



EUROPARC
F E D E R A T I O N

EUROPARC TransParcNet Meeting Report 2014

Saint-Amand-les-Eaux, France, 3rd to 6th June

This report fulfils the objective(s):

Area 2:

Contribute to meet the EU 2020 targets by implementing the EU Biodiversity Strategy

Objective 2b:

Improve knowledge of ecosystem services and their value, and contribute to the implementation of the Green Infrastructure Strategy (Biodiversity Strategy target 2)

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Introduction



The EUROPARC Federation is the largest non-governmental organisation representing protected areas of different kinds across Europe. EUROPARC is built on the principle that Europe's natural heritage can be better conserved and managed through international cooperation. To this end the organisation seeks opportunities for networking, exchange and collaboration in all areas of protected area work. EUROPARC is

committed to the continual improvement in the management of nature conservation and sustainable development, to build a coherent green network across Europe.

Nature knows no boundaries and cooperation between protected areas that adjoin across or lay adjacent to international borders make a significant contribution to the conservation of both natural and cultural heritage and the achievement of sustainable regional development. Such cooperation also promotes international peace and understanding, and makes an important contribution to the development of a common Europe.

With its Transboundary Parks – Following nature's design initiative, EUROPARC meets the demands for guidance on the promotion of best practice in cross-border cooperation in Europe. The Federation's Transboundary Parks Programme is a special verification and certification system that aims to promote and facilitate cross-border cooperation between European protected areas.

The programme runs in its 11th year now and unites 23 protected areas forming ten EUROPARC Transboundary Areas. Together they manage more than 900.000 ha including over 330.000 ha of N2000 sites co-operatively. Every year they get together at the so called TransParcNet meeting in a different cross-border area to share their experiences and new ideas in managing Europe's natural and cultural heritage across international borders.

6th TransParcNet meeting in Hainaut cross-border Nature Park (FR/BE) 2014

2014 saw from 3rd to 6th June the 6th edition of EUROPARC's TransParcNet meeting, the annual get-together of experts in cross-border cooperation of protected areas. It was the biggest TransParcNet meeting so far, with more than 70 participants joining EUROPARC this year in Saint-Amand-les-Eaux in the Hainaut cross-border Nature Park (BE/FR), who hosted the event in their protected areas. During this year's reunion, the participants had the chance to learn about funding possibilities from the EU for transnational cooperation, look into the Green Infrastructure Strategy of the European Commission paired with practical examples, and share good practices and innovative projects in different workshops.



Picture 1: Participants of the TransParcNet meeting 2014

This year many new participants were in the audience. With Hainaut cross-border Nature Park being composed of Scarpe-Escaut Regional Nature Park on the French side and Escaut Plaines Nature Park on the Belgian side, most first timers were representatives of French and Belgian protected areas. During the three day event more than 70 participants from 15 different countries attended, amongst them protected area managers and staff, delegates of EU, national and regional authorities as well as NGOs.

The deputy mayor of Saint-Amand-les-Eaux opened the meeting, welcoming the participants to his town and region, a region characterised by its history and intensive coexistence of man and nature. Wet plains, farming plateaus and former mining sites form the landscape and are not only important from a biodiversity point of view, but also play a significant role as recreation zones for people. The presidents of both parks gave then a deeper insight into the record of their successful cooperation that benefits from a strong political support, thanks to the representation of local and regional authorities in the decision-making body.

The new EU funding period 2014-2020 and possibilities for transboundary protected areas

The afternoon session of the second day was dedicated to the new EU programming phase 2014-2020 and different frameworks in Europe of transnational cooperation. Jelena Stojovic, from DG Regional and Urban policies, gave insight into the funding mechanisms available through DG Regio. She emphasised that the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) 2014-2020 is one of the two goals of Cohesion Policy. From this period on there will be a link with country specific European Structural and Investment Programmes and the strategic orientation within DG Regio lies on the EU 2020 strategy and macro-regional strategies.

Eleven thematic objectives (TO) have been established for the ETC 2014-2020 period. Protected Areas are advised to look especially at TO 6, environmental protection and resource efficiency. Funding is available for projects in

Cross-border cooperation

- 60 cross-border programmes
- Budget EUR 6.6 bn
- Cooperation at local and regional level across the common border
- Possible actions include environment protection (TO 6)
- Project example: [Joint management and ecological development of cross-frontier nature areas \(BE-FR\)](#)

Transnational cooperation

- 15 programmes
- Budget: EUR 2.1 bn
- Cooperation in larger geographical areas
- Macro-regional Strategies
- Possible actions include environment protection (TO 6)

Interregional Cooperation

- Four programmes: INTERREG Europe, INTERACT, URBACT, ESPON
- Budget of EUR 0.5 bn for 2014-2020
- INTERREG EUROPE: cooperation across all borders - EU 28+NOR+CH (budget EUR 0.36 bn)
- 4 topics: Research, technological development and innovation - Competitiveness of SME, Low carbon economy, Environment and resource efficiency
- Actions: Cooperation projects, Policy learning platforms

A representative from the Walloon region reported about the new Interreg V programme, and introduced the four main axes of work that will play an important role for the trilateral cross-border region of France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen and hence the protected areas lying within. They are: 1. Improve and develop the cross border cooperation through research and innovation; 2. Further develop the cross-border competitiveness; 3. Protect and promote the environment through an integrated management of cross-border resources; 4. Promote the cohesion and common identity of the cross-border territories. He concluded pointing out, that the INTERREG France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen Programme represents the perfect tool to overcome limits and borders and that protected areas like Hainaut cross-border Nature Park are a very good example for the usefulness of such territorial approaches.

The following presentations introduced to the participants different certification schemes for protected areas like the European Diploma, UNESCO World Heritage, UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme or Ramsar wetlands, and how they can work in a transboundary context. Examples showed that these international certification schemes can lead to a better co-management of cross-border protected areas, demanding e.g. common steering committees, actions and planning in order for protected areas to meet the criteria given by the schemes.

Furthermore the tool of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) and its potential for the governance of cross-border areas was presented. The EGTC is a cooperation instrument created by the EU, aiming to facilitate and promote cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation at community level. At this moment in time only two groups of protected areas are using this instrument: International Marine Park of Bonifacio and the European Park of Alpi Marittime-Mercantour. The latter presented their cooperation at the TransParcNet meeting, explaining the benefits that they are looking for in using the instrument, including a strong position when it comes to EU project applications.

The EU's Green Infrastructure Strategy and examples from EUROPARC's Transboundary Areas

As the largest network organisation of protected areas in Europe, EUROPARC seeks to disseminate and break down EU policy to N2000 sites and other protected areas' needs and feed back the experiences and requirements of its members to the Commission. The annual TransParcNet meeting is an excellent platform for EUROPARC to communicate strategic directions of the EU to the participants and underpin them with case studies from its certified Transboundary Areas. This year EUROPARC and its network delivered a session on Green Infrastructure (GI) to the participants of the 6th TransParcNet meeting.

Humans depend on ecosystem services. However we keep degrading the natural capital that should be indeed our life support system. Although large areas are already protected under N2000, each year more than 1000 km² are subject to land take for housing, industry and recreation. Today about 30% of the EU territory are fragmented and around 80% of Europeans live in towns or cities. Health of European citizens due to air pollution and global warming and herewith the quality of life are afflicted by this development. In its 2020 Biodiversity Strategy, particularly through Target 2, the EU considers Green Infrastructure to play an important role in protecting, conserving and enhancing the EU's natural capital. Consequently in 2013 the new EU strategy to promote the use of Green Infrastructure in Europe was adopted, comprising four main elements: promoting Green Infrastructure in the main EU policy areas; supporting EU-level GI projects; improving access to finance for GI projects; improving information and promoting innovation.

Green Infrastructure is a strategically planned network of natural and semi natural features, that spans from wilderness areas to green roofs, targeting both urban and rural areas. By connecting core areas of protection through corridors, a balanced system of protection and sustainable use and land management is created. Implementing Green Infrastructure beyond protected areas can help to strengthen the coherence of N2000 sites by creating buffer zones and make core areas of protection more resilient. Green Infrastructure is multifunctional and helps maintain ecosystems healthy, offering natural solutions that are beneficial for nature and people, e.g. through delivering ecosystem services like water and air filtration or better protection from natural disasters. Green Infrastructure allows investments but leaves room for nature at the same time. Herewith it keeps the balance between development and biodiversity conservation or even enhancement. Green Infrastructure is a way to rethink land use, in order for the environment to become an equal partner in Europe's success and not a victim of it.

The little feedback received to the attempt of collecting case studies on Green Infrastructure as well as reactions to the presentation of the Green Infrastructure strategy, showed, that the term "Green Infrastructure" is not well established and/or understood. Certainly many of EUROPARC's Transboundary Areas work towards a better connectivity of habitats and landscape, but very few would put their actions or projects under the topic "Green Infrastructure". When speaking of Green Infrastructure, thoughts of the participants went to eco-bridges and other bigger "green" constructions, immediately thinking, protected areas don't play a big role in this kind of Green Infrastructure. Hence talking about Green Infrastructure to protected area managers needs to be done by breaking this term down into specific examples of the management work of a natural place. The good practices on habitat enhancement, which do exist throughout the transboundary protected area network, can then be easily accessed.



Picture 2: Presenting EU's Green Infrastructure Strategy

Two examples on enhancing habitats to secure connectivity between protected areas across borders come from the certified Transboundary Area Prealpi Giulie Nature Park (IT) and Triglav National Park (SL). Both parks form the ecoregion Julian Alps and cooperate together with 9 other partners along the Green Belt in the project GreenNet. This project aims to create and conserve not only a unique ecological refuge but also to develop these peripheral rural areas in the heart of Europe in a sustainable and integrated way. Important objectives are to contribute to the coherence of the Natura 2000 network by closing the gaps between protected areas, through developing and implementing a joint transnational strategy for management and securing low or non-protected areas in the Central European Green Belt. The transboundary area of Mt. Canin/Kanin on the Italian-Slovenian border, situated in Prealpi Giulie Nature Park and Triglav National Park has been identified as pilot area #6, where potential (and sometimes

specific) conflict between nature conservation and tourism development is given on both sides of the border, e.g. through the planned extension of a ski resort. The goal in the pilot area is to preserve existing natural heritage through conflict prevention with a participative process (involving stakeholders) to the result of having guidelines mutually agreed on the future management of the area.

The second project that Prealpi Giulie Nature Park and Triglav National Park are involved in, is the “GreenAlps Project”, dealing with the valorisation of connectivity and sustainable use of resources for successful ecosystem management policies in the Alps. One of the goals is to promote interrelation between ecological connectivity, use of renewable energies and other natural resources and the provision of ecosystem services. Both protected areas, Prealpi Giulie and Triglav are selected as pilot areas of the project, with the aim to evaluate the ecological connectivity through the informatics tool JECAMI (Joint Ecological Continuum Analysis and Mapping Initiative), elaborated in the framework of the alpine project ECONNECT. JECAMI is a platform to analyse and visualise ecological connectivity in the Alps from local scale to

global scale, for functional and structural connectivity and for all parties of the society. JECAMI allows calculating the Continuum Suitability Index (CSI), a tool to support decisions based on ten indicators (Population, Land use, Land use Planning, Altitude and Topography, Fragmentation, Infrastructure, Landscape Heterogeneity, Edge density, International Protected Areas Ecological Measures); it is applicable to every area and has been already tested in six alpine pilot regions. It has already found application in some local land planning decisions. Soon it will be done for the transboundary ecoregion Julian Alps. http://gis.nationalpark.ch/arcgisserver_app/econnect/jecami.htm

The EU offers different financial instruments for funding Green Infrastructure projects, although none is specifically designed just for that purpose. However a variety of funding opportunities is available like Regional and Rural Development Funds to enhance spatial connectivity, agri- or forest-environment schemes to restore biodiversity and ecosystem functions or LIFE-Environment funds to improve functional connectivity and movement of species. In order to unburden the investment in Green Infrastructure for the private sector, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) discuss options of a financing facility to support natural capital-related investments, including Green Infrastructure projects. Examples of Green Infrastructure projects carried out by business can be found on the European Business and Biodiversity Platform <http://www.business-biodiversity.eu/>.



Picture 3: Director Stefano Santi presenting involvement in Green Infrastructure projects of Prealpi Giulie Nature Park (IT)



Picture 4: Learning about biodiversity after the restoration of former mining areas

In the afternoon the participants could experience other components of Green Infrastructure in practice, during an excursion to a former mining area and wetlands in Hainaut cross-border Nature Park. Nature has slowly taken back Amaury Nature Site, a former coal mining area. Over time these cavities settled, and eventually caved in, filling with water and aquatic plants. Now reed beds and wet woodland have grown up, creating an important habitat and resting place for waterfowl. Further on a visit to Chabaud-Latour Pools (FR) and Harchies-Hensies-Pommeroeul Swamps (BE), took place. Participants could learn firsthand of the multi-functionality that Green Infrastructure features like wetland areas offer. After decades of mining activities or draining land for agricultural use, restoration of wetlands now is in place in many

countries in Europe. The benefits of such natural features for man and nature are just evident, delivering ecosystem services like protection from flood or drought, improvement of water quality, biodiversity enhancement or recreation for citizens.

Transboundary protected areas and Green Infrastructures can be considered twins. They work hand in hand in order to conserve ecosystems and provide landscape connectivity. Indeed connectivity is a key word in both the Green Infrastructure Strategy of the European Commission and transboundary cooperation of protected areas. EUROPARC thinks that by working across international borders, transboundary protected areas connect habitats and ensure ecological connectivity between natural areas in different countries. They can therefore be seen as a vital knot for implementing the Commission's Green Infrastructure Strategy, countering habitat loss and fragmentation in Europe. However former research in the Federation's network also showed that the functional principles of green networks are not yet well enough studied and formulated. Therefore EUROPARC will continue to collect good practices on Green Infrastructure in transboundary protected areas, to be presented to DG Environment, underpinning the EU policy with up-to-date scientific data and information from practical protected area work in the near future.



Picture 5: Exploring Chabaud-Latour Pools and Harchies-Hensies-Pommeroeul Swamps (FR/BE)

Learning from experience: Transboundary cooperation in practice

EUROPARC's TransParcNet meeting serves as a knowledge hub, where information and experiences can be shared on how successful transboundary cooperation between N2000 sites and nationally designated protected areas work in practice. Hence a session with workshops on three different topics was organised the third day of the meeting, where participants could learn from each other's case studies and expertise. A summary of each workshop is provided below.

Workshop 1: Nature across borders – Together for biodiversity (Habitat management)

Borders are abundant in Europe but in order for nature to be effectively protected and the EU 2020 strategy of halting biodiversity loss to be achieved, cooperation across man-made boundaries is necessary. Common activities across borders in habitat management and the harmonization of tools and data will help to better protected Europe's iconic landscapes.

The first presentation of the representative of the Catalan Pyrenees Regional Nature Park (FR) was an initiative to diversify genetically the population of rock ptarmigan, which is present both in the French nature park and in the Cadi-Moixero Nature Park (ES). The rock ptarmigan inhabits vast circumpolar territories (Alaska, Greenland, Siberia), but is also found in some mountain areas of southern Europe



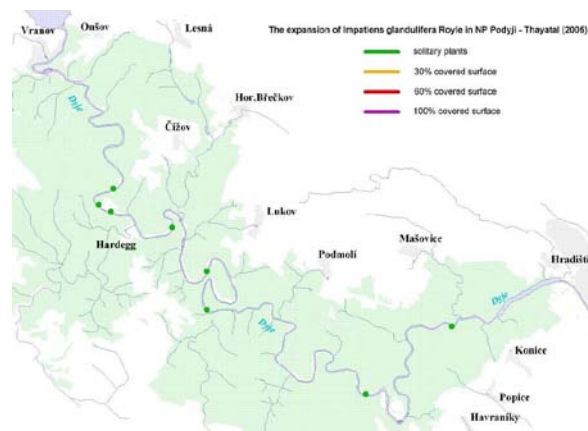
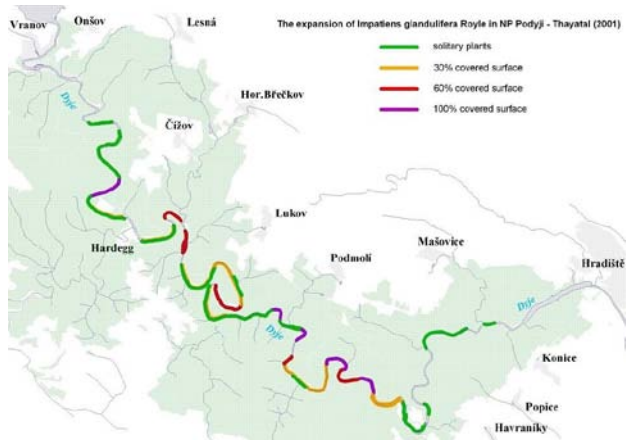
Picture 6: Presentation on genetic diversification of rock ptarmigans in the French and Spanish Catalan Pyrenees

such as the Alps or the Pyrenees. In the warming that followed the last ice age, about 10.000 years ago, the species has taken refuge in the alpine areas of the southern regions. Pastoral exploitation of the Pyrenees Mountains in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries limited the exchange of ptarmigan colonies and probably led to a massive collapse of population because of genetic depletion. In order to stop this process, an initiative for the translocation of birds from the high string to the eastern chain of the Pyrenees was undertaken from 2009 to 2011 within the project "Gallipyr" (Pyrenean Mountain Network Galliformes) and continued in a second phase from 2011 onwards. In total 35 birds were transferred from the French to the Spanish side of the area.

The results of this activity regarding the benefits for the genetic diversification of the rock ptarmigans are not yet evaluated. However, a positive conclusion can be made on the successful cooperation in transferring methodologies between administrations and the work in environmental education which was undertaken during the activity to raise children's awareness about the importance of biodiversity.

The second case study showed how well managed cross-border cooperation can lead to successful reduce and eradication of invasive species in the transboundary area of Thayatal (AU) and Podyjí National Park (CZ).

Invasive non-native species of plants are, due to their high competitive ability to rapidly colonize new places, a threat to indigenous plants and biodiversity. Since the early 90ies of the last century Podyjí National Park has experienced a great invasion of Himalayan Balsam. This up to 2 meters tall annual herb originally from the Himalaya, was introduced in Europe in the 1920s as an ornamental annual plant in private gardens.



Picture 8: Expansion of Himalayan Balsam NP Podyjí and Thayatal 2001

Picture 7: Expansion of Himalayan Balsam NP Podyjí and Thayatal 2006

Soon it began to spread uncontrollably wild, causing extraordinary damage to native riparian vegetation along the banks of European rivers in recent decades. In the mid-nineties, therefore, park managers decided to start a targeted attempt to destroy the Himalayan Balsam along the border in cooperation with the colleagues from the Austrian park. The exhaustive and time consuming work of extracting the plants entirely by hand without the use of chemicals paid off.

The eradication of Himalayan Balsam was one of the first and most successful joint projects of both national parks and resulted in a significant decrease of Himalayan balsam plants in river valley and return of native plants on previously invaded places. The most important success factors for the project were the common approach to the river valley management, access to both banks of the river (trained Czech employees are working on Austrian side of the river), a change in management of meadows (Austrian colleagues persuaded landowners and stakeholders) and the common ongoing monitoring.

These examples showed the challenges that the participants face with managing habitats and species in N2000 sites and nationally designated protected areas that span across borders. However encouraging successes are possible when working closely together regardless of international borders. Speaking in detail about the case studies, it was determined, that frequently the scientists who deal with habitat management in a protected area, know that the transboundary approach is most suitable to tackle common problems extending along borders. However, often the park administration or local and regional authorities stay behind and can't keep up with the pace of the practical on the ground management. Their mechanisms are often not enough adapted to the transfrontier work. Moreover, political strategies and decisions can be quite different between states, which puts another layer of complexity to a transboundary cooperation. Even for European initiatives as Natura 2000 sites no compulsory mechanisms are provided to preserve connected transboundary nature areas. Hence it often comes down to the national or local (park) administrations to be active and aware to define connected Natura 2000 sites. That was the case for the Hainaut cross-border Nature Park, whose existence made the creation of a good transfrontier Natura 2000 network much easier. Furthermore the participants mentioned that the missing harmonisation between monitoring systems and databases very often is an obstacle in the proper co-management of habitats.



Picture 9: Discussing challenges of cross-border habitat management

Workshop 2: Grab the chance - Tourists are coming (Local development and tourism)

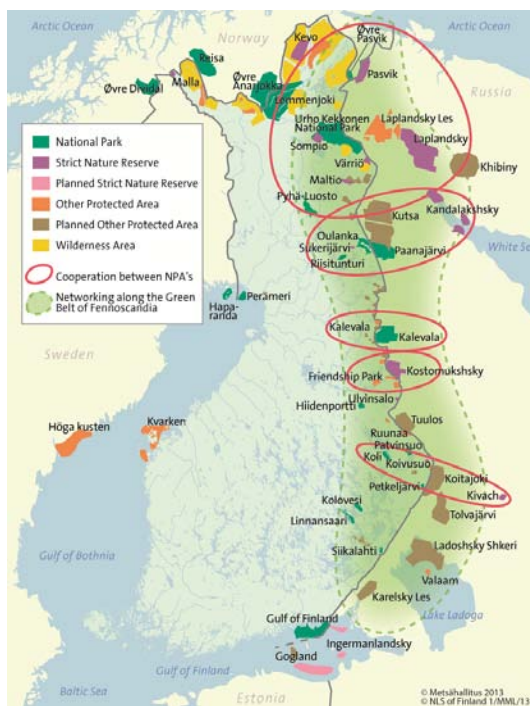
N2000 sites and other protected areas have natural assets, wildlife, landscape, peace and quiet that many visitors like to experience. When managed sustainably and in accordance with the need of local communities, tourism in protected areas can be a main driver for development, especially in remote border areas.

The first case study was presented by Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park (NL/DE), who until now executed very successfully a number of cross-border projects to connect and value the cultural as well as the natural heritage of their region. The project presented has not been submitted yet, but will seek EU funding in the near future. It is based on the common German-Dutch history of the park in regards to raw materials and early settlement, energy use and the history of landscape formation. The project's aim is to create a network of interesting cultural heritage sites within the park and to let visitors experience the history of these sites through audio guides, animated films and through augmented reality technologies. The project strives to find innovative marketing approaches for the German-Dutch cultural heritage and foster its perception by visitors through the use of modern media, such as smart phones and tablet PCs. Furthermore new target groups should be accessed by improving the quality and accessibility of Points of Interest (POIs) as well as by introducing new delivery forms of cultural content, like innovative theatre. An inventory of an overlap of all cultural heritage and biking/hiking trails will be a crucial starting point in this project, since the sites and POIs should be connected through the network of hiking and bicycle trails already existing.



Picture 10: Participants of local development workshop

If messages about conserving Europe's natural and cultural heritage in times of ever fastening lifestyles of people, are about to come across, it is crucial to speak to them in their "own language". This includes the use of all available modern technology for delivering information in the interest of N2000 sites and other protected areas. Furthermore a close cooperation with all stakeholders involved in an area is key to success. Therefore Maas-Swalm-Nette Nature Park is working intensively with the German and Dutch communities within the park, the German partner Nature Park Schwalm-Nette, nature, cultural, tourist and theatre organizations, and universities and secures funding from their part to successfully implement the project.



Picture 11: Cooperation across borders along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia

The second presentation consisted of two case studies from Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services about cross-border cooperation and development of nature-based tourism along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia. The projects "Quality-CET – Quality for Cross-Border Practices in Ecotourism" and "ABC heritage – Arctic Biological, Geological and Cultural heritage" are run in the two Transboundary Areas Oulanka-Panaajärvi National Parks (FI/RU) and Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park (FI/NO/RU) respectively. The common aims of both projects are: increased awareness and visibility of sustainable tourism in Nature Protected Areas (NPAs), increased knowledge about NPAs, increment of sustainable nature-based tourism in NPAs and overall development of cooperation between transboundary areas along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia.

The Quality CET project focuses on increasing the cooperation between Finnish and Russian protected areas to develop and market the Karelian region as a viable eco-tourism destination by improving attractiveness and visibility of the area. The goal is to set up sustainable cross-border cooperation between nature protected areas by establishing a twin-parks cooperation model in several Finnish-Russian NPAs, similar to the one used in the certified EUROPARC Transboundary Area Oulanka-Panaajärvi. Creating twin-parks cooperation should enable the authorities to harmonize sustainable

tourism development strategies, to provide new marketing and environmental education materials, and to create new communication tools.

An important focus of the ABCGheritage project is the development of new, innovative co-operative networks along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia, which do long-term nature conservation work and establish sustainable nature tourism. The expected results of this project are: new materials and infrastructures for education and nature-based tourism, an active and enhanced cooperation between protected areas and local stakeholders along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia, as well as an inventory of geological and cultural heritage sites in order to develop the “Lapland tour for Geotourists”. This will be achieved through increasing regional knowledge, particularly where schoolchildren are concerned, but also for tourists, local residents and nature tourism operators. Furthermore new tourism infrastructures will be built and a sustainable tourism strategy for the Green Belt of Fennoscandia developed.



Picture 12: Educational material developed in ABCGheritage project

N2000 sites and nationally designated protected areas that stretch along international borders, especially those along the former iron curtain, are very often remote places, with rich biodiversity but also regions of less structured development. Transboundary protected areas can play a vital role in the sustainable development of a remote border area e.g. through responsible tourism approaches, creating and securing employment opportunities for the inhabitants of the region. It is however crucial to bring all relevant stake and right holders together, to commonly set up a strategy for sustainable regional development. With their expertise in intercultural and intersectoral cooperation transboundary protected areas can be of help in that matter. Challenges that protected areas face when it comes to tourism development are lack of awareness of inhabitants, tourism businesses and tourists towards the natural and cultural heritage and the sensitivity of the area. Awareness rising plays therefore an important role, and is most effective when started early e.g. already in primary school. Teaching the young people of today to become the responsible tourists of tomorrow, aware of cultural differences and heritage, is something that transboundary protected areas also based on EUROPARC’s Junior Ranger and European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas Programme can deliver. A professional network, with partners from the tourism sector advocating for the cause of the protected area, is seen as most beneficial.

Workshop 3: Cooperation comes naturally – or does it? (Building cooperation and networks)

Animals, rivers or mountain ranges do not recognize man-made borders; they follow nature’s design. International organizations recommend cross-border cooperation in nature conservation. But collaborating with neighbouring countries brings its own particular challenges, adding another layer of complexity to the already difficult task of managing a protected area.

At the beginning of the workshop participants asked if it is so evident that protected areas and their authorities cooperate and how a cooperation could be improved working with the methodology of EUROPARC’s Transboundary Parks Programme. They concluded that it is important to start cooperations and in order to do that rather successfully it is important to start where it is easiest. If not well coordinated from the beginning, cooperation can disappear, which risk can be minimised by having a common target and goal e.g. “common nature management”.

Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services, who through the transboundary areas Oulanka-Panaajärvi National Parks (FI/RU) and Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park (FI/NO/RU) have a track record in protected areas cooperating across borders, presented the first case study. The idea was to take the good examples from above mentioned transboundary areas to support the development of a cooperation between Perämeri National Park (FI) and Haparanda Skärgård National Park (SE). In the Bothnian Bay area, two cities along the coast are cooperating already well, but the two marine protected areas in their vicinity are not. Through an Interreg project (06/2013 -05/2014) both protected areas



Picture 13: Sari Alatossava from Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services presents the Bothnian Bay cooperation project

sought to exchange knowledge, network and to define ideas for a future cooperation. A Feasibility study of joint visitor services (accessibility, services for tourists, information, etc.) and a draft cooperation agreement to implement a sustainable cooperation are/will be the outputs of this project. The project has shown that it is crucial to not only involve the park management authorities but all stakeholders concerned and that common needs and goals are a driver for the cooperation. EU-funded projects have proven to be a good way of securing resources and both protected areas plan a follow-up project in the new EU programming phase 2014-2020.



Picture 14: Presentation of PaNaNet project

The second example came from Neusiedlersee-Seewinkl National Park (AU) who together with their transboundary partner Fertő-Hanság National Park (HU) were involved in the Interreg project “PaNaNet”. Over the last decades many new protected areas were created in Western Hungary and in the Burgenland in Austria. The PaNaNet project brings 10 nature parks and 4 national parks together to 1 network for conservation and development. The project co-funded within the EU-ETC AT–HU framework, aims at establishing a network of Pannonian protected areas in order to raise the acceptance for nature conservation as an asset for local economy. Objectives are the transfer of experience from long established parks to newly created ones and within the same cross-border area. Over

the course of six years activities in the fields of project management, public relations, marketing, joint training and education, construction or improvement of infrastructure for nature tourism and nature experience and development of (joint) touristic packages took place. The transboundary aspect of the project not only concerned the park authorities but also reached out to the public and visitors, with offering transboundary conferences and visitor programmes.

Conclusions of the workshop on good cooperation of protected areas across borders included that cooperation takes time, endurance and the power to convince. It was also said, that good practice examples, sharing knowledge and networking possibilities are much more useful for protected areas to establish a functioning cooperation than any kind of guideline can be. One wish towards the EUROPARC Federation was, to make the completed forms and reports of successfully evaluated transboundary areas available to those who want to start cooperation and apply for the Transboundary Parks Programme. The participants concluded that a sustainable cooperation is not only depended on the persons involved but in order to guarantee a long lasting cooperation a strong institutional structure and backup through authorities is necessary.

Summary

Once again the TransParcNet meeting delivered an interesting and comprehensive portfolio and showed its value of a platform for experience exchange and networking. New connections between “old-timers” and “first timers” were established.

Learning from each other, from personal experiences, engaging in debate and discussion is the way EUROPARC believes to drive up standards, to develop new ways to meet the challenges that affect the management of protected areas. This is no more important when protected areas need to manage effectively, nature, visitors, and stimulate sustainable economic development across a political international border. Even in today’s “open bordered” EU, there remain cultural, administration and statutory differences that can sometime be “barriers” to good management of nature.

EUROPARC’s Transboundary Parks Programme is one of the world’s most developed, working Transboundary certification programmes that gives protected areas an effective tool and “3rd party neutral” agreement to provide a structure that builds on the personal contacts and cooperation seen at a park level.

EUROPARC is most thankful to the hosting parks for their sterling work and to the participants for their very valuable contributions to this meeting and new inspirations for the Transboundary Parks Programme. All presentations of the plenary sessions and workshops can be downloaded on the [EUROPARC website](#).

Pictures of the 6th TransParcNet meeting are available on the [EUROPARC website](#) and on [flickr](#). All pictures in this report, except pictures 7/8/11/12 and 14 are courtesy of Samuel Dhote (www.samueldhote.com).