagonist of the identification, enhancement and communication process of a shared image of places.

In the year 2017 a very successful project [“The biodiversity cultivated in the Park”](#) was created as the result of a collaboration between the Museum of Seravella, National Park and the Professional Institute of Agriculture and Environment “Antonio Della Lucia” of Feltre. During the project agronomic and

ethnobotanical researches was documented about numerous local varieties of apples and pears, the lexicon was created, as well as technical and naturalistic knowledge, the use, and the conservation



Fig. 63. Samples from exhibition “Enviabile heritage of the Belluno mountains” at Ethnographic Museum of the Province of Belluno and Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park. ©B. Ralle

techniques was compiled. As the final step an exhibition “Enviabile heritage of the Belluno mountains” was created at Ethnographic Museum of the Province of Belluno and Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park showing all the results (see Figure 63).

Thus this project nicely represents an importance of local people’s interaction with the territory in the past. The results are also the heritage to the future society to not forget these traditions. As stated in Park’s “Environmental Interpretation Plan” it is extremely important to bring the light and enhance ancient knowledge, crafts, historical memories and culture that are “in danger of extinction” and that strongly contribute to the identity and specifics of the protected area.

Another successful way NP Administration has found in the work with society is [Piero Rossi Cultural Center](#), established by NP Administration in the former fire station situated in Piazza Piloni, in the heart of Belluno (see Figure 64). As NP Administration states, it is not a traditional Visitor Center, but a meeting place for both tourists and residents. The center provides a cafe offering tastings of local typical products labelled with the Park's “Carta Qualità” (Quality Card) a space dedicated to children with babysitting service, a shop with publications, clothes and gadgets of the Park. Currently it is managed by [Social Cooperative “Mani Intrecciate”](#), who periodically organizes there exhibitions of photography and paintings, conferences, cultural meetings, food and wine events, events dedicated to children etc. Per year – around 20 different activities. All of events have to be approved by NP Administration.



Fig. 64. The offer of NP Information materials and Carta Qualità products at Piero Rossi Cultural Center. ©B. Ralle

### 2.3.5. Sustainable tourism

The one step further in the work with local society, in even more practical level, Park find its effort in the sense of supporting local habitat economic needs in sustainable tourism direction. The Park has a big role in helping to make tourism development options more reliable in the economic area affected by the existence of National Park. NP Administration see establishment of an effective communication with local as a future result of sustainable thinking of park guests, which can serve as guaranty for sustainable development also for the Parks' nature values, thus creating territory more sustainable in all aspects – on the one hand giving entrepreneurs the seeds for further spreading of better understanding of NP values, on the other hand developing also their economic interests.

Another aspect here is Parks' strong role on protection aspect – it has legal opportunities to conserve not only the nature, but also cultural heritage – especially, agricultural heritage. As Park states – typical agricultural products today are threatened by the massive industrialization of the agri-food sector. Therefore, to promote the area as a whole, consisting of naturalistic values and cultural values in the year 2000 the [“Carta Qualità”](#) Project was implemented in NP territory focusing on cultural, anthropic and economic quality, which assigns the Parks logo (*Campanula morettiana* – silver and golden label; the golden campanula identifies the products obtained using organic farming methods; the other companies are characterized by the silver label) to services and products that guarantee high standards of quality and respect for the environment.

As stated at Parks's webpage – “Carta Qualità” is a circuit in which services and product most closely related to the “park system” are inserted and therefore represented to tourists and residents. It is an initiative of “territorial marketing”, intended to promote the territory of the Park as a whole system consisting of animals, flowers, mountains and landscapes, but also of qualitative tourist facilities to welcome visitors – starting with typical agricultural products and ending with traditional handicraft productions. Participation in the Project is possible for any tourism company operating in any of the 15 Municipalities of the Park.

The business activities have been divided into six “sectors”: tourism (farms, hotels, shelters, bed & breakfasts, restaurants), agrarian-food production (traditional products – organic farming etc.), typical craft productions, environmental education and hiking activities, business services, events and festivals. Currently more than 250 entrepreneurs are in this network.

Protocols have been drawn up for each production sector, which establish the following: quality and environmental protection requirements that the economic activity must respect to be able to boast the Park “brand”. The benefits which the product and service providers included in the “Carta Qualità” can get have also been declared. The most important is promotion of their visibility organized by the Park at local and national level (their information inclusion in a specific section of the Park's website, on printed leaflets, Park newsletters), possibilities to participate in local and national fairs etc., as well as the great option to be included with their products in all the market places, where those products are sold for Park's visitors.



Fig. 65. NP advertisement on milk packages of milk producer “Lattebusche sca”. ©B. Ralle

From the other side, the cooperation between Park and “Carta Qualità” members has to be two-sided. Good example of this cooperation is showed between local milk producer [“Lattebusche sca”](#) and the Park, annually providing some issues of carton milk packages with promotional materials about the park (see Figure 65). The number can reach 500 000 per one edition. Thus they are used as very creative and effective

communication tools to spread information about the park for great number of people. Additionally in cooperation with the company also separate information stand with NP information materials are located in the Companies run “White bar” ([Bar Bianco](#)), annually visited by 2 million visitors.

Another great cooperation is established with factory/restaurant “La Birreria Pedavena” (Carta Qualità - Campanula d'argento site). In the tourist shop, which the company runs, separate section of NP Carta Qualità products is provided, as well as information materials and other representative tools to use for Parks’ advertisement (see Figure 66). Overall the Park there are about ten places, where it is possible to buy Carta Qualità products.

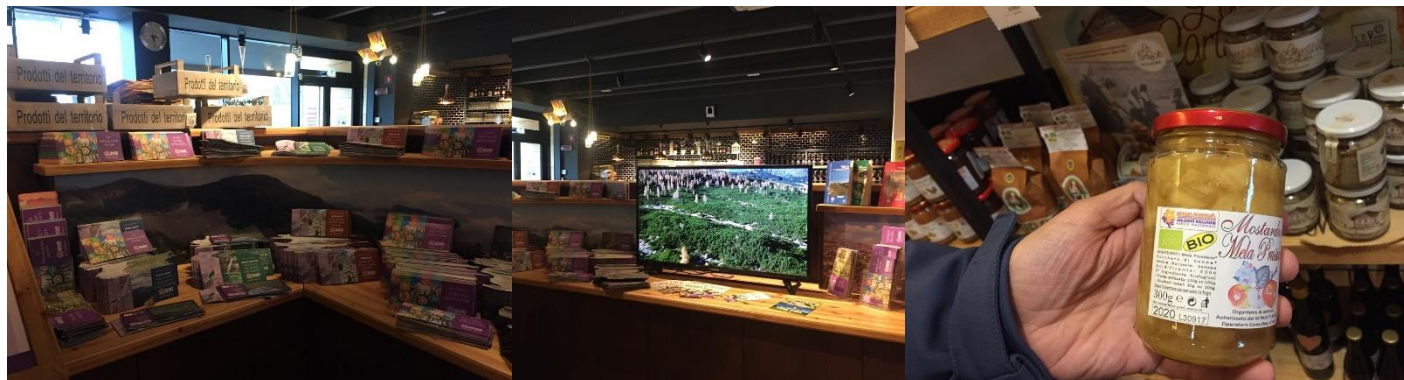


Fig. 66. The offer of NP Information materials and Carta Qualità products at tourist shop of factory/restaurant “La Birreria Pedavena” (Carta Qualità - Campanula d'argento site). ©B. Ralle

To widen Park’s experience in sustainable tourism management since 2015 NP has joined [European Charter](#) for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas becoming “Sustainable Destination” and fulfilling [Charter Part I](#). In 2018 NP has started to [implement also Charter Part II](#) “Sustainable Partners in Charter Areas”. It was a process of transforming “Carta Qualità” regulations to Charter’s certification [requirements](#). As a result NP supplemented the network with 20 sustainable sleeping facilities: apartments and B&Bs, hotels and refuges, hostels and guesthouses with recognition granted by EUROPARC Federation to the companies that are committed to respect the environment and promote forms of low impact tourism. In all of these sleeping facilities information stand containing all important NP information materials is located to create existing link with the park (see Figure 67).



Fig. 67. Information stand of NP information materials at one of Charter Part II sleeping facilities “B&B L'Isola delle Rose” I stayed during the visit. ©B. Ralle

Every year Park representatives organize common meeting of all Charter members, informing them about Park’s actualities. This year special section in the meeting was dedicated to the results of NP visitor survey conducted by professor of The University of Padua in cooperation with the University of South Australia. The research includes detailed information on the NP visitor profile, recreational activities carried out, their motivations to visit NP, interest and satisfaction related to the tourist services offered and to the environmental quality of the protected area.

## 2.4. Communicating Triglav National Park



Fig. 68. The view on the Lake Bohinj, Triglav National Park. ©B. Ralle

Triglav National Park (TNP) (see Figure 68) Public institution states – as for any other national park also for them fundamental purpose of national park is the provision of nature protection, exploration, education and visiting and recreation to the extent level. And similarly to other national parks TNP aims to be a park for prosperity and enjoyment of people. But there is an urgent need to find a good balance between protecting and preserving nature, eliminating exploitation of natural assets, i.e., all activities that are contrary to the objectives of insurance, and provision of spiritual, scientific, educational and recreational opportunities for visitors. Especially because of constantly growing Parks visitor number, which is nowadays estimated around two million per year, from them – 1,3 million – only during the summer season causing a lot of problems and discussions.

Therefore, conservation of natural and cultural heritage, sustainable development and **communication with the general public** are **challenges** and the tasks of the national park, which provides local residents and visitors with active co-operation approaches the importance of protecting nature and cultural heritage and sustainable development in the Alps. TNP Administration is already investing a lot of energy in the work of balancing the needs of nature conservation and growing tourism, where also the needs of local habitants for economic development are not to be ignored.

Idealistic future vision of TNP included also in Park's Management plan (2016-2025) is successful coordination of different interests aimed at the same goal – preserved nature, landscape and cultural heritage, as well as sustainable development. The values of the national park are a motive and an attractive destination for visitors who respect the exceptional nature and cultural heritage and peace and quiet. NP Administrations expects that someday visitors will come in different forms of sustainable mobility and the park infrastructure will be arranged directed towards the less vulnerable areas of the national park where they are offered possibility for experiencing nature and relaxation. Therefore, these are the main issues NP Administration works towards in the sense of communication.

There are several documents prepared aiming at communication topic. One of them is the already mentioned [TNP Management plan \(2016-2025\)](#), more detailed information about the progress of Plan's implementation can be found in Annual reports ([2017](#), [2018](#)), as well as useful information on the topic of nature interpretation can be read on "[TNP Information Network: strategy](#)". To examine all the levels of TNP communication work, all of these documents are used as a framework in the following analysis.



## 2.4.1. Visual identity

For the first time NP created visual identity standards establishing logo in 1981, when the NP was founded, but in 2011, when the park celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary new logo and [visual identity guidelines](#) were worked out. Currently they are applied in strict manner to all of Parks infrastructure elements such as signposts, information boards, as well as also to all information materials – leaflets, journals, magazines, maps. Also work clothes and other elements of corporate identity, such as cars, busses and any other means of communication – banners, flags are well held in the visual standards (see Figure 69).



Fig. 69. Current logo of Triglav National Park, created in the year 2011 vs historical logo, created in the year 1981

The main element of visual identity is Park's logo established by law in 2011, while creating new visual identity guidelines. The symbol is a stylized image of Triglav mountain, the chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), which is the most typical animal species inhabiting the alpine territory (gams in Slovenian), Triglav rose or the pink cinquefoil, one of the symbols of the Triglav National Park, and the inscription of Triglav National Park.

Within the sustainability project [“Park and enjoy nature!”](#) (“Parkiraj & doživi naravo!”) in 2016 children friendly elements of visual identity were also created. They are three native breeds of domesticated animals, widely used for communication campaigns until now – Drežnica goats, Bovec sheep, and Cika cattle (see Figure 70).



Fig. 70. Characters of Triglav National Park, widely used at social campaigns and cartoons, as well as children friendly elements on education materials

## 2.4.2. Public relations

As already mentioned above, particular danger for national park during last 20 years has been an increase of mass tourism in the summer and winter season and the rising number of one-day guests. Visitors are using NP facilities for different purposes, mostly for recreational activities on mountain landscape such as hiking, mountaineering, alpinism, skiing, sledding, swimming, skating, sport (fly-) fishing, mountain biking, riding, sailing, kayaking, racing, cannoning, paragliding, driving with motor bicycles and cars.

NP Administration has sorted out many issues connected with this active tourism, where there is need for extreme communication actions and mostly all of them are on agenda of NP public relations and nature education. Between the most problematic tourist actions are unmanned aerial vehicle (drone) usage, walking unmarked paths, harvesting of forest goods in illegal amount or illegal areas of NP (herbs, forest fruits and mushrooms), camping outside of designated areas, walking dogs without leashes, using pyrotechnics, private vehicle to drive as far as possible in the park trails or even drive out of roads, illegal fishing, inadequate feeding of wild animals during the winter season.

They may lead to the disturbance of wildlife species, destroyed habitats, endangered animals and plant species, even serious reduction of them, disturbance of animal and bird migration routes or the

negative impact of their nutrition and reproduction, increased compaction and soil erosion, soil contamination, emission of gases, odor, noise, and a large amount of waste etc. Therefore, NP Administration is working very hard to communicate these topics in different ways starting with informing on Parks webpage, print information materials, social media, press releases to media, different communication campaigns, ending with different nature education activities. Currently in the field of PR and nature education approximately 17 members from staff are involved; 12 of them full time.

#### **2.4.2.1. Webpage**

National Park has its own webpage [www.tnp.si](http://www.tnp.si). The content is available in Slovenian providing various information about the national park, its nature and culture values, nature education, event calendar, tourism sites, publications, press releases, different project information, contact information, as well as other important information.

The information on webpage is well structured and designed, the page is very attractive and meets modern standards and requirements (big pictures and headlines etc.). The main information of the webpage is translated also in English, adapting the content for foreigner audience, mostly focusing on tourist needs. In the English version there is no information about nature education activities and press releases aimed to local people, also the part of different project information, as well as publications is available only in Slovenian.

#### **2.4.2.2. Cooperation with media; press releases**

Regarding cooperation with media important players for NP Authority are the local correspondents. The Park is divided in 8 municipalities and 5 local newspapers, 4 TV and radio stations are present in the territory. Therefore, the communication work towards local community is very complicated – sometimes communication messages are sent out only to one municipality, sometimes to all of Parks municipalities, but only the most important news is attributed to the national media. The average number of press releases per week is 1–2, but it might vary from year to year from situation to situation. As NP Authority admits, it is very hard to make even communication plan, because situation with the daily topics is changing every day. In the year 2018 a number of press releases were around 80, in the year 2017 – 50. In some cases, also special media events are held to inform public about important topics.

#### **2.4.2.3. Social media**

One of the aims towards more effective communication pointed out in the NPs' Management plan is to upgrade digital communication tools by establishing social media. Therefore in 2018 three social network accounts for TNP was created – [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#). Currently they all are in active use, but it is too early to make any conclusions or analyze their impact.

Facebook serves as platform for interaction with both locals and foreigners in the communication of different nature awareness topics, informing audience about nature friendly behavior in the nature, creating different events organized by NP and partners, as well as sharing important information provided by NP partners – mountain associations etc., mostly dedicated to nature friendly behavior, as well as some tourist friendly opportunities. Big part of content is bilingual – Slovenian and English, thus reaching wide audience. Currently (July 2019), Facebook account has reached around 2 500 followers, but it is estimated the number will grow. There is also some small money available from NP Administration resources devoted for promoting some of the most important topics for certain audiences.

Instagram is more dedicated to the visual senses. One of the Park's Rangers with the qualities of making great photography is the responsible person for keeping the account updated. Currently there are around 100 different posts, mostly consisting of various photos dedicated to nature's beauty, thus

representing Park's flora, fauna, and various tourist activities. Currently (July 2019) the follower number is around 2 160, but it is continuously growing. YouTube channel so far has the smallest amount of subscribers – only 14. There are 12 different video available on the topics of raising nature awareness (campaigns), as well as promotional video of NP. The views of video vary – some of them have around 500 unique views, some – less than 20, bigger reach of videos is achieved on Facebook.

#### 2.4.2.4. Communication campaigns

With the aim to change the park visitors' actions and habits to more nature friendly ways TNP Administration is working in the direction of different communication campaigns. For the last two years at least five different campaigns can be highlighted.

Since the park is strongly working in the field of sustainable development linking nature conservation principles with sustainable tourism, the second campaign was more focusing on raising the awareness of the importance of preserving and protecting the natural and cultural heritage of Julian Alps and Triglav National Park. With the slogan **“Thank you for preserving nature for future generations”**, the [campaign](#) aimed at encouraging visitors to enjoy the nature of the Julian Alps with a high level of respect and preservation of its features. The idea of campaign is to make people aware that only by preserving and protecting greatest values of NP society can ensure that future generations will also have a chance to admire exceptional views from the highest peaks, hold their breath while watching stunning sunrises and sunsets, and enjoy exceptional flora and the fauna of the mountain flowers of the Julian Alps. During the campaign [promotional video](#) was made.

One more campaign is focused on the changes of Park's visitor habits, this time in terms of nature friendly hiking using existing Park's trails. NP Administration has to point out that the pressure of visitors on the Triglav National Park area is high and is constantly increasing. Hikers in the park area have over 800 km of marked paths that are built to provide excellent experiences and sights in the park in a safe way, but there are sorts of visitors walking outside the paths thus making harmful impact to the nature, as well as putting themselves into danger.

Therefore, to raise Park's visitors' awareness about anthropogenic load problems NP Administration in cooperation with Mountain Partner organization has created [campaign](#) with the slogan **“Walk along the marked paths”(Your step matters. Stay on trails. Protect the soils.)**, pointing out that the use of marked pathways contributes to the preservation of the living space of wildlife and to the preservation of the always enticing mountain vegetation. In the mountains, the soil is extremely susceptible to erosion processes. Walking outside the marked paths further accelerates these processes. Therefore, the nature conservation, management and aesthetic aspect of visiting a sensitive mountain area requires a respectful visitor who takes into account the fragility of life in the mountains.

Another [campaign](#) is aimed to raise public awareness of fireworks as a danger for nature when used during different celebrations, traditionally on New Year's eve. NP Administration points out the bad role of fireworks in the sense of disrupting wildlife (mostly scared animals, who have to consume additional energy escaping from the firework sound, so they need more food what is not abundant in the winter), polluting the air and the environment, as well as threatening human safety. The campaign slogan is **“No to pyrotechnics!”**. Also this campaign's central message is summarized in a [short video](#).

Another campaign with [promotional video](#) is created within the project **“LIFE NATURAVIVA Biodiversity – Art of Life” “One with nature's diversity – Biodiversity counts”** pointing out nature friendly behavior, while being at national park and accepting its rules and recommendations, which has key importance in protected areas worldwide: to protect and conserve exceptional, pristine and unique nature's phenomena.

Another international campaign NP Administration is participating in as a partner is joint awareness [campaign](#) of the Alpine countries **“Be a part of the mountain!”**. The campaign is focused on the Alparc network of protected areas in the Alps, in which the Triglav National Park is actively involved. It aims to inform the public about the negative effects of winter activities (mountaineering, ski touring, snowshoeing, ice climbing) on wildlife and to promote responsible mountain traveling in the nature of sensitive areas. The central message is summarized in a promotional [video](#) with a call to the winter visitor to be considerate of wildlife.

#### 2.4.2.5. Information and education materials

NP Administration is making a great variety of different information materials, many of them – already traditional and prepared regularly. Mostly aimed to reach the park visitors, but there are also some issues oriented to professionals – nature expert audience to introduce them with the research results on flora, fauna etc.

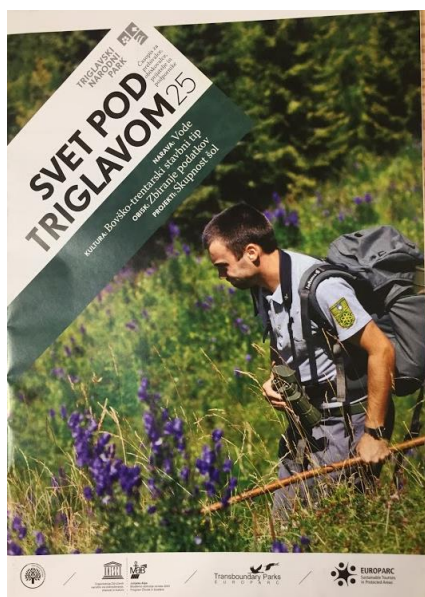


Fig. 71. Magazine “Svet pod Triglavom”

One of typical “products” NP Administration issues on a regular basis (annually one or two issues) is magazine [“Svet pod Triglavom”](#) (see Figure 71). It is intended for inhabitants, visitors, nature lovers and supporters and provides useful articles about NP actualities, nature issues, culture and people, sustainable tourism, ongoing projects. It is available free of charge to the residents of the park, as well as available in all information centers of the NP

Another regular information material is [“Triglav National Park Biosphere Reserve Julian Alps visitor guide”](#) (see Figure 72), issued in Slovenian and English usually once per year. It includes a program of activities, tips for excursions and useful information for the visit of NP. Also this edition is available in the information centers of NP and tourist offices.

Within the [project “LIFE NATURAVIVA Biodiversity – Art of](#)

[Life”](#) for the first time this year the NP Administration had made also [special “Triglav National Park Kid's guide”](#) (see Figure 72) for young park visitors, issued both in Slovenian and English language. The content is similar to traditional guide, but it is more visually attractive for children (larger pictures, more colors, infographics etc.), tended to teach more about the diversity of life – biodiversity, as well as the content is written in popular language. It is distributed to more than 7000 pupils from 39 primary schools and it is also freely available in park’s info centers.



Fig. 72. “Triglav National Park Kid's guide”, 2019 and “Triglav National Park Biosphere Reserve Julian Alps visitor guide”, 2018

The scientific educational journal [“Acta Triglavensia”](#) deals with contributions related to the research and protection of living and non-living nature as well as material and intangible cultural heritage in the area of the NP and in the wider area of the Julian Alps. Professional interventions in natural sciences, social sciences and connecting sciences. The contributions are in the form of scientific articles and short news.

There are also some other information materials prepared with the aim of providing information: [General leaflet about the Triglav National Park](#), leaflets on different NP Information centers, information on different tourism objects: [Soška pot](#), [Path of the Triglav Basin in the valley of the Vrata](#), High Pasture [Klek](#), [Pokljuka and its peat bogs](#), as well as material for people with disabilities – [Triglav National Park for everyone](#).

#### 2.4.2.6. Environmental communication

As stated in the NP Management plan, the network of information points and park infrastructure (recreation centers, the area of Lake Bohinj, hiking trails and huts, cycling, tourist, historical and thematic paths), as well as the guidance and educational boards and signs are a support system for many visitors to the national park.

NP Authority has made educational park paths in the total length of 67 km. Almost 500 different units of park infrastructure are installed

together, including number of signposts, also special ones for marking Park's entrance (see Figure 73), information boards, which are intended primarily to inform and direct visitors to the parks territory. All of signs and boards are well kept in the visual identity standards of NP (see Figure 75, 76), despite some of them still are not updated to the last visual standards. As well as there are additional information boards made in the case of urgent matter. For example, during my visit there additional information board warning visitors about a closed path and describing alternative ways of exploring "Peričnik Fall" was set up (see Figure 74).



Fig. 73. The border sign of Triglav National Park. ©B. Ralle



Fig. 74. Warning board about closed bridge over "Peričnik Fall"



Fig. 75. Information boards located at different tourism sights. ©B. Ralle



Fig. 76. Specially created information boards and sections of boards explaining NP rules. ©B. Ralle

### 2.4.3. Nature education

Educational activities for NP are one of the key directions towards reaching the aim to find the balance between natural and cultural heritage provision and sustainable development in the NP. NP Authority implements many activities in the field of education. Currently they are working on reaching wider audiences of schoolchildren as well as continuing the work with other audiences – residents and visitors of NP in the work of educational events.

There is ongoing [UNESCO program and the LIFE NATURA VIVA project](#) (mentioned already above) aiming at establishment of The community of schools of the Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO program “Man and the Biosphere Program” – UNESCO MAB), which is considered as the first and largest connection between elementary schools and the management of the protected area on such a large scale and in such an extremely important area as the Triglav National Park and Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve. It includes 44 educational institutions, connecting more than 7000 elementary school pupils, directors and teachers in the care for the Triglav National Park and its influential area (see Figure 77).

The aim of the Community is to bring the youngest generation closer to the nature conservation and management of the protected area. NP states that “genuine contact with protected nature is essential in helping children grow into adults who will have a responsible attitude towards nature and people.

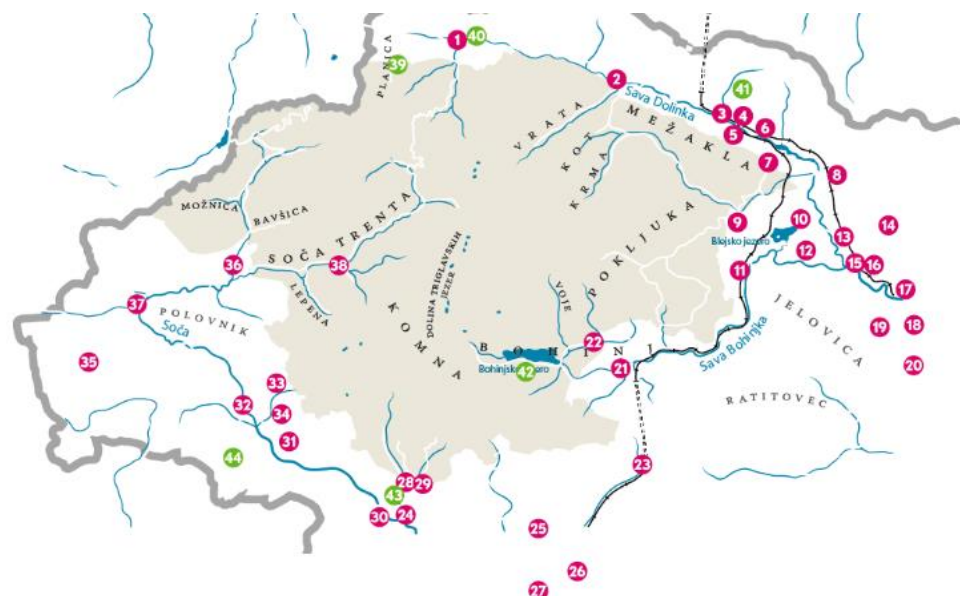


Fig. 77. The network of Community schools of TNP and Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve

Therefore, educational activities are focused on providing nature experience since this is a precondition for understanding the complexity of its interwoven factors and processes". The long-term objective of the Community is to ensure implementation in cooperation with stakeholders out-of-school activities in the field of education in park municipalities, thus pursuing the goals of management of a protected area in the field of nature protection and sustainable development. Pupils accept the commitment to a responsible attitude towards nature and cultural heritage, while the community brings benefits with special educational contents to the children. Additionally, this year NP organized also summer camp for these community schoolchildren.

#### 2.4.3.1. Nature classes for schoolchildren

The target aim of NP Authority is to encourage school children to visit NP at least once during their school year. Annually, NP educates more than 5000 children, which is important because without a genuine contact with nature there can be no desire to protect it and there are hopes that with the establishment of Community network the number of participants will grow significantly. NP Authority has prepared various [programs](#) that are related to the school program, and allows children to experience nature on their own. Educational workshops are suitable for kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. The [content](#) and duration are adjusted to the age, school program and time available to the group. Workshops take place both in NP info centers and in the field (for example, see Figure 78).

There are three different sections of discovering NP. **Gorenjska**, where the nature education offer includes discovery and learning more about such topics as (1) the design of the surface with the glacier valley; (2) invasive species; (3) peat bog; (4) tree and meadow species, (5) animal traces, (6) water life and animals, (7) animal and plant species & Golden Crown Prince



Fig. 78. School group visiting InfoCenter Dom Trenta. ©B. Ralle

Fairytale; (8) life in the forest; (9) Pocar's homestead exposition. Then there is also possibility to visit the peat bog Goreljek on **Pokljuka**, as well as to visit some of learning trails in **Trenta**: (1) Soška pot, (2) Technical heritage trail, (3) Path of the Krivopetnice following footprints of the animals. There are also two different workshops – created for blind and visually impaired.

All workshops on the field can be combined with the visit of the nearest info center in [Bled](#), [Bohinj](#) and [Trenta](#) with an introductory presentation of the park, film and an acquaintance of the exceptional richness of biodiversity in the area of the park. For example, when visiting infocenter Bohinj, it is possible to do a workshop on Traditional Knowledge of Handicraft or workshop on getting to know life in Bohinj Lake.

NP is organizing some of the offers in cooperation with its partners. For example, when visiting infocenter Bled in cooperation with [Zavod za turizem inkulturo Žirovnica](#) there is possibility to visit

also permanent exhibitions "Raj pod Triglavom" on the natural and cultural heritage. Also a guided walk through the Tolmin Gorge is provided in cooperation with Parks partner [LTO Sotočje](#), as well as the offer of visit Slovenian Mountain Museum in Mojstrana, exploration of Vrat Valley and creative workshop is organized in cooperation with [Slovenian Mountain Museum](#).

#### 2.4.3.2. Nature education events and other activities

NP Administration organizes annual and occasional activities of different educational programs: nature days for different target groups, excursions and other forms of guidance. All of activities provided and/or organized by National Park are introduced at NP webpage's [calendar](#). The offer includes guided tours to different NP objects with TNP guides – during the summer months to Tolminka gorge, Mostnica gorge and Soča trail, also some thematic events like Astronomical evening at Vogel. There is also offer for tourists to take guided hike to reach the top of Triglav safely, made in cooperation with mountain guide IFMGA. All the offers are held approximately once a week and are paid service.

Currently many education activities free of charge for public is held within already mentioned European project [LIFE NATURAVIVA "Biodiversity - the Art of Life"](#), between them –photo exhibitions "Magic Nature at the Pocard Homestead", "Nature connect us - Parks of Dinarides", as well as free summer cinema sessions, demonstrating movie "Undamaged".

Another direction NP Authority is currently working towards is educational opportunities for physically impaired, blind, visually impaired and deaf people. The Park has started cooperation with Crater Lake National Park, USA and other Slovenian Partner organizations within the project frame "[Accessibility for all](#)". Institution plans to gradually manage access and adapt infrastructure in the NP territory and modern technologies, such as customize web page and set up audio guides. In the future, events for the interpretation of natural and cultural sites for the blind and partially sighted are also planned.

#### 2.4.3.3. Nature education and information centers

One of the NP target goals is to raise awareness among random visitors, some target groups (school groups, hikers, mountaineers) and ultimately the local population about the importance of preserving nature and cultural values of the larger area of the Julian Alps and indirectly of all protected areas. For this aim [information centers](#) can be used perfectly.

NP Administration currently administrates three different information centers – [Infocenter Dom Trenta](#), [Infocenter Triglavska Roža Bled](#), [Center TNP Bohinj](#). Additionally, [mobile information terminal](#) has also been created; as well as one [Info Point – TNP Green House in Kobardid](#) offering wide range of tourism materials and souvenirs. There are also information points provided at [Pocar homestead in Zgornji Radovni](#), [Slovenian mountain museum](#) in Mojstrana and other places at the Park, like schools etc. In 2018 TNP infocenter information and environmental activities were visited by close to 90 000 people.

Currently each of the info centers offers a bit different perspective for visitors. **Dom Trenta** provides multivision presentation of the TNP, an exhibition on the living and inanimate nature, cultural landscape and the role of man in nature. It is possible to watch the film installation about the beauty of the forests "Forest–Time Triptych", view the 8-screen video installation "The Secret of the Soča–The Time Horizon" about underwater world of the Soča river. Additionally, center offers the visit of Trenta Museum presenting ethnological heritage and the cultural and historical traditions.

**TNP Bohinj** offers place for different events; permanent exhibition "Jezero" is located here as well.. It provides room with a view used as an event area, reading room, place for rest. The Center also offers the shop with Bohinj local products, as well as kitchen. The place is used also as a local community support center, and it offers mountain bike rental, too. (see Figure 79).



**Triglavsko Roža Bled** is provided with permanent exhibition “Paradise under Triglav” with a rich multimedia presentation, a shop with a wide variety of local products, souvenirs and hiking, mountaineering literature, coffee shop, multimedia hall. Here various events, workshops and



Fig. 79. Infocentre TNP Bohinj offering variety of soveniers, information materials, as well as exhibition aob.ut lakes “Jezero”. ©B. Ralle

occasional exhibitions are held. Center serves also as mountain or electric bicycle rental.

Mobile information terminal has been implemented within the INTERREG III project between Slovenia and Austria “Borderless nature experience” (2007 – 2013). It consists of a processed van and carefully designed and up-to-date equipment for presentations in different environments and at various events. It enables the transmission of audiovisual content through the multimedia equipment installed in the vehicle. In the bus mobile exhibition of TNP “Man and nature go hand in hand” is installed. The bus is present in various parts of the park, and sometimes travels throughout Slovenia and abroad. In the most visited places in the park, accessible by vehicle, it contributes to awareness and information of tourists, and also serves for presentations for local residents and schools.

In the future vision, explained at NP Management plan, it is intended that information centers Triglavsko Roža Bled, Dom Trenta and TNP Bohinj, as well as other information points will work interconnectedly and will be included in educational, guided tours and other tourist destinations programs. Programs will also be market-oriented and will complement the already made local offer tourist entities. Information centers will be recognized for local residents as an important environment that promotes and complements the existing local tourist offer and adds a higher value. Local tourist providers and information centers will co-create the tourist offers and have business connections in implementation.

To realize this future vision, during last two years NP Authority has organized [training for tourist guides of Biosphere reserve of Julian Alps](#) and also TNP. NP stresses that those trainings have a great importance and crucial role for ensuring the efficient targeting of visitors, both from the perspective of understanding and respecting the values of NP and achieving the priority objectives of the protected area as well as from the point of view of local development.

#### 2.4.4. Sustainable tourism

As stated in NP Management plan, National Park has a great experiential value and symbolic significance; it is internationally recognizable, which are advantages for sustainable tourism in the territory, for the production and marketing of local products and services, which can bring new opportunities for employment. On the other hand, the national park has to deal also with the situation there are still undeveloped employment opportunities, negative demographic trends, low economic capabilities of the population and enterprises, high real estate prices, too weak involvement of local residents in the management of the National Park and inconsistent functioning of all operators in the National Park.

To balance this situation sustainable tourism issues are one of top priorities of NP Authority, where NP has to cooperate and exchange experiences very actively with local residents and local, national and international organizations; especially because of constantly growing number of seasonal park visitors, which cause a lot of different problems. Therefore, NP has already started the work in different directions to prevent new treats for nature caused by growing number of visitors and to promote local entrepreneurs implementing different projects and actions in these two directions:

- 1) redirecting activities from “traditional” areas to less visited areas of the national park;
- 2) creating new forms of activities to raise awareness of nature conservation and sustainability among tourism service providers and visitors.

Since there are many directions Park currently is working on, just several will be pointed out here.

One of the activities promoting sustainability held in the last two years was addressed to the issue of sustainable mobility. The park has well developed road network exceeding 126 km, therefore, providing Park’s visitors good chances to visit territory by car. But during the summer, which is the peak season for Park’s visitors, the traffic is up to three times higher than the rest of the year causing a lot of nature disturbance. Therefore, the Park seeks to ease traffic by promoting public transport and inviting people to explore a park in more environmentally friendly ways.

In cooperation with Slovenian Ministry of Infrastructure, as well as many local tourism institutions and volunteering organizations [Promotion day of calming down traffic](#) was implemented involving more than 4500 Park visitors in this campaign. The main purpose of the campaign was to recognize the benefits of slowing down traffic, which gives visitors a better experience and less negative impacts on the nature. During Promotion day a modern traffic regime with closing roads for private vehicles and organized free transportation was carried out. Other possibilities of access were organized in Bohinj, visitors enjoyed free boat trips, horse-drawn carriage rides, guided hikes.

Six [bigger projects are](#) currently under development, aimed at reaching sustainability in the sense of directing visitors from NP highlands, the most sensitive and critical Park’s areas to less-crowded areas, outskirts of the park and appropriately regulated areas that can withstand heavy load, thus preserving nature and natural heritage, habitats and biodiversity.. The main aim of all of them is to create final product called “Juliana Alp trail” (see Figure 80). All the projects are prepared by local action groups - LAG (LAS in Slovenian) that cover the area of NP. Partners are all municipalities that are in the NP (8) and the TNP Public institution.



Fig. 80. [Planned Juliana Trail](#): outskirts of Triglav National Park

By directing visitors from the highlands and sensitive zones of the Triglav National Park it is planned to contribute to the development of rural areas with the emphasis on promoting local rural development. In other words – it is planned that the operation will indirectly influence employment in the tourism industry.

Another sustainable idea worth discussing in more details is The Quality Mark of the Triglav National Park (see Figure 81) - a certificate for products and services that prove superior quality and are related to the space and values of the Triglav National Park and the Biosphere Reserve of the Julian Alps. The

idea is to connect existing certification systems that are in line with the goals of the National Park and represent the connecting element of the quality of the Julian Alps as a tourist destination.

With the quality label the NP Authority supports various activities in the fields of environmental protection and the conservation of nature, biodiversity and cultural heritage. The certificate can be awarded for areas, facilities, products, goods and services and represents the designation of the area of origin of quality food products, home and art products, catering and tourism and other public and private services in the area of the Triglav National Park and the Biosphere Zone of the Julian Alps.

So far, the Triglav National Park awarded the quality label to six organic farms engaged in tourist activity or marketing products with obtained certificates from the European Quality Scheme (protected designation of origin, protected geographical indication, guaranteed traditional specialty, and ecological production).



Fig. 81. The logo of The Quality Mark of the Triglav National Park

## 2.5. Comparative analysis between home and visited countries

### 2.5.1. Comparison on the most important features between the visited territories

Features	PLA Central Bohemian Uplands	Saxon Switzerland National Park	Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park	Triglav National Park
<b>Governmental body</b>				
<b>Who manages PA</b>	PLA managing Authority is Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic, which is established by the Ministry of the Environment	Park is property of the state and it's managing Authority is Saxon State Forest Enterprise ( <i>Sachsenforst</i> )	Park is managed by a “non-economic independent public body”. The Park's Authority is directly under the supervision of the Italian Ministry of the Environment	Parks managing Authority is Triglav National Park Public Institution, which operates under the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning
<b>Visual identity</b>				
<b>Existence of united guidelines: yes or no</b>	Not for PLA, but for NCA (2016) and the project “ <a href="#">LIFE České středohoří</a> ” (2017-2023)	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>The use of logo</b>	In different combinations: PLA logo, Project logo, NCA logo, LIFE logo, NATURA 2000 logo	In different combinations: NP logo, logo of EUROPARC Germany, cross-border logo , logo of German State Forest Enterprise	NP logo	NP logo
<b>Public relations</b>				
<b>Webpage: does territory has its own or is it complex</b>	It is complex. There is NCA webpage <a href="http://www.nature.cz">www.nature.cz</a> , where separate chapter is dedicated to PLA – <a href="http://ceskestredohori.ochranaprirody.cz/o-regionalnim-pracovisti/">http://ceskestredohori.ochranaprirody.cz/o-regionalnim-pracovisti/</a> . As well as separate webpage for PLA is created within Project <a href="http://www.lifecs.cz">www.lifecs.cz</a>	Yes: <a href="https://www.nationalpark-saechsische-schweiz.de">https://www.nationalpark-saechsische-schweiz.de</a>	Yes: <a href="http://www.dolomitipark.it">www.dolomitipark.it</a>  But there is also <a href="http://www.parks.it">separate section on www.parks.it</a> (managed by Italian Ministry of the Environment):	Yes: <a href="http://www.tnp.si">www.tnp.si</a>
<b>Cooperation with media: regional/national cooperation</b>	Mostly regional, some news also sent to national media	Mostly regional	Mostly regional	It depends. Mostly regional, some news also sent to national media

<b>Press releases: number per year</b>	It depends. Average up to 40	It depends. Average up to 40	It depends. Average 20-30	It depends. Average 50-80
<b>Social media: (1) does territory have their own social network and which, (2) number of followers</b>	(1) Yes, Project's <a href="#">Facebook</a> (2) over 900	No social media	(1) Yes, <a href="#">Facebook</a> account (2) over 5780	(1) <a href="#">Facebook</a> – over 2 500; <a href="#">Instagram</a> – 2 160; <a href="#">YouTube</a> – 14.
<b>Information and education materials: what kind of materials are created; outstanding ideas</b>	Materials mostly dedicated to nature values, as well as describing all the national monuments and nature reserves. Two materials about nature trails. More <a href="#">here</a> .  Representative materials about the Project, focused to any target group, but more to adults; Nature education materials mostly focused to children target group: <b>coloring books, fairytales</b> etc..	Materials dedicated to tourists (maps for hikers, cyclists etc.), specific materials about tourism services in the region, nature education and guides offers etc., leaflets popularizing park's problematics ("Give nature what it need"; "Bark beetles"). All <a href="#">here</a> .	Materials dedicated to tourists - maps of tourism routes, special materials dedicated to those tourists who are willing to discover NP by bike, specific issues dedicated to " <b>Carta Qualita</b> " specialties, as well as specific tourism objects – museums, Botanical garden, mountains, and mountain churches. All <a href="#">here</a> .	Different regular issues dedicated to tourists – guides for adults, as well as this year for <a href="#">children</a> , scientific magazine for professionals, as well as special info materials for most popular tourism objects. All <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Environmental communication: (1) what kind of structures are set up; (2) novelties</b>	(1) Mostly information boards and signposts  (2) different warning posters on the spots, where management activities are held	(1) Mostly information boards and signs  (2) warning about drone ban or special NP border signs, created from the stones	(1) Mostly information boards, direction signs  (2) different characters created from wood; educational information about nature friendly behavior (Park's rules)	(1) Mostly information boards, direction signs
<b>Nature education</b>				
<b>Nature classes for schoolchildren: (1) what kind of system used to educate them; (2) free or paid service  (3) how many children educated per year</b>	(1) Special program with a standard offer for schoolchildren is not created and offered. Cooperation with NGO " <a href="#">SEVER stredisko ekologické výchovy</a> " offering nature classes for kindergartens and they have a module <a href="#">programs</a> .  (2) NCA activities are free of charge; NGO has paid service	(1) Different nature education programs (classes) for kindergarten, school children, families and people with disabilities (detailed offer <a href="#">here</a> ). Programs are managed by one PA's Authority member, annually preparing 20 students to work with educational programs (in cooperation with German Commerzbank, which support with scholarship	(1) Special environmental education program called " <a href="#">School in the park</a> " established by NP Authority, but provided by 15 local guides (working directly for " <a href="#">The Mazarol</a> " – Regional Nature Environmental Guides Cooperative)  (2) Paid service with support from NP	(1) NP has prepared and implements various programs that are related to the school program, and allows children to experience nature on their own. Detailed offer <a href="#">here</a> . Workshops take place both in NP info centers and in the field.  (2) paid service  (3) approx. 5000 , within <a href="#">UNESCO</a>

	(3) for NCA approx. 300 children, for NGO – no information	(2) activities are free of charge  (3) approx. 4000-6000 people, mostly school children	(3) approx. 2000-2500	<a href="#">program and the LIFE NATURAVIVA project</a> the network has broaden and it is planned to educate even bigger number of school children
<b>Nature education events and other activities: (1) what kind of system used to organize them; (2) free or paid service</b>	(1) Staff members of NCA provide them or participate in them as a one party of the events; there are also some events organized by NGO “SEVER”, special conferences and later on – seminars for school teachers on nature education topic.  (2) Mostly free of charge	(1) NP Authority participates or organizes up 5 different events; regular events (excursions, hikes etc.) are organized in cooperation with <a href="#">Certified National Park Guides</a> taking place once a week on fixed dates and with fixed routes; also The Saxon Switzerland National Park Centre organizes nature classes for schoolchildren, as well as excursions, lectures and educational seminars, workshops for public, but this is not in strong conjunction with NP Authority  (2) Hikes organized by Guides are paid service; also educational classes and events organized by Center are mostly paid service	(1) NP Authority is promoting, organizing and financing numerous nature education events (approx. 15 per month). Mostly in cooperation with <a href="#">The Mazarol Walking Guides Society (MWGS)</a> , realizing the program “At the Park with mom and dad” (“ <a href="#">Al Parco con mamma e papà</a> ”). The rest is organized within different projects in cooperation with other organizations.  (2) The participation in these activities is free of charge because the cost of the guides is paid by the NP.	(1) NP Administration organizes annual and occasional activities of different educational programs. Mostly they are guided tours to most famous NP objects with TNP guides (paid service), also some thematic events like Astronomical evening are held, as well as other options as exhibitions, free cinema evenings are provided for free within project <a href="#">LIFE NATURAVIVA “Biodiversity - the Art of Life”</a> . There are also activities organized in cooperation with mountain guide IFMGA. All of offers are held approximately once a week and is paid service.
<b>Nature education centers and information points: (1) how many per protected territory; (2) what functions they are providing; (3) free or paid service</b>	(1) There is no NCA owned visitor, nature education center or information point at PLA. Municipalities has three information centers – City Information Centre – Magistrát města Ústí nad Labem, Dečín Information Centre, Information center Litoměřice.	NP Authority owns 6 different centers, each focusing on other topics, serving more as information platforms or points; run by automatic doors without human resources involved; free of charge; Saxon State Conservation Foundation manage The Saxon Switzerland National Park Centre providing expositions and movie – paid service	(1) NP Authority has set three Visitor Centers uncovering different aspects of nature and cultural values and providing information, one Botanic Garden, one Environmental Education Center – for providing information and realizing specific cultural, education and training initiatives, and one Natural Museum. More <a href="#">here</a> . (3) Mostly all of them are free of charge.	(1) NP Administration currently administrates three different information centers offering exhibitions and information materials, as well as bike rental. <a href="#">Mobile information terminal</a> has also been created One Information point is also provided. The centers not regulated by NP Authority – at <a href="#">Pocar homestead in Zgornji Radovni</a> , <a href="#">Slovenian mountain museum</a> in Mojstrana and other places at park, like schools etc. (3) Entrance at Info Points is free of charge; the visits of Information centers – paid service.
<b>Society involvement</b>				

<b>Society involvement: main activities and outstanding projects</b>	Volunteering Ranger network, where more than 30 different age and profession rangers – volunteers are involved.	Not discussed	(1) The project <a href="#">“The biodiversity cultivated in the Park”</a> (2) <a href="#">Piero Rossi Cultural Center</a>	Discussed on sustainable tourism and media campaign section
<b>Sustainable tourism</b>				
<b>Sustainable tourism: main activities and outstanding projects</b>	Not discussed	Project <a href="#">“National Park Partners”</a>	(1) <a href="#">“Carta Qualità”</a> Project (2) <a href="#">European Charter: Charter Part I, Charter Part II</a>	(1) Promotion day of calming down traffic (2) <a href="#">“Juliana Alp trail”</a> (3) <a href="#">The Quality Mark of the Triglav National Park</a>

## 2.5.2. Notes to take home from the study tour

Visited Protected Areas (PAs) can be divided in two sections. The first one includes parks directly subject to the Ministry of Environment and therefore with quite independent vision of how the PA has to develop communication process – visual identity standards, nature education work, as well as other topics. The second, in its turn, includes PAs, which are managed by subordinated governmental body as Nature Conservation Agency, who has its own united vision on how PAs of the country should be developed and what kind of tools should be used in communication to reach the aim of societies awareness about nature conservation, thus making the life of PA more dependent and centralized. This is the case of Czech Republic and Latvia. Therefore, these two different systems have to be taken into account when making comparisons and drawing conclusions.

Another aspect which is very important to mention is the financial support the protected territory is getting from the public body for activities of raising public awareness about nature protection topics. The visit results and informal conversations with PA Authorities have led to one conclusion – towards communication issues the support from governmental institutions is not enough and not appropriate for the nowadays situation with growing number of visitors, economic interests and overall education level. Therefore, all the territories I visited regard different project money as the best tool for different communication improvements, which is the same also for Latvia. Project money serves as a grant for many different outstanding and even brilliant ideas; a whole bunch of those can be brought from this study tour to serve as a great inspirational deposit for Kemer National Park and other PAs in Latvia.

In the further section I will mention some problematic aspects we are currently dealing with in Latvia, especially in Kemer National Park and some solutions or ideas which were especially useful to discover during the study trip. Yet, it has to be pointed out once again that the trip as a whole was amazing experience, broadening my knowledge significantly and contributing to numerous aspects of my professional life in so many ways.

**Visual identity:** As proved during the study visit, PA's Authorities find visual identity as the strongest pillar on which to base all further communication activities. Currently Kemer National Park is on the brink of great changes in terms of visual identity – revision of all PA logos is in the work plan of 2019, therefore the study visit has helped in very useful aspect discussing different approaches on visual identity and corporate design. The use of visual standards differs from territory to territory, depending on the managing Authorities and their interests – to refer to fundraiser (Project, Ministry, direct Management institution, as well as to wider network (as it is in Germany, where also EUROPARC Germany and cross-border cooperation with Czech Republic is very important to mention to make both NP united).

But, the main conclusion regarding this topic after all the visits is, that the visual identity of PA must be recognizable and easy understandable, letting people connect themselves with the system of PA thus more easily leading them to acceptance of the rules which have to be taken into consideration while visiting and exploring these special territories. Therefore, I found that the territories directly subject to the Ministry are dealing with visual identity standards most successfully – Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park in Italy and Triglav National Park in Slovenia. Even with some limits and difficulties due to the Ministry requirements, for me it seemed they feel more independent and stronger in their identity than those who have to live in subordinated structure as a unit of bigger system, like Nature Conservation Agency. Good impression was also created by Saxon Switzerland National Park

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in Germany. While visiting these territories, I always had a feeling of being in a special system – national park – easy recognizable, modern and understandable.

**Public relations:** Willing to improve Kemer National Park everyday communication agenda, I had high expectations regarding the study visit in terms of getting some additional inspiration for public relation work. I wanted to get to know how other protected areas feel about traditional form of public relations – press releases, where do they see current communication process is leading us and how should we deal with the new technologies and social media.

Kemer NP has been a subject of Nature Conservation Agency management since 2013, and its webpage has suffered. Within unified management of all PAs of Latvia, all the independent NP webpages, managed previously by NP Authorities were cancelled, creating just a small section deep into the structures of NCA webpage for each territory. Thus, they are not functioning very well for providing information. Therefore, one of my study tour aims was to examine the current situation of other PA webpages in Europe. As a result I found out some outstanding evidence on the importance and usefulness of separately communicated PA webpages (very good example was showed by Dolomiti Bellunesi NP, where special webpage dedicated to all parks has been created, in the same time maintaining a separate webpage for the Park; the situation was similar also in PLA Central Bohemian Uplands, where within the LIFE project new webpage for PLA has been created). Overall, I found out very good examples of how NP webpages can be created and used to reach public information needs; those can serve as future examples of making new webpage also for Kemer NP.

Visited territories brought evidence and highlighted the importance of traditional forms of communication still in place, especially regarding communication with local communities (in many territories there is a big issue of constantly aging inhabitants and therefore extreme importance for consumption of traditional media), as well as growing importance of social media in the communication with younger audience – potential PA visitors, living only in this informative space.

During the visit it turned out, that almost all the territories find traditional means of communication – press release – still effective tool in communication with wider society, though very unpredictable at the same time with very limited possibilities to develop communication plan even for a year, since the situation in nature is fluctuating all the time. The only PA visited, who could show the plan was Saxon Switzerland National Park in Germany, but also there it was said the plan is never regarded as finished and new topics come to agenda all the time.

Constantly growing popularity of nature tourism (especially in its active forms; here again we can't ignore the similarity with Kemer National Park, which is close to the capital with great visitor facilities established and big numbers of population reaching it as one of the closest holiday destinations ) and consequent increase in PA visitation have led to the tendency of creating proactive communication units of PAs and thus providing significant support for Park's guards (rangers, inspectors, experts), in raising public awareness on nature conservation issues and nature friendly behavior in the territory.

Additionally to press releases also special communication campaigns and even projects are on the agendas of PAs, especially in Triglav NP, where I found many outstanding inspirational communication campaign ideas such as “Thank you for preserving nature for future generations”, “Your step matters. Stay on trails. Protect the soils”, “No to pyrotechnics!” and “One with nature's diversity – Biodiversity counts”.

Study visit has highlighted also some difficulties and limits in the work of new forms of communication. Here it is important to take in consideration the above mentioned aspect of

insufficient support from management institutions, where the limited human resources working on communication topics were mentioned in almost all PAs visited. Thus it turned out, that communication work on social platforms is a painful topic not only for Kemer National Park (very limited time to work with it, as well as lack of qualitative photo material and sometimes even content), but also in other countries, especially in Saxon Switzerland National Park, where due to the limited human resources and awareness of the amount of effort needed to ensure the achievement of the desired aims and effects, social networks have not been established at all. The lack of human resources is the case also for Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park in Italy, where social networks are not playing very active role (despite the good number of followers).

On the other hand, Triglav National Park in Slovenia and PLA Central Bohemian Uplands in Czech Republic have showed great respect to social media, despite the fact that they also admit it is very hard to provide continuous, well considered content for the network followers, especially because the content has to be “soft” (animal topics, cartoons, attractive and qualitative photos, friendly recommendations). Surprisingly, for Central Bohemian Uplands, Facebook communication has overtaken traditional ways of communication, what is slowly becoming reality communicating some topics also here in Latvia, especially talking about some continuous story series (for example, forest fire during summer time, trails under reconstruction etc.).

Since many information materials currently provided by Kemer NP start to require improvements and fresh view (we are thinking about creating new Tourism manual, as well as presentation booklet about NP and some new children friendly nature education material), another PR aspect I was looking at during my study trip was what kind of information materials are created for PAs and which audiences they mostly focus on. And again here I had a possibility to look on how different directions PAs are working. PLA Central Bohemian Uplands more concentrate their communication work on children audience offering many outstanding coloring and comics books on the most endangered and special animal and plant species, while other territories more focus on tourists and their needs, in the same time keeping in mind they don't serve as tourism agencies, but more as guards of nature, thus making materials with additional, nature awareness raising elements such as explaining the aim of protected area, introducing with the main nature and culture values of the territory. Here good examples were showed by Dolomiti Bellunesi NP and Triglav NP, who have long traditions on issuing special visitor guides, this year also for schoolchildren. Both territories have created also special characters of NP, thus making nature education even friendlier for children. This is one more aspect to learn from.

The last important PR aspect I was curious to discover during my study trip was environmental communication structures. Despite the fact that Kemer NP has well established structures in the nature (there is a big number of information boards, border signs, etc.), there is still a need for improvement of additional environmental elements such as sign posts, nature awareness raising elements, such as drone ban signs etc. During my study trip I found very well established environmental communication systems (kids friendly as well), and even documents dedicated to interpretation topic, such as it was in Dolomiti Bellunesi NP, as well as I felt also Triglav NP and Saxon Switzerland NP have taken a great care to make this system work appropriately.

I have collected also many useful samples to work later on, developing Kemer NP environmental communication: interesting ideas of creating new park's border signs – very outstanding for Dolomiti Bellunesi NP, as well as for Saxon Switzerland NP, complementation existing board system with new elements such as separate information boards explaining park rules (currently for Kemer NP they are included into the already existing information boards, but since the number of visitors is growing every year and the tendency of human impact in the territory is becoming stronger, as seen in different

territories, it requires separate, outstanding communication as soon as it is not too late), very nice examples demonstrated by Dolomiti Bellunesi NP and Triglav NP.

Another aspect I am keen on working is activation of NP work in the sense of explaining ongoing management activities (in Latvia currently we are working with one big initiative focusing of public involvement in nature management activities called [“Preserve nature values by active work!”](#), (“Daru labu dabai”) in a more effective way, while they are visible for Park’s visitors, thus reaching two goals – raising public awareness about nature conservation works held in the territory, avoiding wrong interpretation of observed activities and popularizing them for future – growing potential of wider network of interested people to participate in those activities. Great effort here was shown by PLA Central Bohemian Uplands with temporary information board system.

**Nature education:** As already mentioned above, due to the different circumstances, almost all of the visited PA Authorities are suffering from lack of human resources dedicated to communication and/ or nature education work. Not surprisingly, the situation isn’t different also in Latvia, Kemeru NP, where only one staff member is dealing with the growing amount of interested school classes, therefore it was very useful experience to get some assumptions on how PAs are dealing with the “almost no human resources” situation, understanding the big importance of nature education, where under right circumstances nature education has a whole arsenal of tools to raise nature awareness in the sense of sustainable development between both – youngest generation of PA visitors, as well as adults.

As a result I was delighted that the territories I visited could “feed” and satisfy my worries and interests with a whole array of different approaches and established systems, established and in use for so many years already, reaching big amount of schoolchildren from the PA’s regional schools, as well as wider visitor audience aiming to discover national park during holidays.

Overall, the visited PAs showed me great models and examples how effective in nature education can be cooperation with (1) non-governmental entities (Central Bohemian Uplands and sample of cooperation in education work with NGO SEVER), (2) officially established Parks’ Guide network (Dolomiti Bellunesi NP and Triglav NP) or (3) joint cooperation with university students and some source of funding (Saxon Switzerland National Park). The same can be attributed also to the topic of nature education events and activities, in many cases provided by local guides, but under circumstances, provision and informative support created/established by PA Authorities. Since one of the aims of Kemeru NP, set also in Sustainable Tourism Strategy, is to work towards more effective use of local guides, this experience and new knowledge has also been extremely important to gain.

The programs offered by different PA Authorities were very impressive, too. Those may help to evaluate the existing offer for Kemeru NP’s nature classes in the future and perhaps supplement an offer with the new perspectives or directions, as well as reconsider application system and other small, but very crucial details to make the offer more suitable for modern standards. All the PAs I visited provided very useful ideas for different aspects of future work, yet there are two I would like to point out especially – one was Triglav NP with the idea of creating school network of NP and biosphere reserve to widen their involvement in nature conservation processes and nature education activities; and the other one Dolomiti Bellunesi NP with its very well established system in cooperation with The Mazarol Walking Guides Society.

While examining this topic of nature education, I have come to one more very important conclusion (not very surprising, but anyway important to mention), that nature interpretation has become extremely important due to nowadays situation, when it is very hard to keep children’s attention. Nature education work in all the PAs I visited tends to walk out of the standardized education systems still implemented at schools and instead provoke schoolchildren use all senses during the nature

classes – sight, hearing, smell and touch, thus grabbing participants' attention and reaching the aim of understanding nature and insuring long term conservation and management aims. Here the best examples were showed “alive” during my visit of PLA Central Bohemian Uplands in two different events, which was also a great proof that the direction Kemer NP is currently working with school children and wider audience, is well concerted with nowadays situation.

**Society involvement and sustainable tourism:** During my study trip society involvement and sustainable tourism were also very important subjects of my interest. Since 2017 for already second term Kemer National Park is working with [European Charter](#) for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas fulfilling Charter Part I and therefore is included in the family of “Sustainable Destinations”. NP has set a lot of interesting goals and plans towards sustainability, but Park faces also some struggling points to implement them, especially regarding entrepreneurship and finding the right solutions for paving the way for engagement in Charter Part II.

Also long-lasting traditions of society involvement are set up in Kemer NP, such as Green afternoons for local NP inhabitants and new ideas for developing oral history collection of Kemer resort for future generations. But these are just couple of ideas and new directions of wider actions are needed.

During my study trip I witnessed some great efforts done regarding local population and economic sectors, with the PAs trying to reach the aim of locals as conscious members of PA's structures, feeling the area as a powerful tool of supporting their business needs and cultural identity, as well as having an empathy and interest for to the protection needs of the territory.

Great examples on society involvement were presented by Dolomiti Bellunesi NP with the wonderful joint project “The biodiversity cultivated in the Park”, which nicely showed ways of successful cooperation and better connection with local inhabitants within the aim to save Park's agricultural heritage. Another great sample was showed by Central Bohemian Uplands and their Volunteering Ranger network, thus involving local people in the nature awareness raising activities and ensuring their loyalty to PA.

Sustainable tourism matters are currently very actively worked with in three PAs – Triglav NP, Dolomiti Bellunesi NP and Saxon Switzerland NP. Triglav NP is currently cooperating as a partner for several big projects with one common aim - development of [“Juliana Alp trail”](#) aimed at reducing the visitor load on NP highlands and sensitive zones by redirecting visitors to less-crowded areas, outskirts of the park, thus preserving nature values and developing and promoting local rural development. Another successful project here is [“The Quality Mark of the Triglav National Park”](#), which is a certificate for products and services that prove superior quality and are related to the space and values of the NP and the Biosphere Reserve of the Julian Alps.

In Dolomiti Bellunesei NP, in its turn, the successful [“Carta Qualità”](#) Project has been developed since 2000, focused on “territorial marketing” and providing the Parks logo to those products and services that guarantee high standards of quality and respect for the environment. There are also certain efforts regarding [European Charter](#) for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, implementing [Charter Part I](#) and [Charter Part II](#). Despite the fact that Saxon Switzerland NP is not within the system of European Charter, they also have great sample of NP entrepreneur network called [“National Park Partners”](#). All the participants are perceived as “Ambassadors” of NP message. They identify with the region, work in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner and serve to the guests as a competent advisor.

## **PART III: CONCLUSION**

Despite the situation being very different in different PAs in Europe (administration, financial support and overall governmental system, cultural level, etc.), this study tour has given me a full bunch of new tools and ideas to work with later, shoulder to shoulder with colleagues developing communication issues in my country.

Study tour has given also broader understanding on how similar situations we are overcoming in our protected areas all around Europe despite the decent geographical distance between us:

- 1) We all have set up communication work as inseparable unit in official documents dedicated to establishment of PA as a platform of conservation of nature and culture values;
- 2) We all are dealing with the constantly growing number of visitors and struggling/working with solutions what to do with this big number of people coming to the territory for nature recreation and education in very different patterns (mostly active recreation – the biggest threat for nature);
- 3) Therefore, PA communication is all about raising nature awareness in many different ways, starting with traditional press releases focusing on adults and elderly generation, social media networks, different media campaigns, environmental education, nature education means – nature classes, events, excursions, education centers and information points, museums, sustainable tourism matters – it is just interpretation which differs from territory to territory and which exactly makes those matters unique and therefore worth learning from;
- 4) On the current communication agenda biodiversity conservation challenges are crucial, including tireless “translation” work on the topic of nature friendly attitude and behavior towards nature conservation, explaining these matters in popular language people can attribute themselves to and understand, while using PAs facilities;
- 5) Despite awareness of the crucial role of communication in nature conservation, we are all facing and overcoming insufficient financial support for communication and education activities;
- 6) Therefore, we are subjects of creativity and cooperation, of managing and/or supporting different outstanding projects/ methods/ solutions towards more successful /sustainable ways of protecting and conserving nature and cultural values of PAs for coexistence of both – nature and human beings in the future.

Taking into consideration all the above mentioned, despite some difficulties (discussed in the Part II), I would like to point out that the study tour I exceeded all the expectations I could dream about, making new useful connections with members of the wide European PA network. Therefore, I have a further suggestion to EUROPARC Federation to create wide and strong network of communication specialists and organize workshops and/or non-formal meetings for them on a wider scale with the possibility to share communication issues with each other, thus having possibilities to make more general conclusions on the situation of communication matters.

I hope this study visit and this study report will be useful as a result of experienced matters not only for me and my colleagues at my home institution, but also for professionals all around Europe. To make my experience more transferable, meet also other expectations and needs for new solutions and ideas to adapt in different territories, the report has been developed in a very detailed way with the provision of many different links and visual materials.

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### The webpages of visited protected areas:

- The webpage of Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park Administration: [www.dolomitipark.it](http://www.dolomitipark.it)
- The webpage of Italian National Parks: [www.parks.it](http://www.parks.it)
- The webpage of Nature Conservation Agency of Czech Republic: <http://www.ochranaprirody.cz/>
- The webpage of Saxon Switzerland National Park Authority: <https://www.nationalpark-saechsische-schweiz.de>
- The webpage of the project “LIFE České středohoří” [www.lifecs.cz](http://www.lifecs.cz)
- The webpage of Triglav National Park Authority: [www.tnp.si](http://www.tnp.si)
- The webpage section of PLA Central Bohemian Uplands in the webpage of Nature Conservation Agency of Czech Republic: <http://ceskestredohori.ochranaprirody.cz/>

### Other webpages

- The webpage of “NORTH Environmental Education Center: <http://sever.ekologickavychova.cz/>
- The webpage of “The Mazarol” – Regional Nature Environmental Guides Cooperative <http://www.mazarol.net/en/>
- The webpage of The Saxon Switzerland National Park Centre <https://www.lanu.de/de/NationalparkZentrum/Angebote-rund-um-die-Natur.html>

### Social media

- Facebook account for Central Bohemian Uplands: <https://www.facebook.com/lifeceskstredohori/>
- Facebook account for Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park: <https://www.facebook.com/parcodolomitibellunesi/>
- Facebook account for Triglav National Park: <https://www.facebook.com/triglav.national.park.official/>
- Instagram account for Triglav National Park: <https://www.instagram.com/triglav.national.park/>
- Youtube account for Triglav National Park: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8hWSbpW2GwBE5IM-vZ-DJg/featured>

### **Collection of all information materials – brochures, leaflets etc. at PAs webpages**

- Central Bohemian Uplands: <http://ceskestredohori.ochranaprirody.cz/publikace/publikace-kestazeni/>
- Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park: <http://www.dolomitipark.it/it/page.php?id=316>
- Saxon Switzerland National Park: <https://www.nationalpark-saechsische-schweiz.de/service/downloads/>
- Triglav National Park: <https://www.tnp.si/sl/spoznajte/publikacije/>

**NOTE: exact links to the chapters of webpages and web published information materials are referred in the report using hyperlink system.**

## ANNEXES

### Short introduction and communication issues of Kemer National Park



Fig. 1. The view on Kemer Great Bog, Kemer National Park. ©Konatsu Hagita

Kemer National Park (Kemer NP) (see Figure 1) is one of four national parks in Latvia. It is established in 1997. Kemer NP is the third largest national park in the country by area (from four national parks), covering an area of 381.65 km<sup>2</sup>. Since the reform of nature conservation system in Latvia in 2010, Kemer National Park has been managed by Pieriga Regional Administration (in following text – NP Administration) of Nature Conservation Agency, Latvia (NCA).

Kemer NP has diverse natural heritage – raised bogs, swamp forests, scenic lakes, seacoast, inland dunes, and meadows. Most important protected species within the national park are Lady’s Slipper Orchid, Black Stork, Lesser Spotted Eagle, White Tailed Eagle, Corn Crake, Great Bittern, Wolf and Lynx. It is an internationally Important Bird Area and one of its lakes is a Ramsar site, an important area of nesting waterfowl and stopover place for migrating birds.

One of the features that make it unique is formation process of sulphurous mineral waters below raised bogs. The cultural heritage reflects the diversity of the area. Traditions of sea fishing and fishermen are preserved in coastal villages. In the heart of the national park lies the centre of historical resort with a picturesque landscape park and historical buildings. Operating from 1838 to 1990ties, the resort was famous for its healing mineral waters, medical muds and bustling social life. Forests and bogs of Kemer NP keep the traces of famous battles fought during World War I and II.

All these values are situated an hour away from capital of Latvia – Riga and 30 minutes away from the centre of resort town Jūrmala. Approximately 100 000 tourists visit the national park each year – rest at the beach, regain health at sanatoriums, visit the nature trails, museums and enjoy other tourism products offered by the national park. The most popular tourism sites are Kemer Great bog, Lake Kanieris bird watching towers and trails, Sloka lake trail, Dunduri meadows. There are approximately 50 tourism businesses operating in the national park – sanatoriums, guest houses, cafés, shops, bicycle rentals etc.

## Communicating Kemeru National Park

On Nature Conservation Agency level, “Raising public awareness on nature conservation issues” is currently included into the Organization Strategy which is being implemented and reported on quarterly basis. Yet, activities in/around Kemeru NP (or any other Protected Area) are not specifically singled out in common reporting documents. Still, in Kemeru NP, the development of nature education dates back to its establishment in the end of 1990ies, and most of the traditions is still alive nowadays.

The aim of environmental interpretation in Kemeru NP is to tell about nature and cultural history values of the territory, promoting understanding of their significance and necessity of protection, using methods best suited to every target audience. In addition to the interpretation of the National Park values, it is necessary to inform society about the Park's mission, to explain different sensitive questions (dead trees in the forest, beavers' damages, burned areas and wind broken trees, cormorants, etc.), to explain the rules of behavior and educate about sustainable development aspects.

Pierīga Regional Administration has been the main responsible party for interpreting nature values. Since 2014 this task has been implemented by a special structural unit – Nature Education Centre “Meža māja”, which is responsible party for public awareness in a broader sense, not only in Kemeru National Park, but in the whole region of Pierīga Regional Administration. The main activities include public relations work (press releases, meetings, etc.), organizing nature education classes, lectures and events, preparing information materials, implementing Junior ranger program, organizing volunteer and student’s work; as well as implementing sustainable tourism strategy (Kemeru NP tourism forum meetings, etc.). Currently there is three staff members working on those issues and responsibilities are more or less divided in three parts – PR, nature education and sustainable tourism, but the borders for involvement in each responsibility are not very strict; in fact, there is a lot of evidence of those often overlapping and fluctuating.

There are several documents for NCA referring to different communication aspects. Those are very well described in the current document of “Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism in Kemeru National Park” (2017-2021) (not published online; it is possible to get it personally contacting with Agnese Balandiņa, the Head of Nature education center “Forest house” via e-mail [agnese.balandina@daba.gov.lv](mailto:agnese.balandina@daba.gov.lv)), as well as chapter dedicated to nature education included in the [Management Plan of Kemeru National Park \(2002-2019\)](#).

## Visual identity

Kemeru NP has its own logo (see Figure 2), created around the year 1997. The symbol is white-backed woodpecker (*Dendrocopos leucotos*). It is rare and endangered woodpecker species that lives in Broadleaved swamp forests. It symbolizes both the importance of NP for the protection of rare bird species and the importance of preserving the habitats of protected species, especially wetlands. There are no other visual guidelines or standards worked out for the Kemeru NP. Since the Park currently is managed by

NCA, the logo is used in strong conjunction with the Agency’s visual standards – logo (see Figure 2), colors, visual elements etc. Therefore, the situation with visual identity is very complex. In the year 2019 new visual guidelines for Latvian national parks are being planned, thus improving situation.



Fig. 2. Logo of Kemeru National Park, logo of Nature Conservation Agency of Latvia

## Public relations

Also the public relation work at Kemeris NP is the subject of NCA. Currently one person is working with the PR issues directly dedicated to communicating Kemeris NP, but since there are also other working duties, e.g., communication work of all Pieriga Regional territory, also central NCA Department of Communication and Nature Education is sometimes involved in the communication process, supporting Pieriga Regional Administration. Besides all the press releases have to be approved by NCA Central unit and also the process of distribution of press releases is organized centralized.

## Webpage

Since the Kemeris NP is managed by NCA, separate webpage dedicated to the national park is not existing anymore (such a site existed before the reform of Nature Conservation System in Latvia, during the time period when Kemeris NP Authority was working directly under the management of Ministry). Currently all the news is published on the central NCA webpage [www.daba.gov.lv](http://www.daba.gov.lv), therefore again – centralizing news, but decentralizing the idea about the national park as a PA of state importance. [Separate section](#) on the webpage is dedicated to national park covering such sections as overall information about Kemeris NP – nature values and cultural history, tourism offer (tourism objects, trails, tourism products and services – facilities to sleep and eat), as well as interactive map is provided.

But the section is “hidden” very deep into the webpages’ structures, almost impossible to find, therefore not very useful for those tourists, who would like to visit the park and get some additional information. Moreover, there is no news in this section, therefore, if the Park visitors want to find newest topicalities about NP, they have to read all the news on webpage news section and sort themselves. The webpage’s section is translated also in English, but again – almost impossible to be found being a random tourist.

To make it more easy for tourists to find information about National Park, NGO – Kemeris National Park Foundation – has created its own independent webpage [www.kemerunacionalaisparks.lv](http://www.kemerunacionalaisparks.lv), but unfortunately the content is available only in Latvian, also the webpage design needs to be updated to more modern standards. During next years it is on NCA agenda to make independent webpages for all four national parks of Latvia.

## Cooperation with media; press releases

On the NP Administration and institutional level also good communication work with mass media is held. The main duties include preparation of press releases. The number of those varies from year to year reaching amount of 50-60 press releases per year. Mostly the topic covered is nature value protection, as well different problematics NP has to face – illegal fishing, illegal dumps, driving motor vehicles off the road; different nature management activities NP Administration has implemented with the support of society (more discussed on the chapter “Media campaigns”), scientific and monitoring work, different activities of nature education center – events, nature classes, junior ranger movement etc.

Mostly communication with media is on the national level, the territory of Kemeris NP has below 10 local newspapers, no TV and radio, therefore only in rare cases information is distributed only to local media, despite we have to admit it is very important source for elderly generation living within the borders of the Kemeris NP, therefore local media can’t be ignored in any sense. In many cases they serve as great distributor of NP Administration messages, visiting local events and later creating reportages. Another direction NP Administration and Department of Communication and Nature

Education has to work is media relations, organizing interviews with experts, answering questions on TV, radio and newspapers.

## **Social media**

To create platform for separate communication dedicated only to the issues of national parks, in the year 2018 Facebook profiles for all four national parks were created by NCA, including also [Kemeru National Park](#). Also this account is managed both by the Administration and NCA Central unit. So far it has reached an audience of a bit more than 700 followers. Currently it is in the second place among the national parks in the number of followers. Only Slitere National Park has reached a bit larger number of followers – a bit over 800.

The number is not big enough and also the regularity of posting news could be improved. So far national park has made content about different events (creating events on page's agenda, posting pictures from events later on), management activities, interesting projects and everyday actions with parks experts and inspectors, as well as promoting national park objects and places and giving suggestions for holidays. Unfortunately, NCA in Latvia has no legal way of promoting national park's posts (events etc.) for money.

During the year 2018 also [Instagram account](#) was created for Kemeru NP, but also this is the subject of limited time and the lack of qualitative photo content to publish. Currently account has only a bit more than 400 followers. Mostly posts are about nature values and their protection, concentrating on tourism promotion through the perspective of awareness rising.

## **Communication campaigns**

Currently there are no communication campaigns specifically about Kemeru NP, but the NP Administration has taken an active role in some initiatives and campaigns NCA right now is working on.

One of them is called [“Leave no trace”](#) (“Dabā ejot – ko atnesi, to aiznes!”), implemented together with WWF which aims to change the societies habits of leaving trash on nature trails and objects, inviting all of nature visitors to take trash back home until the first closed trash container. Therefore Kemeru National Park has set up campaign informative boards all around nature trails.

Another one is NCA initiative called [“Preserve nature values by active work”](#) (“Daru labu dabai”) focusing on involvement of volunteers in different nature management activities. In this campaign Kemeru NP is one of the most active players organizing many collective management works and communicating the message of the initiative.

One more seasonal campaign, where also Kemeru NP is involved in very directly is addressed to seal babies during spring time. Its main aim is to raise public awareness of this natural phenomena of seal baby's coming to rest at the Baltic sea coastal zone. Since Kemeru NP has a long beach zone, during the spring season from February until May, informative campaign boards are set up on the coastal zone, as well as active communication with closest municipality institutions of NP (museums, schools, libraries, police etc.) is implemented.

## **Information and education materials**

Kemeru NP has a variety of different information materials. The map of Kemeru NP can be considered as the most important tourism material for the national park, providing basic information on nature and cultural values, objects of interest and tourism services. Currently it is available in 5 different languages – Latvian, English, Russian, Lithuanian, as well as German.

Booklets (A4) about individual nature values and/or objects have also been created, available both as printed versions and PDF documents in LAT, ENG, RUS. They are created about (Great) Kemerī Raised Bog, Lake Kaņieris, Sloka nature trail, Dunduri meadows, Boardwalk in Black-alder Swamp), as well as different materials for such target groups as walkers, cyclists etc.

Unfortunately, also here the form and design of materials has to be put under discussion and some more modern ways of their appearance and information forms should be considered. Every year many posters and flyers dedicated to national park activities as well as some universal materials about all the PA are created by NCA. In 2017, celebrating NP's 20th Anniversary unique newspaper about NP work was created, mostly dedicated to the local society, but currently it is already out of date to provide for Park's visitors.

In the future, creation of two more information materials is essential: tourism product manual, comprising complex offers and package tours available in Kemerī NP, which could be used as a promotion material for tourism agencies and operators; new material on walking possibilities in Kemerī area. This material should only be made after reconstruction works of Kemerī landscape park, providing information on the restored objects as well as other trails in the area, e.g., the route to the sulphur spring in Lūžņu ditch. But as already mentioned, also other types of materials have to be on the agenda of discussions, for example presentation booklet of Kemerī NP would also be necessary, as well as children friendly educative materials could be useful.

### **Environmental communication**

All Kemerī NP tourism objects and paths managed by NCA are equipped with different information boards containing general information about Kemerī NP (map with attractions and services; contacts and short information about the closest surroundings (nature and cultural history values), as well as more specific information about nature and culture values in the nearest vicinity. These boards can be found in most visited places, along most nature trails, sightseeing towers, as well as in parking lots on roadsides, next to the beach and railway stations. Some more strategic places have been identified where such boards should still be placed (coastal villages; remaining railway stations).

Almost all the information boards have been made according to the common guidelines created by NCA for tourism infrastructure and information materials for protected areas in Latvia. The same guidelines are observed also when preparing boards and other information materials within international projects implemented by NCA and other partners; as well as by local municipalities, who tend to use NCA visual standards on their information boards.

During the already mentioned campaign "Leave no trace" additional environmental elements have been set up in the territory, along all main attraction sites. But there is need for additional communication means dedicated to some other nature problems, like use of drones. Despite the very well established information board system, still there is need also for the improvement of wider network of post signs covering all the territory of Kemerī NP and providing tourists with environmental orientation tools. It may come in united visual standards to be better recognized as the signs used for national park communication.

### **Nature education**

Nature education essentially is one of interpretation forms. As already mentioned, currently Kemerī NP is included in bigger nature education offer, covered by Nature Education Center "Forest house" which as a structural unit of NCA is providing nature education activities not only for the national park guests but for all the region of Pierīga regional administration. Nature education offer provided by the Centre consists of several types of activities: outdoor activities/classes, lectures at schools, educational events, exhibitions – travelling and permanent, Junior ranger movement.

## **Nature classes for schoolchildren**

As already mentioned, first activities at Kemeris NP for schoolchildren started in 2000. Current programs of nature classes are developed for different age groups of schoolchildren, encompassing learning about five ecosystems – raised bogs, forest, especially wet forest, seaside/beach and waters. The main topics: ecosystems inhabitants, their diversity and significance, in secondary school – also the restoration of habitats (marshes).

If historically the nature classes were mostly provided as outdoor activities, currently the offer is not strictly standardized but is based on the needs of each target audience. It is a complex offer including an introductory movie about Kemeris NP, interactive exhibition, educative games and outdoor activities. Depending on the target audience, creative activities can also be included.

The outdoor part usually is about 1-1.5 h long, depending on class group and the location. The main aim is to get to know the respective ecosystem by activating all the senses – sight, hearing, smell and touch, using the necessary equipment (binoculars, loupes, thermometers, tweezers, etc.) and filling in worksheets. Within the different projects many educative games have been worked out, intended for use in public events, but have now been included into nature education classes.

Till 2009, the Nature School activities were available for a little price; special staff was assigned to them – environment education specialist of Kemeris NP administration, joined by assistants during the busiest season. Currently all the nature classes are led mainly by one nature education specialist for all the region and they are free of charge, thus usually demand is many times higher than supply, which is a great topic to discuss in the future perspective.

Nature education offer currently is implemented also with lectures at schools – one of environment education forms which were especially activated after the reform of nature protection system in Latvia, the formation of a unified Nature Conservation Agency and the inclusion of environment education in the majority of employees' job descriptions. At present, to make lectures more interesting and interactive, they are supplemented by educative games, especially for younger ages; thus lectures can also be considered as part of Nature School offer.

Lectures about different topics, related to nature protection, are organized also in the Administration building, mostly providing information to the groups of students or specialists of different areas. These themes are chosen according to the needs of every group.

## **Nature education events and other activities**

Every year Nature Education Centre organizes events, dedicated to getting to know Kemeris NP nature values, mostly targeted to wide audience, with special attention to families with children. The topics of the educational events reflect the nature values of Kemeris NP. Some events are dedicated to certain groups of animals, e.g., to birds (spring and autumn bird watching days; bird listening evenings), bats (Bat Night); some events are dedicated to certain ecosystems (Meadow Day); but other events encompass a wider theme range, dealing with nature protection (Biodiversity Day, Wetlands Day) or sustainable tourism (Travelers Day, Ski Trips).

Among these events, spring and autumn bird watching days, as well as the Bat Night, are the richest in traditions, as they take place almost since the foundation of Kemeris NP. These events have a certain long-time quality attached to them and always attract great public interest. Since 2011 Travel Day has also become a tradition. It is an event created by joint effort of the Administration and other stakeholders (local businesses, etc.) with a common aim to provide possibilities to discover the



amazing diversity of Kemeru NP. Thus more and more Kemeru NP nature values are covered and new target audiences are attracted.

Besides the events, organized by the Nature Education Centre, different events in the Kemeru NP are held also by municipalities and their subordinated bodies (culture houses, museums). Besides contemporary culture events, historical seasonal celebrations are held – Easter, Summer solstice etc.

Nature Education Centre “Meža māja” is also participating in the events organized by other stakeholders, e.g., Kemeru Festival organized by the local NGO and Jūrmala Municipality; the Museum Night in Lapmežciems Museum, etc. For example, actively participating in creation of Kemeru Festival every year, offering several nature related activities.

In the future with the help of local entrepreneurs the potential of these nature events could be used to a greater extent, e.g., creating similar offers for smaller groups, especially in foreign languages. More activities should be developed for the low season and for increasing the length of people’s stay in the territory.

In addition, since 2005 some efforts of working with local guides have also been implemented as a hope to ease Administration load with different nature education events (process of establishing official Park guide system with training, accreditation, etc.. was started), but unfortunately due to different circumstances like complicated legislative and bureaucratic issues and time limits of Administration (see more detailed information in the strategy) this process was stopped. Currently the process is ongoing in less complicated version, where already existing guides and stakeholders will take a part in at least one training (on nature values, nature interpretation etc.) every year. After the training the participants will receive a certificate of attendance; and only the ones who have done so would be actively promoted on the website [www.kemerunacionalaisparks.lv](http://www.kemerunacionalaisparks.lv). Besides this, activities for further promotion of existing guides could be organized, e.g., during existing and new public events; by organizing set excursions with the times and topics announced beforehand, so that individual tourists could apply for them, etc.

### **Nature education centers and information points**

As stated already above, NCA at Kemeru NP currently runs only one nature education center “Forest house” as a platform to work with schoolchildren, to organize various educational events and activities for different audiences. Unfortunately, so far it has worked only on request or special occasions, like nature classes or public events. During working days, it is not open for everyday visitors. But during the rest of time it works free of charge.

Center offers two permanent exhibitions. “Try to see what others don’t”- was created in Nature Education Centre “Meža māja” within EST-LAT-RUS Project “People with nature”. The exposition is created as a mini-model of Kemeru NP, highlighting the four main ecosystems – coastline, meadows, forests and raised bogs. The main aim of the exposition is to provide possibility to discover and explore things which cannot be seen in nature (e.g., formation processes of mineral waters happening deep under the surface of raised bogs); as well as to turn attention to special aspects of each ecosystem, encouraging attempts to try to notice them also in nature. Exposition includes task sheets and interactive elements allowing visitors to use several senses in discovery process.

In 2017, another permanent exhibition was opened in nature education center “Meža māja” focusing on climate change. Unfortunately, so far both of exhibitions are provided only Latvian, therefore there is future plan to supplement them with materials in foreign languages (at least English and Russian; possibly also German and Lithuanian) to make them more accessible to wider audiences.

Another future plan is to improve interpretation of cultural, natural and healing values in the premises of “Meža māja”, making exhibition on the history of Kemerī NP. There are interesting historical photos at Administration’s disposal, highlighting the history of “Meža māja”, peat extraction in the Park, etc. Therefore, by creating an exhibition focusing of cultural history, it could be possible to attract larger audiences, especially local people, promoting perception of their surrounding area as unique and outstanding place.

To introduce wider audiences with KNP nature values and to raise public awareness about nature conservation of Kemerī National Park, the Center has also created two travelling exhibitions about KNP nature values – “Natural health facility – bog” – created in 2011 and “Treasures of Kemerī National Park”, created in 2014. They are widely used as short-term exhibitions in deferent places inside and outside the national park – libraries, museums, schools, community and youth activity centers etc. The use of exhibitions is free of charge therefore they are almost constantly in use.

In the same building of nature education center “Meža māja” also KNP Tourism Information Center is located, but it is not officially certified as an information centre and works only from mid-April till the end of October. To operate the center, NCA actively co-operates with Kemerī National Park Foundation, which provides additional worker for the center. So far it is the only information center also in the territory of the NP.

The nearest information points outside the PA territory are in Tukums – 1, Jūrmala 2 and Jelgava – 1. Engure district authorities are contemplating opening an information centre in Lapmežciems. All the TICs, as well as some local shops and cafes are equipped with small information stands. Together with TICs there are 10 information points, thus improving accessibility of tourism information in the area.

Nevertheless, the situation is expected to change dramatically with development plans of Jūrmala Municipality to open new multi-functional nature centre in Kemerī in the nearest future. These actions are expected to change Kemerī from being known as “ghost town” for decades into one of the major nature and health tourism spots in the Baltic region and will require ability to take swift, yet sustainable decisions from all stakeholders to balance the growing visitors’ demands with conservation needs, ensuring long-term development.

## **Society involvement**

Currently, there are two main directions of work in this sphere in NP Administration, one aimed at local society, the other – at national and sometimes even worldwide audience. Already for 6 years, during the winter season nature education center in cooperation with NCA rangers and inspectors are organizing informal meetings with inhabitants (the so-called “Green afternoons”). Usually those meetings are held in libraries and other popular gathering places of local people by the Administration in all municipalities of KNP. The need for such events was established as a result of the local inhabitant survey in 2013 to provide a possibility for local communities to meet the members of Administration in informal atmosphere, learn about the news and topicalities in KNP and find answers to questions before they have escalated into more serious disagreements.

Another way of working with local society currently is collecting unrecorded oral history of Kemerī resort, therefore already five meetings during the year 2018 and 2019 were held, personally inviting the oldest generation of Kemerī community to share their memories about the life and culture in the past decades of Kemerī resort. All of the meetings are recorded by camera and voice recorder, as well as also transcribed as much as possible. During the meetings wide variety of unique and rare materials such as leaflets, books and memories have already collected and will be used in the future for the development of new NP culture interpretation materials.

National direction of society involvement is the already mentioned initiative [“Preserve nature values by active work”](#) (“Daru labu dabai”), actively organizing different management activities and inviting society to participate. Mostly activities are dedicated to the management of invasive species, reducing anthropogenic load along seashore, management of wetlands, such as lake Kanieris, providing better circumstances of life for birds nesting in reeds, as well as preserving rare juniper plantation. Traditional hay making activities during summer time are also held here, thus preserving rare plant species, as well as inviting society for active nature protection work.

NP Administration is providing also opportunities for interns and short-term volunteers. Every year this opportunity is used by approximately eight students both coming from local highest education institutions and institutions abroad. The offer for interns coming from abroad is following – the trainee is involved in daily routine of host institution staff, with activities including different aspects of nature conservation – nature education, tourism development, habitat management, monitoring. But it can vary depending on the students’ interests. For Latvian students also little research topics about history, nature and sustainable tourism are offered, as well as some translation works.

Last activity worth mentioning here and in place since the year 2015 is [EUROPARC Junior Ranger Program](#), where approximately 12 active schoolchildren are participating. Meetings are held at least 8 times per year, more often during school holidays. Usually one or two days, but at least 2-3 summer camps (2-3 days long) during summer holidays are organized with the aim to provide non-formal nature education, out of school standards.

## **Sustainable tourism**

As already mentioned on the Introduction, currently NP Administration has joined [European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas](#) becoming “Sustainable Destination” and fulfilling Charter Part I. Development of sustainable tourism and joining the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas founded by EUROPARC has been one of the main priorities of the managing institution of Kemeris NP since the elaboration of the first Management Plan in 2002. The Charter process in Kemeris NP was first carried out in 2009-2011 and resulted successfully with the first Charter Award for Kemeris NP in 2012. In 2017 NP got re-certified for the period until 2021. The development of the tourism strategy and action plan for 2017-2021 is mainly the result of Tourism forum; organized regularly since 2010. Here local businessmen, tourism service providers, municipal representatives, NGOs and other sides meet.

Some of aspects of sustainable development have already been mentioned within other chapters, like development of guide network to ensure new offers for constantly growing visitor needs, especially taking into consideration the circumstances that the NP Administration has limited human resources and capacity to offer nature education activities and events.

Another aspect besides continuous cooperation between NP Administration and stakeholders with the aim to establish sustainability, is close cooperation with Jurmala Municipality establishing already mentioned multi-functional nature centre in Kemeris town, where sustainability matters have to be discussed and accepted by NP Administration, as well as ongoing NP Administration project with the aim to increase duration of stay at Kemeris NP by establishing new tourism site next to the most popular Kemeris NP object – Kemeris Raised bog, using its potential as the main attraction of the Park to promote and encourage visits also to other objects of interest and service providers in the Park.

During the next years NP Administration is facing challenges also to find a mechanisms to popularize the existing tourism services (by putting particular emphasis on the beach visitors), develop supportive system to activate souvenir producing process at the territory, thus establishing another great form of sustainable tourism and cooperation with local business sectors. This includes also the work with

establishing Kemer NP “logo” towards its official use for “sustainable” souvenirs, representing Park’s values. As well as it is planned to find solutions of supportive system of nature-friendly and local resident-friendly economic activities – the local producers – biological farming, fish processing, craftsmen, starting with the use of promotional tools (by including information in tour maps and by posting a description of the territory on the internet), and promotion of collaboration between the local producers and tourism entrepreneurs (excursions, seminars), local producers and stores/petrol stations.

