

# PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR TRANSBOUNDARY PROTECTED AREA MANAGERS IN EUROPE

Case Studies and Best Practices from EUROPARC-Certified Transboundary Areas



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F E D E R A T I O N



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## Introduction

Transboundary areas (TBAs) are unique ecosystems that cross national borders, demanding collaborative approaches to conservation, management, and sustainable development. This document delves into the achievements and challenges of EUROPARC-certified TBAs, presenting an array of most recent case studies that provide invaluable insights for transboundary area managers worldwide.

Each case study explores a specific TBA initiative, shedding light on innovative projects and programmes. While the content is organised around core themes—such as conservation, tourism, governance, climate change, digitalisation, culture, infrastructure, and youth engagement—it is essential to recognise that these themes are deeply intertwined. Environmental questions demand integrated solutions, and this interconnectedness is reflected in the practices and lessons highlighted in this document.

By drawing on these experiences, TBA managers can adapt and implement proven strategies, fostering greater cooperation, resilience, and ecological integrity across borders. Whether addressing biodiversity conservation, promoting sustainable tourism, or advancing climate adaptation, the following examples serve as a roadmap for cross-border collaboration.

## I. Conservation

### **Podyjí and Thayatal National Parks Transboundary area: Pilot Survey of Lichen Biodiversity**

- Programme: Interreg
- Project Duration: within 2022
- Budget: €23,054.33

#### **Project Objective**

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The primary aim of this pilot project was to explore and document lichen biodiversity within the Podyjí and Thayatal transboundary protected area. With a focus on lesser-studied species groups, the project sought to identify key hotspots of lichen diversity and establish a solid foundation of floristic data that would contribute to ongoing conservation efforts. Another core goal was to raise public awareness about lichens—a group often overlooked despite their ecological importance—and to bring experts and students into the area to deepen understanding of this unique biodiversity.

#### **Key Achievements**

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##### **Identifying Hotspots of Lichen Biodiversity**

A thorough survey of 21 locations across the border region of Podyjí and Thayatal was conducted to identify areas with significant lichen diversity. This comprehensive study yielded remarkable results, including the discovery of 166 Red List species of lichens. Some of these species had been previously considered extinct, highlighting the ecological value of the region and underscoring the importance of dedicated biodiversity studies.

The data collected during the project were systematically recorded and stored in a professional database. This resource is now accessible to researchers and conservation practitioners, ensuring that the information can be utilised for future studies and decision-making.

#### ✓ Raising Public Awareness

One of the standout aspects of the project was its emphasis on engaging with the local community and raising awareness about lichens. Public outreach activities included two "experience days" and two excursions designed to introduce participants to the fascinating world of lichens. These events were highly interactive, offering opportunities for hands-on learning.

For instance, children participated in creative sessions where they painted with natural lichen pigments, while visitors explored local lichen diversity with the guidance of experts. These efforts not only increased understanding of lichens' role in ecosystems but also fostered a sense of connection to the local environment.

#### ✓ Bringing Experts to the Territory

The project also facilitated a one-week field course attended by 15 students and experts from across Europe. This intensive course provided participants with the opportunity to explore key sites within the transboundary area, engage in practical fieldwork, and share expertise.

The presence of international specialists not only enriched the scientific understanding of the region but also highlighted its significance on a broader scale. By fostering collaboration among experts and students, the project strengthened the network of lichenologists and set the stage for future partnerships.

### Impact

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The project had a lasting impact on both the scientific and community levels. Scientifically, it established a foundational dataset that will be invaluable for guiding future conservation efforts and monitoring changes in lichen biodiversity. The discovery of Red List species previously thought extinct demonstrates the potential for uncovering hidden ecological value in other transboundary areas as well.

From a community perspective, the project succeeded in making lichens—a group often viewed as obscure—accessible and interesting to the public. Through interactive events and educational activities, local residents developed a greater appreciation for the biodiversity in their region.

Furthermore, the collaboration with international experts elevated the profile of Podyjí and Thayatal National Parks, demonstrating how transboundary cooperation can yield significant ecological and educational benefits.

### Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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This project serves as a valuable model for other transboundary protected areas seeking to enhance their biodiversity research and community engagement efforts.



*Credits: Nature education. A. Kläring*

- (1) **Focus on Neglected Biodiversity:** By targeting a lesser-known species group such as lichens, the project revealed the hidden ecological importance of these organisms, demonstrating that every group has value and a story worth telling.
- (2) **Engage the Public:** Combining research with community outreach ensured that the project's findings were not limited to the scientific realm. Public events fostered a sense of local pride and involvement, which is critical for long-term conservation success.
- (3) **Leverage Expert Collaboration:** Inviting experts and students from across Europe to participate in fieldwork enhanced the project's outcomes and established international connections that can benefit the region in the future.
- (4) **Ensure Data Accessibility:** Creating an open-access database of the collected floristic data exemplifies how transparency and knowledge sharing can amplify the impact of a local conservation initiative.

This case study illustrates the potential of well-coordinated transboundary projects to generate meaningful scientific insights, strengthen international collaboration, and engage local communities in the conservation of their natural heritage.

## **Saxon-Bohemian Switzerland Transboundary area: Red Deer and Elbe Parks Network**

Focused on conservation efforts as its primary goal, there are two latest projects coming from the Saxon-Bohemian Switzerland Transboundary area that will be observed further.

### *Improving the Efficiency of Managing Red Deer through Transboundary Approaches*

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- Programme: Interreg
- Project Duration: 2024 – 2026
- Budget: 1.515.126,18 EUR
- Website: [REDEMA](#)

This ambitious project focuses on improving the management of red deer populations in the Saxon-Bohemian Switzerland region. With a strong emphasis on data collection, behavioural research, and ecosystem interactions, the project addresses the complexities of managing wildlife populations across borders.

#### **Key Aims**

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The project is designed to address multiple aspects of red deer ecology and management:

- ✓ **Understanding Population Dynamics:** By studying population density, spatial distribution, and demographic structure, the project aims to provide a detailed understanding of the red deer population.
- ✓ **Behavioural Studies:** Researchers are examining the spatial activity of red deer and tracking changes over the past 15 years. Special focus is given to the influence of wolves on deer behaviour, including predation dynamics and spatial responses.
- ✓ **Assessing Human Impacts:** The impact of human activities, such as tourism and hunting, on red deer populations is being evaluated to develop management strategies that minimise conflicts and support ecosystem health.
- ✓ **Analysing Forest Regeneration:** The project investigates how deer behaviour affects forest regeneration, including the challenges posed by grazing and browsing in deforested areas.

## Expected Outputs

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The project is anticipated to deliver robust datasets and insights that will enable the development of effective wildlife management strategies. Key outputs include:

- ✓ Recommendations for balancing predator-prey dynamics.
- ✓ Strategies to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts.
- ✓ Conservation measures to support forest recovery and ecosystem resilience.

## Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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- (1) Long-term ecological studies provide critical insights into species behaviour and population dynamics.
- (2) Collaboration across borders ensures a holistic understanding of shared wildlife populations and their ecosystems.
- (3) Integrating modern monitoring techniques with traditional knowledge can yield innovative solutions for sustainable management.



*Credits: Monitoring, Dr. Annika Busse.*

## ELBE PARKS Network

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- Initiation Year: 2020
- Website: [ELBE PARKS \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

The ELBE PARKS Network is a collaborative initiative bringing together protected areas located along the Elbe River, starting from its source in Krkonoše National Park in Czechia and extending to the North Sea in Germany. The initiative aims to enhance the conservation of the river's unique ecological features, support sustainable development, and foster cross-border cooperation among its stakeholders.

## Objectives of the Initiative

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The ELBE PARKS Network has outlined a comprehensive set of objectives to maximise the ecological, cultural, and social value of the Elbe River and its surrounding regions:



- ✓ **Promoting Ecological Awareness:** The Elbe River holds immense ecological significance, supporting diverse ecosystems and providing valuable services to both nature and humans. The initiative seeks to raise public interest in the river's ecological functions, fostering a greater understanding of its biodiversity and the benefits it provides.
- ✓ **Facilitating Knowledge Exchange:** Conservation efforts along the river require coordinated actions, and this is facilitated through the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and best practices among protected areas. The network strengthens cooperation by enabling stakeholders to learn from one another and address common challenges effectively.
- ✓ **Preserving Heritage and Boosting Sustainable Tourism:** The regions along the Elbe are rich in cultural and natural heritage, which are integral to their identity and appeal. By promoting sustainable tourism, the initiative aims to strengthen public awareness of this heritage while supporting regional economic development that respects the integrity of natural landscapes.
- ✓ **Building Strategic Partnerships:** ELBE PARKS actively seeks partnerships with existing networks and collaborative projects to enhance knowledge exchange and foster cross-border conservation of river ecosystems. These partnerships enrich the initiative's scope and bring in diverse perspectives.

### **Progress and Achievements**

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The formalisation of cooperation through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding has laid the groundwork for long-term partnerships and shared conservation strategies. Additionally, the initiative has successfully initiated platforms for collaboration and communication between various stakeholders.

### **Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers**

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- (1) Establishing networks like ELBE PARKS fosters a unified approach to conservation that transcends political boundaries.
- (2) Combining ecological conservation with cultural heritage preservation can create sustainable tourism models that benefit local communities.
- (3) Cross-border cooperation offers valuable opportunities to address shared environmental challenges through collective expertise.

These projects underscore the importance of collaboration in managing shared natural resources and wildlife. They highlight the potential for transboundary conservation initiatives to address complex ecological challenges while fostering regional development and cross-cultural exchange.



## Šumava and Bavarian Forest National Parks Transboundary area: 5 conservational excels

Focused on conservation efforts as its primary goal, there are five latest projects coming from the Šumava and Bavarian Forest National Parks Transboundary area that are worth to be observed.

### *LIFE FOR MIRES: Restoring the Heart of Europe's Wetlands*

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- Programme: Life
- Implementation Period: 2018 – 2024
- Budget: €5,845,000
- Website: [LIFE for Mires](#)



LIFE FOR MIRES represents a flagship initiative aimed at the restoration of peatland ecosystems across the Šumava and Bavarian Forest National Parks, as well as their surrounding areas. With wetlands recognised as some of the most important habitats for biodiversity and ecosystem services, this ambitious project is dedicated to reversing historical degradation and ensuring their resilience in the face of climate change.

The project encompasses extensive peatland restoration activities, which include rewetting drained mires and creating conditions that encourage the natural recovery of these unique ecosystems. These efforts not only benefit rare species and habitats but also play a crucial role in carbon sequestration, water retention, and flood mitigation. By actively involving local communities and stakeholders, LIFE FOR MIRES fosters a collaborative approach to conservation, ensuring the long-term sustainability of its interventions.

This project serves as a blueprint for large-scale habitat restoration, highlighting the vital role of cross-border cooperation in tackling complex ecological challenges.

### *Ecological Impacts of the Return of Wolves to the Šumava and Bavarian Forest Ecosystem*

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- Implementation Period: 2023 – 2026
- Budget: €1,499,832.33

As apex predators return to the forests of Central Europe, their presence offers both challenges and opportunities for ecosystem management. This project is dedicated to studying the ecological impacts of wolves in the Šumava and Bavarian Forest National Parks. It focuses on understanding how the return of this keystone species influences the behaviour and population dynamics of herbivores, particularly red deer, and how these changes cascade through the ecosystem.

Through a combination of modern tracking technologies, field observations, and data analysis, researchers aim to assess predation patterns, spatial activity, and the broader implications for forest regeneration. The project also examines the interplay between human activities, such as hunting and tourism, and the natural behaviours of wolves and deer.

The findings from this study will provide critical insights into the role of wolves in shaping resilient ecosystems and offer guidance for managing predator-prey dynamics in transboundary protected areas.

### *Šumava Fish Jewels: Conserving Native Brown Trout Populations*

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- Implementation Period: 2023 – 2026
- Budget: €1,436,936.25

The Šumava Fish Jewels project is a pioneering effort to protect and conserve the natural populations of brown trout, an indicator species of freshwater ecosystem health. The initiative employs modern, non-invasive monitoring methods to gather precise data on trout populations and their habitats.

Using this information, the project develops coordinated conservation plans that aim to enhance the resilience of trout populations to the impacts of climate change. These measures include habitat restoration, promoting sustainable fishing practices, and engaging local communities and stakeholders in conservation efforts.

The project's outcomes are communicated widely through media channels, fisheries organisations, and educational programmes, ensuring that its lessons inspire action beyond the borders of the Šumava and Bavarian Forest National Parks.

### *Flora of the Bohemian Forest: A Comprehensive Botanical Study*

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- Implementation Period: 2019 – 2022
- Budget: €1,150,700
- Website: [Flora of the Bohemian Forest](#)

This project represents a monumental effort to document the distribution of vascular plants across the transboundary Bohemian Forest region. By compiling and analysing historical and contemporary data, researchers created a bilingual online database, complete with distribution maps and ecological profiles for individual species.

In addition to advancing scientific understanding, the project prioritised practical conservation by identifying endangered species and implementing measures to support their populations. The culmination of this work was the development of a Red List of endangered plants specific to the region, which will serve as a critical resource for conservation planning.

The project's accessible website ensures that its findings benefit both the scientific community and the general public, fostering a greater appreciation of the region's botanical heritage.

### *Biodiversity in Focus: Insects, Fungi, Lichens, and Mosses*

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- Implementation Period: 2020 – 2022
- Budget: €787,106
- Website: [Biodiversity Project](#)

This project addressed the conservation needs of often-overlooked organisms such as insects, fungi, lichens, and mosses. Through a combination of habitat creation and advanced monitoring techniques, it aimed to improve the conservation status of these groups in the Bohemian Forest.

Over 210 hectares of habitat were enhanced by increasing deadwood availability, promoting rare tree species, and protecting old-growth trees. These efforts created critical microhabitats for many species. Simultaneously, researchers conducted extensive monitoring to better understand the relationships between biodiversity, ecosystem processes, and services.

The findings have been presented in an engaging format to raise public interest in conservation and support decision-makers with planning tools. This project underscores the importance of integrating biodiversity considerations into forest management practices.

### *Risk Assessment for Wildlife: Managing the Giant Liver Fluke*

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- Implementation Period: 2020 – 2022
- Budget: €922,094
- Website: [Leberegelpjekt im Nationalpark Bayerischer Wald](#)

The spread of the invasive giant liver fluke poses a significant threat to wildlife in the Bohemian Forest. This project aimed to better understand the host-parasite dynamics by studying the distribution of the parasite, its hosts, and their habitat preferences.

By simulating various management scenarios, researchers developed practical recommendations for reducing infection risks. These findings were disseminated through training sessions and seminars, equipping local stakeholders with the tools to address this growing challenge. The project also created online tools to facilitate long-term monitoring and recording of infection cases.

This case study highlights the importance of proactive measures to manage invasive species and mitigate their impacts on native wildlife and ecosystems.

Each of these projects showcases innovative approaches to conservation that leverage cross-border cooperation. They serve as exemplary models for transboundary protected area managers, demonstrating the potential to achieve significant ecological, social, and cultural benefits through collaboration and shared expertise.

### **Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers**

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- (1) **Cross-Border Collaboration:** Joint efforts between neighboring regions amplify conservation outcomes by sharing resources, expertise, and knowledge. projects like *life for mires* exemplify how transboundary areas can address large-scale ecological challenges such as habitat restoration through unified strategies.
- (2) **Integration of Science and Management:** The use of cutting-edge research and innovative technologies, such as in the *Ecological Impacts of the Return of Wolves* and *Šumava Fish Jewels* projects, shows the importance of data-driven decision-making to guide ecosystem management and policy.
- (3) **Public Engagement and Education: Effective** communication of project outcomes, like the accessible botanical database in *Flora of the Bohemian Forest* and media outreach in *Biodiversity in Focus*, fosters public awareness and support for conservation efforts, ensuring broader societal impact.
- (4) **Targeted Conservation for Underserved Areas:** Projects like *Biodiversity in Focus* demonstrate the value of addressing lesser-studied groups (e.g., insects, fungi, lichens) and integrating their needs into larger conservation frameworks, contributing to holistic ecosystem health.
- (5) **Proactive Risk Management:** Risk Assessment for Wildlife underscores the importance of anticipating threats, such as invasive species, and implementing evidence-based mitigation strategies to protect native biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

By adopting these practices, transboundary area managers can enhance their conservation strategies,

foster sustainable development, and build stronger ties between neighbouring regions.

## II. Tourism

### **Neusiedler See- Seewinkel National Park and Fertő-Hanság National Park** **Transboundary area: CrossEcoSys**

- Programme: Interreg
- Project Duration: 2024 – 2027
- Budget: €1.441.306,80



#### Project Overview

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For nearly 30 years, the Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park and the Fertő-Hanság National Park have maintained a strong tradition of cross-border cooperation focused on nature conservation, species protection, and environmental education. However, despite their proximity and shared environmental goals, the parks have yet to create a cohesive ecotourism offering that unites their diverse natural and cultural heritage. The CrossEcoSys project, initiated under the Interreg VI-A Austria-Hungary programme, is designed to create a unified ecotourism product that enhances sustainable tourism opportunities and showcases both parks' unique ecological and cultural assets.

The project aims to enhance the region's appeal as a sustainable ecotourism destination, with a focus on cycling tourism. By combining rich biodiversity, historical landmarks, and local culture, the CrossEcoSys initiative seeks to foster environmentally responsible tourism that emphasises slow tourism and nature exploration over mass tourism.

#### Objectives

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- ✓ **Create a Joint Ecotourism Product:** The goal of the CrossEcoSys project is to develop a cross-border tourism product, primarily focusing on cycling. This initiative will connect key ecological sites, cultural landmarks, and natural reserves in both national parks, offering cyclists and nature enthusiasts a seamless and immersive experience through diverse landscapes.
- ✓ **Enhance Visitor Experience through Sustainable Tourism:** By creating and promoting a joint ecotourism product, the project aims to engage tourists who are passionate about sustainable and slow tourism. This involves showcasing not only the biodiversity of the parks but also the rich history of the region, including the Iron Curtain and the Andau Bridge, integrating education about local conservation efforts.
- ✓ **Develop Cross-Border Marketing and Branding Strategy:** The creation of a joint marketing and branding strategy will promote the two national parks as a transboundary ecotourism destination. The aim is to appeal to visitors interested in exploring lesser-known, biodiverse areas and to position the region as a leader in sustainable tourism.
- ✓ **Support Local Communities and Businesses:** The project will work to integrate local service providers (e.g., accommodation, food, bike rental services) into the ecotourism value chain. This will not only improve the tourism experience but also ensure that the economic benefits of tourism are shared by the surrounding communities.

## Key Activities

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- ✓ **Cycling Trail Development:** The CrossEcoSys project focuses on creating the National Park Cycling Trail, a cross-border route linking nature sites, villages, and historical landmarks. This eco-friendly trail will allow visitors to experience diverse ecosystems, rare wildlife, and traditional landscapes while promoting sustainable tourism.
- ✓ **Marketing and Branding:** A unified campaign will promote the ecotourism offer using online tools, multilingual materials, and digital innovations like QR codes. The focus is on attracting eco-conscious travelers by highlighting biodiversity, cultural heritage, and sustainable tourism practices.
- ✓ **Cycling-Friendly Services:** Local businesses will offer cyclist-oriented amenities, including rentals, tailored accommodations, and sustainable dining. These services will enhance the visitor experience and support local communities.
- ✓ **Educational Activities:** The project will host guided tours, workshops, and events to educate visitors on conservation and sustainability, fostering deeper connections with the parks.
- ✓ **Cross-Border Collaboration:** The partnership between Neusiedler See-Seewinkel and Fertő-Hanság National Parks ensures a unified visitor experience and strengthens cross-border ties with local tourism stakeholders.

## Expected Outcomes

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- ✓ **Sustainable Tourism Product:** The National Park Cycling Trail will attract eco-conscious tourists, showcasing the region's biodiversity and cultural heritage while minimizing environmental impact.
- ✓ **Boosted Tourism Revenue:** Increased visitation is expected to benefit local businesses such as bike rentals, accommodations, and restaurants, fostering economic growth.
- ✓ **Promoted Sustainability:** By emphasizing slow, immersive travel, the project will reduce environmental pressures and encourage responsible tourism.
- ✓ **Local Economic Impact:** Collaboration with local businesses ensures economic benefits are widely distributed, supporting a more diversified and resilient economy.
- ✓ **Diversified and Balanced Tourism:** The project will reduce over-reliance on traditional tourist hotspots by attracting visitors to explore lesser-known areas in a sustainable way.
- ✓ **Joint International Visibility:** Cross-border marketing will elevate the profile of both parks, attracting eco-conscious tourists from Europe and beyond.

## Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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- (1) **Integrated Tourism Offers:** Develop cross-border attractions that combine nature, culture, and history for a unique visitor experience.
- (2) **Collaborative Marketing:** Use joint campaigns to amplify reach and appeal to diverse audiences.
- (3) **Community Involvement:** Engage local businesses to provide tailored services that enhance tourism and share economic benefits.
- (4) **Sustainability Focus:** Prioritize eco-friendly practices and slow tourism to protect natural resources.
- (5) **Visitor Education:** Raise awareness through interactive programs to foster a deeper appreciation of conservation efforts.
- (6) **Cross-Border Cooperation:** Strengthen partnerships between protected areas and stakeholders to create cohesive and resilient tourism products. By focusing on ecotourism, sustainability, and cross-border collaboration, the CrossEcoSys project exemplifies how integrated tourism development can enhance both environmental protection and local economies. The creation of a joint ecotourism product will not only benefit visitors by offering a unique and sustainable travel experience but also ensure the long-term health and vitality of the region's protected areas.

## **Maas Schwalm Nette Transboundary area: ATTRAKTIV Project: Enhancing the Horseback Riding Experience**

- Project Duration: Ongoing since 2022

### **Project Objective**

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The ATTRAKTIV Project is designed to enhance the experience of horseback riders by improving accessibility and facilities within the Maas Schwalm Nette Transboundary area, which spans both Germany and the Netherlands. This initiative aims to connect over 900 km of suitable riding paths, making the area more accessible and enjoyable for riders, while promoting sustainable tourism and raising awareness about the region's natural beauty, heritage, and shared resources.

The project focuses on addressing several key challenges faced by riders, such as cross-border access, traffic safety, and conflicts between user groups. It also aims to improve the overall infrastructure for horse riders, including better signage, increased facilities, and more welcoming stops, known as “Paarden Welkom” (Horses Welcome) locations.

### **Project Outputs**

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- ✓ **Unified Signage System:** The creation of a unified knot system for over 900 km of riding trails will make it easier for riders to navigate across borders. This system will ensure that the trails are well-marked, safe, and easily accessible to riders in both countries.
- ✓ **Barrier-Free Access:** One of the key objectives is to reduce the barrier effect of borders for riders. This will be achieved through communication and regulatory adjustments, including agreements between Germany and the Netherlands to ensure that riders can move freely between the two countries.
- ✓ **Improved Rider Facilities:** The project includes the development of more “Paarden Welkom” locations along the trails. These facilities will provide resting spots, water troughs, and places where riders and their horses can relax and refresh.
- ✓ **Enhanced Traffic Safety:** Safety measures will be taken to improve traffic conditions for riders, ensuring that they can safely navigate through busy areas, particularly where trails intersect with roads.
- ✓ **Increased Participation of SMEs:** The project will foster partnerships with local businesses, such as horse farms, inns, and restaurants, to support the horse-riding community. Through these collaborations, the project will help generate income for local businesses while encouraging riders to engage with the region's local economy.
- ✓ **Promotion and Marketing:** The ATTRAKTIV Project will also involve marketing and communication campaigns targeting horse riders across the Netherlands, Germany, and beyond. This will include the development of websites, maps, and promotional materials that highlight the region's unique equestrian offerings and tourism opportunities.

### **Project Outcome**

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- ✓ **Improved Visitor Experience:** With better signage, more welcoming rest stops, and safer routes, horseback riders will have a more enjoyable and accessible experience while traveling through the Maas Schwalm Nette region.



- ✓ **Stronger Cross-Border Cooperation:** The project will help to overcome the challenges of cross-border access for riders and foster better cooperation between Germany and the Netherlands in managing the shared natural and cultural resources.
- ✓ **Sustainable Tourism:** The project encourages eco-tourism by improving the infrastructure for horseback riding in the region, which aligns with sustainable tourism principles. By enhancing the visitor experience, the project will likely lead to a boost in tourism in the area, particularly within the equestrian community.
- ✓ **Economic Impact:** Through the involvement of local businesses, the ATTRAKTIV project will increase the economic activity in the region by attracting riders to local farms, restaurants, and accommodations, thus benefiting the local economy.



*Credits: Hart van Limburg en fotografer Petra Lenssen.*

### **Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers**

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- (1) **Cross-Border Infrastructure Development:** The ATTRAKTIV Project highlights the importance of cross-border infrastructure in promoting sustainable tourism. Developing a unified network of trails and facilities for horseback riders ensures that visitors can seamlessly experience the region's natural and cultural landscapes without encountering barriers due to national borders.
- (2) **Stakeholder Engagement and Partnership Building:** A key success factor of the project has been the collaboration between multiple stakeholders, including national parks, local governments, equestrian organisations, and businesses. Engaging all relevant stakeholders early in the process helps ensure that the project meets local needs and priorities, and it encourages mutual benefits for all involved. Other transboundary area managers should look for ways to build partnerships with local communities and businesses to support their projects.
- (3) **Integrated Marketing Strategies:** The project's emphasis on marketing and communication is essential for promoting the area's equestrian offerings. By creating websites, maps, and promotional campaigns, the project ensures that riders are aware of the region's attractions. transboundary area managers can take advantage of similar marketing efforts to highlight local attractions and promote sustainable tourism.
- (4) **Sustainable Tourism:** The ATTRAKTIV Project demonstrates how infrastructure improvements can support sustainable tourism by enhancing the visitor experience while minimising environmental impact. The development of a unified network of trails and rest areas provides a more enjoyable and responsible way for visitors to experience nature. This approach can be adapted by other transboundary area managers to ensure that tourism development aligns with conservation goals.



The ATTRAKTIV Project represents a forward-thinking approach to promoting equestrian tourism in the Maas Schwalm Nette region, enhancing cross-border access, improving visitor infrastructure, and fostering local economic growth. The lessons learned from this project can guide future initiatives in cross-border cooperation, sustainable tourism, and stakeholder engagement for Transboundary areas across Europe and beyond.

## **Transboundary area Julian Alps: Transboundary Connection Trail**

➤ Project Duration: 2022 – Ongoing

### **Project Objective**

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The TB Connection Trail project aims to enhance cross-border tourism by connecting existing hiking trails across the Soča Valley region, which spans both Slovenia and Italy. This initiative allows visitors to experience the unique natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and shared history of the area. By creating a seamless trail across the borders, the project promotes sustainable tourism, eco-tourism, and outdoor activities, while preserving the natural environment and historical landmarks along the trail. The initiative also fosters a deeper understanding of the region's biodiversity and cultural significance, strengthening cross-border collaboration in tourism and conservation efforts.



*Credits: Transboundary area Julian Alps, by Mojca Smolej.*

### **Project Outputs**

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- ✓ **Connection of Existing Trails:** The project focuses on linking existing hiking trails that cross both Slovenia and Italy, creating a continuous, accessible route. This allows visitors to explore the natural beauty and historical landmarks of the Soča Valley while traversing two countries, promoting an immersive and enriching experience.
- ✓ **Guided Tours for Visitors:** To enhance the visitor experience, the project will offer guided tours along the newly connected trail as part of the Soča Valley Hiking Festival 2024. These tours will provide educational insights into the region's natural landscapes, flora and fauna, and cultural heritage. The guided experience offers a deeper connection with the area's biodiversity and history, while highlighting the importance of cross-border cooperation in preserving these resources.
- ✓ **Educational Signage on Nature and Cultural Heritage:** Along the trail, informative signage and interpretive materials will educate visitors about the local ecosystem, wildlife, and historical landmarks of the Soča Valley. These educational tools aim to raise awareness about the shared natural and cultural resources of the region and emphasise the importance of conservation across borders.

### **Project Outcome**

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The TB Connection Trail has made significant strides by successfully connecting hiking trails and offering guided tours during the Soča Valley Hiking Festival 2024. The project has achieved the following outcomes:

- ✓ **Increased Visitor Engagement:** The newly connected trail, along with the educational opportunities provided through guided tours, has attracted more visitors to the region. The seamless cross-border experience allows tourists to explore both Slovenia and Italy, gaining a richer understanding of the area's natural and cultural importance.
- ✓ **Cross-Border Collaboration:** The project has fostered greater cooperation between Slovenia and Italy by uniting both countries through shared natural resources and a common historical narrative. This cross-border partnership enhances the visitor experience while promoting mutual understanding and collaboration in tourism and conservation efforts.
- ✓ **Promotion of Sustainable Tourism:** By focusing on enhancing existing trails and providing a low-impact, immersive experience, the project contributes to sustainable tourism in the region. Visitors are encouraged to explore the beauty of the Soča Valley responsibly, helping to preserve the environment and cultural heritage for future generations.

### **Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers**

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The TB Connection Trail offers several valuable lessons for transboundary area managers focused on sustainable tourism:

- (1) **Linking Existing Infrastructure:** Connecting existing trails rather than building new infrastructure from scratch is a cost-effective and environmentally friendly approach to enhancing cross-border tourism. This strategy minimises environmental disruption while enhancing the visitor experience by creating a continuous journey across multiple countries.
- (2) **Integrating Education into Tourism:** Incorporating educational elements, such as interpretive signage and guided tours, enriches the visitor experience and fosters a deeper understanding of the landscape and its significance. This combination of education and tourism strengthens the connection between visitors and the environment.
- (3) **Fostering Cross-Border Cooperation:** The TB Connection Trail demonstrates the value of cross-border cooperation in tourism projects. By linking regions through shared natural and cultural heritage, transboundary areas can promote collaboration, strengthen relationships between neighboring countries, and enhance both tourism and conservation outcomes.
- (4) **Supporting Sustainable Tourism:** Sustainable tourism can be effectively promoted by connecting and enhancing existing infrastructure. The TB Connection Trail offers a model for how infrastructure development can minimise environmental impacts while still allowing visitors to enjoy the region's beauty.
- (5) **Maximising Impact Through Events:** Integrating infrastructure projects with local events, such as the Soča Valley Hiking Festival, can increase visibility and encourage participation. Coordinating tourism development with regional events is a powerful way to engage both local and international visitors.

The TB Connection Trail in the Soča Valley is a prime example of how cross-border tourism initiatives can promote sustainability, raise awareness about nature and cultural heritage, and foster international cooperation. By connecting existing trails and integrating educational components, the project enhances the visitor experience while preserving the unique landscapes and historical sites of the region. The project underscores the importance of collaboration, education, and sustainable tourism in the management of Transboundary areas, providing valuable lessons for future initiatives.

## Pasvik-Inari Transboundary area: PAN – Phenomena of Arctic Nature

- Funding Programme: Kolarctic CBC ENI Project
- Budget: €2,615,785
- Implementation Period: 2019 – 2022
- Project Website: [Phenomena of Arctic Nature \(PAN\)](#)

### Primary Objective

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The primary goal of the PAN project was to promote international cross-border cooperation between Finland, Norway, and Russia to develop sustainable nature tourism while highlighting the vulnerability of Arctic nature.

### Project Overview

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The PAN project brought together Finnish, Norwegian, and Russian partners to develop sustainable tourism services and information materials focusing on Arctic nature and its unique phenomena. By promoting responsible tourism practices, the project aimed to attract visitors to the region while ensuring that nature and the local environment are protected for future generations.

The project faced significant challenges, notably the COVID-19 pandemic and the geopolitical conflict that arose with the war in Ukraine, which led to Russia's exclusion from the project after February 2022. Despite these challenges, the project achieved important outcomes, particularly in the Pasvik-Inari region, where cross-border cooperation was focused on creating sustainable tourism infrastructure.

### Key Achievements

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- ✓ **Development of Nature Tourism Services:** Partners created new services and information materials aimed at encouraging sustainable tourism practices. These materials helped raise awareness about the importance of preserving Arctic nature and provided practical guidance for tourists on how to interact with the environment responsibly.
- ✓ **Collaboration with Tourism Businesses:** The project facilitated collaboration between local tourism businesses through seminars and webinars. This allowed local operators to align their offerings with sustainable tourism practices, improving the quality and sustainability of tourism in the region.
- ✓ **Visitor Infrastructure:** One of the concrete outcomes of the project was the creation of a new visitor point, Gjøken, located at the Øvre-Pasvik National Park. This included the renovation of log buildings and the development of informational materials designed to educate visitors about the park's unique natural features and the importance of conservation.
- ✓ **Adapting to External Challenges:** The project adapted to external challenges, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic and the exclusion of Russian partners due to the geopolitical situation. Despite these concerns, the project maintained its focus on sustainable tourism, which remains a key aspect of the future development of the region.

### Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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- ✓ **Cross-Border Cooperation in Tourism:** The PAN project highlights the importance of cross-border cooperation in the development of sustainable tourism. Transboundary area managers can learn from this example by fostering collaborative efforts between neighboring regions, ensuring that tourism development aligns with conservation goals.

- ✓ **Adapting to Challenges:** The project faced unforeseen challenges such as the pandemic and political issues, but it was still able to achieve tangible results. Transboundary area managers should be prepared to adapt to changing circumstances, whether they be environmental, economic, or political, while staying focused on long-term goals.
- ✓ **Sustainable Tourism Infrastructure:** Developing visitor infrastructure that educates tourists while also promoting conservation is key. The Gjøken visitor point at Øvre-Pasvik National Park is an example of how tourism infrastructure can be designed to inform and inspire responsible behavior among visitors, enhancing both the tourism experience and environmental protection.
- ✓ **Engaging Local Tourism Operators:** Involving local businesses in the development of sustainable tourism practices is essential. By holding seminars and webinars, the project ensured that tourism operators were equipped with the knowledge to offer sustainable experiences, which can have long-lasting benefits for both the economy and the environment.
- ✓ **Effective Communication of Arctic Nature's Vulnerability:** The PAN project's success was also due to its emphasis on educating visitors about the vulnerability of Arctic nature. This is an important lesson for transboundary area managers who should focus on awareness campaigns that highlight the uniqueness and fragility of the environments under their care.

By focusing on sustainable tourism practices and fostering cooperation between countries, the PAN project sets a strong example for how to promote nature tourism in a way that protects and celebrates the Arctic's remarkable natural heritage.



*Credits: Photo: Mostphotos, Oulanka National Park in Finland.*



## Binntal Veglia Devero Transboundary area: Shared Cartography of Alps with Livestock Guardian Dogs (LGDs)

- Project Duration: Ongoing since the return of wolves to the Western Alps

### Project Objective

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This project focuses on improving the safety of both tourists and farmers in the Binntal-Veglia Natural Park by providing clear, accessible information about areas where Livestock Guardian Dogs (LGDs) are deployed. With the natural return of wolves to the region, farmers have increasingly turned to LGDs to protect their livestock from potential wolf attacks. However, the presence of these dogs may pose a challenge for unprepared hikers and tourists who are unfamiliar with how to behave around them.

To address this, a collaboration between the Landschaftspark Binntal and APO (Ente di Gestione delle Aree Protette dell'Ossola) has led to the integration of LGD zones into the digital cartography used for hiking. Through the Swiss hiking portal [Schweizmobil](#), visitors can access detailed maps that clearly mark areas with LGDs. These maps are available both online and through a mobile app.

The initiative aims to inform tourists and hikers about the presence of LGDs, encouraging proper behavior when encountering them, and ensuring the protection of both the dogs and visitors. This project represents a crucial step in balancing nature conservation with sustainable tourism in a transboundary protected area.

### Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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- (1) **Integration of Local Wildlife Protection Measures into Visitor Information:** This project demonstrates the importance of integrating local wildlife protection measures (such as the use of LGDs) into the visitor information systems of transboundary protected areas. By using digital cartography, managers can enhance the safety of visitors and reduce conflicts between wildlife protection efforts and tourism activities. Managers in other transboundary areas can adopt this approach, providing clear and accurate information about any wildlife-related safety measures in their regions.
- (2) **Collaboration Across Borders for Consistent Messaging:** The cross-border collaboration between Switzerland and Italy has allowed for consistent messaging about LGDs across the entire transboundary area. For other transboundary area managers, this highlights the value of working across national borders to ensure that information about shared resources, species protection measures, and visitor behavior expectations is communicated uniformly, preventing misunderstandings or confusion among tourists from different countries.
- (3) **Using Technology to Enhance Visitor Experience and Safety:** By incorporating GIS-based cartography and mobile apps, the project demonstrates how technology can be leveraged to enhance the visitor experience while ensuring their safety. Transboundary area managers should consider adopting similar digital tools to share crucial information with visitors in real-time, such as wildlife zones, potential hazards, and best practices for encountering local species.



*Credits: Stefano Costa, Ente di gestione delle Aree Protette dell'Ossola*

- (4) **Raising Awareness About Human-Wildlife Interactions:** This project also underscores the importance of educating visitors about human-wildlife interactions. Managers can use these kinds of initiatives to raise awareness about the presence of wildlife (such as wolves, bears, and LGDs) and the precautionary measures in place to protect both wildlife and tourists. Interactive campaigns, on-site signage, and educational materials can all help promote responsible tourism.
- (5) **Promoting Sustainable Tourism:** The project highlights the need to balance nature conservation with sustainable tourism. Visitor management strategies, such as the creation of clear informational maps, can help ensure that visitors stay safe, enjoy their experience, and do not interfere with conservation efforts. Managers should focus on promoting sustainable tourism practices that are in line with the long-term goals of conservation while providing educational resources for responsible visitor behaviour.
- (6) **Building Relationships with Local Stakeholders:** The involvement of local stakeholders, including farmers, local authorities, and tourism bodies, is critical for the success of such initiatives. The project shows that by involving stakeholders early in the planning process, transboundary area managers can build strong partnerships that support both conservation goals and local economies. For other managers, it's essential to foster collaboration with all parties who may be impacted by wildlife protection measures and tourism management efforts.



*Credits: Landschaftspark Binntal.*

In summary, the Binntal-Veglia project offers valuable lessons for transboundary area managers seeking to enhance visitor safety, improve wildlife protection, and promote sustainable tourism practices in shared cross-border landscapes.

### III. Policy and Governance

#### **Transboundary area Julian Alps: Transboundary Staff Exchange and ECST Forum**

- Project Duration: Since 2015, annually

##### **Project Overview**

Since 2015, the Julian Alps Transboundary area has implemented a successful transboundary staff exchange and forum initiative, aimed at strengthening relationships and fostering a deeper understanding between stakeholders working in or with the protected areas. The core of this initiative is the annual **EUROPARC's European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) Forum**, which alternates between the Slovenian and Italian sides of the Julian Alps transboundary area. The forum serves as a platform for employees, stakeholders, and partners to meet, exchange knowledge, and engage with one another on both professional and personal levels.

Through this annual event, the participants not only discuss important conservation and sustainable tourism topics but also visit local attractions and best practices related to nature conservation, cultural heritage, gastronomy, and quality brands. This programme plays a key role in fostering transboundary cooperation and enhancing the mutual understanding and connectivity of individuals involved in managing the protected areas.

## Objectives

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- ✓ **Build Personal Connections:** It is crucial for those working in or around transboundary protected areas (TB PAs) to establish personal relationships with colleagues across borders, improving communication and cooperation.
- ✓ **Foster Knowledge Exchange:** The forum allows stakeholders from both sides of the Julian Alps transboundary area to exchange knowledge, share experiences, and learn from one another.
- ✓ **Promote sustainable tourism:** the initiative highlights the importance of sustainable tourism and how it can be integrated with conservation efforts, benefiting both local communities and protected areas.
- ✓ **Celebrate Local Heritage:** Each year, the forum offers an opportunity to explore and celebrate local nature, cultural heritage, gastronomy, and quality brands, which also fosters a sense of pride and ownership in the protected areas.

## Key Activities

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- ✓ **Annual ECST Forum:** The forum rotates between Slovenia and Italy, with the hosting location shifting each year. This rotation ensures that stakeholders experience the diverse aspects of each country's protected areas, learning from local successes and challenges.
- ✓ **Official Meetings of Stakeholders:** The forum provides a formal setting for stakeholders from both sides of the Julian alps transboundary area to meet, discuss joint challenges, set goals, and align on priorities for the coming year.
- ✓ **Visiting Best Practices:** One of the key features of the forum is the visit to various local projects that showcase best practices in conservation, sustainable tourism, nature protection, and community engagement. This hands-on learning experience allows participants to gain insights into the practical application of sustainable practices and share knowledge with their counterparts.
- ✓ **Networking and Social Interaction:** In addition to formal meetings, the forum includes social events designed to encourage informal networking, providing an opportunity for participants to build relationships in a more relaxed setting. This is especially important for developing trust and improving cooperation over time.

## Project Outcomes

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- ✓ **Informed and Connected Stakeholders:** The main outcome of the transboundary staff exchange and forum is the creation of a well-informed, well-connected network of stakeholders, employees, and partners. Through personal connections and shared experiences, these individuals are better equipped to collaborate on conservation and sustainable tourism initiatives.
- ✓ **Strengthened Transboundary Cooperation:** The ongoing exchanges between stakeholders across the two countries have reinforced the transboundary cooperation, making joint efforts in conservation, tourism, and management of the Julian Alps protected areas more effective.
- ✓ **Enhanced Knowledge of Local Practices:** Participants leave the forum with a greater appreciation of the cultural heritage, natural resources, and sustainable tourism practices on both sides of the Julian Alps. This knowledge enriches their work and enhances the overall management of the protected areas.
- ✓ **Promotion of Sustainable Tourism:** By actively promoting sustainable tourism practices, the forum helps ensure that local communities benefit from tourism in an environmentally responsible manner, aligning with the goals of the ECST.

## Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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- (1) **Building Personal Connections:** The success of the forum underscores the importance of fostering personal relationships across borders. When staff and stakeholders know each other personally, communication improves, and trust is built, which is essential for effective cooperation.
- (2) **Rotating Locations for Broader Exposure:** By rotating the forum location each year, participants gain a deeper understanding of the diverse management practices and issues on both sides of the transboundary area. This creates a more balanced and comprehensive approach to managing shared landscapes.
- (3) **Incorporating Best Practices:** Visiting local best practices during the forum offers a valuable opportunity for hands-on learning. Sharing successes and challenges is essential for improving the effectiveness of management strategies and promoting sustainable tourism.
- (4) **Engaging Communities in Sustainable Tourism:** The initiative highlights the role of local heritage and quality brands in sustainable tourism. By involving local communities and showcasing their strengths, the forum ensures that tourism development aligns with conservation objectives and supports the local economy.

The Transboundary Staff Exchange and ECST Forum initiative serves as a valuable model for other transboundary areas looking to strengthen cooperation, promote sustainable tourism, and build lasting relationships between park staff and stakeholders. By fostering knowledge exchange and enhancing mutual understanding, the programme contributes to the long-term success of conservation and sustainable tourism efforts in the Julian Alps transboundary area.

## **Krkonoše and Karkonosse National Parks Transboundary area: Deepening Knowledge and Understanding of the Krkonoše Mountain Region**

### **Project Overview**

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The project, titled *"Deepening Knowledge and Understanding of the Krkonoše Mountain Region,"* addresses the unique challenges and opportunities of managing the Krkonoše (Czech Republic) and Karkonosse (Poland) National Parks as a unified natural area despite the presence of an international border. The Interreg Czech-Poland Program has funded this initiative under Objective 4.2, focusing on strengthening transboundary relationships among institutions and communities in the Czech-Polish border region.



*Credits: Daniel Bilek during educational programme, by Kamila Antosova.*

With a total budget of €400,885, of which €320,708 is funded through the program, the project aims to enhance collaboration between the national park administrations. By acknowledging the artificial nature of the border in a homogeneous mountain ecosystem, the project seeks to harmonise conservation strategies and foster mutual understanding through education and outreach.

### **Aims of the Project**

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- ✓ **Unified Conservation Approach:** Develop shared strategies for conservation to ensure a coherent and effective approach across the Krkonoše mountain range, recognizing the interconnectedness of the ecosystem.
- ✓ **Cross-Border Environmental Education:** Implement mirrored environmental education programs, where Czech school groups and ecolubs visit Polish exhibitions under the guidance of Czech lecturers, and Polish groups reciprocate with visits to Czech expositions led by Polish educators.
- ✓ **Facilitated Access Across Borders:** Provide bus transportation to enable seamless cross-border educational exchanges, breaking down physical and logistical barriers.
- ✓ **Enhanced Educational Tools:** Develop and provide educational tools, activities, and small motivational materials to support learning and engagement among participants.
- ✓ **Capacity Building for Educators:** Train environmental education lecturers to deliver specialised, cross-border programs tailored to the unique ecological and cultural features of the Krkonoše mountain region.

### **Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers**

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- (1) **Recognise and Address Artificial Barriers:** Natural ecosystems do not adhere to political boundaries. Successful transboundary management requires a shared vision that transcends artificial borders to achieve cohesive conservation outcomes.
- (2) **Prioritise Education for Long-Term Impact:** Environmental education is a powerful tool for fostering mutual understanding and shared responsibility for conservation. Tailored programs, such as mirrored exchanges, can deepen the connection between communities and the environment.
- (3) **Facilitate Mobility for Collaboration:** Providing logistical support, such as funded transportation, removes practical barriers to cross-border interaction and strengthens the bond between neighboring regions.
- (4) **Invest in Capacity Building:** Training educators and equipping them with appropriate tools enhances the quality and effectiveness of conservation and educational efforts, ensuring sustained success.
- (5) **Promote Cultural and Ecological Unity:** Highlighting shared natural and cultural heritage strengthens the identity of the transboundary region as a cohesive whole. This unity can be a foundation for broader cooperation in conservation, tourism, and community engagement.

### **Conclusion**

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The "Deepening Knowledge and Understanding of the Krkonoše Mountain Region" project exemplifies the power of collaborative transboundary initiatives. By harmonizing conservation strategies, fostering education, and breaking down barriers, it serves as a blueprint for TBA managers worldwide, demonstrating how shared challenges can be met through unified efforts.

## **Binntal Veglia Devero Transboundary area: Strengthening Governance through Cross- Border Exchange and Knowledge Sharing**

➤ Duration: 2023 – Ongoing

### **Project Overview**

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In 2023, the Binntal Landschaftspark and Ente di gestione delle Aree Protette dell'Ossola launched two key initiatives aimed at strengthening cross-border cooperation and governance within the Binntal and Veglia Devero Transboundary area. These initiatives, the Staff Exchange Programme and an Exchange Visit to the Brunnebiel Dairy facility, focus on enhancing mutual understanding, knowledge exchange, and collaboration between park authorities, local farmers, and other stakeholders.

1. **Staff Exchange Programme (2023 - Ongoing):** The Staff Exchange Programme encourages active participation from park rangers, administrative staff, and management experts from both sides of the border. Through this programme, park staff engage in shared learning experiences, improving their understanding of each other's management structures and conservation challenges.

The staff exchange provides opportunities for park staff to collaborate on specific topics such as flora and fauna management, park regulations, and administrative practices. This enables the parks to align their goals and tackle shared issues in areas like conservation, education, and public engagement.

2. **Exchange Visit to Brunnebiel Dairy (June 25th, 2024):** On June 25th, 2024, LPB organised an exchange visit to the Brunnebiel dairy in Switzerland for a delegation consisting of APO representatives, Italian farmers working within the Binntal Landschaftspark, and partners of the RurACT Project. The purpose was to demonstrate the success of the cooperative dairy system at Brunnebiel, known for its sustainable farming practices and support for the local community. The visit allowed the delegation to learn about the cooperative farming model employed at Brunnebiel and how it contributes to sustainable agriculture in mountain areas. This insight was valuable for Italian farmers, especially those from the Veglia Devero Natural Park, as they explore similar agricultural models for their own region.

### **Key Activities & Outcomes**

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#### **1. Staff Exchange Programme:**

- ✓ **Plenary Meetings:** Regular gatherings where staff from both parks discuss key themes, share experiences, and set goals for future collaboration.
- ✓ **Thematic Working Groups:** Specialised groups were formed to address specific topics such as conservation management, regulatory frameworks, and park planning.
- ✓ **Field Visits:** Park rangers participated in a field trip from July 22nd to 25th, 2024, to understand each park's unique characteristics and engage in discussions on regulations, management, and educational practices.

#### **Outcomes**

- ✓ Strengthened partnership between the two parks, enhancing collaboration on shared goals such as conservation and management.
- ✓ Improved understanding of different approaches to park management, including regulatory practices and flora/fauna conservation.

- ✓ Identification of joint future projects, including cross-border educational programs and conservation campaigns.

## 2. Exchange Visit to Brunnebiel Dairy:

- ✓ **Tour of Dairy Facility:** Participants toured the dairy, cheese cave, and production areas, learning about cooperative farming methods that promote sustainable agriculture and support local communities.
- ✓ **Knowledge Sharing:** The visit highlighted how a successful dairy operation can thrive in a remote, mountainous area, providing valuable lessons for Italian farmers seeking similar models.

### Outcomes

- ✓ Inspiration for Italian farmers to explore sustainable agricultural practices and cooperative models similar to those used in Brunnebiel.
- ✓ Strengthened cross-border ties and the promotion of shared governance between Switzerland and Italy.
- ✓ Opportunities for creating a more sustainable and collaborative farming environment in Veglia Devero.

## Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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- (1) **Cross-Border Knowledge Exchange:** Both the staff exchange and the visit to Brunnebiel demonstrate the importance of knowledge-sharing between parks and stakeholders across borders. This fosters better governance by integrating local knowledge, sustainable practices, and innovative solutions to shared challenges.
- (2) **Collaborative Governance:** The exchange programmes highlight how cooperation between park authorities, local farmers, and external partners can strengthen governance frameworks, ensuring that sustainable practices are promoted in a way that benefits both the environment and the local economy.
- (3) **Building Relationships for Effective Decision-Making:** The programmes help foster strong relationships between stakeholders, ensuring that decision-making processes are inclusive and consider local communities' needs. In the case of the Brunnebiel visit, this relationship-building promotes a better understanding of how rural communities can integrate conservation with economic viability.
- (4) **Cooperative Models for Rural Development:** The successful operation of the Brunnebiel dairy serves as a model for how rural communities in mountainous areas can thrive through cooperation and sustainable farming practices. Transboundary area managers can consider using similar models to support rural development, improve local economies, and promote nature conservation.
- (5) **Integrating Agricultural Sustainability into Protected Area Management:** The exchange visits highlight how agricultural practices can be integrated into the broader governance and management strategy of protected areas. By involving local farmers and ensuring their activities align with conservation goals, these exchanges support sustainable development within protected areas.
- (6) **Strengthening Cross-Border Governance:** The collaboration between parks in Switzerland and Italy demonstrates how cross-border governance can be strengthened through shared knowledge, mutual respect, and joint projects. Other transboundary areas can adopt this

collaborative model to improve management strategies and engage communities more effectively.

By integrating these two initiatives into one cohesive governance strategy, the Staff Exchange Programme and the Brunnebiel Exchange Visit provide a model for strengthening governance in transboundary protected areas. They promote cross-border cooperation, sustainable land management, and community engagement, ultimately contributing to more effective conservation and rural development strategies across borders.



*Credits: Landschaftspark Binntal.*

## **Pasvik – Inari Transboundary area: Multi-Use Plan for Pasvik and Grense Jakobselv (MUP)**

- Funding Programme: Kolarctic CBC ENI Project
- Total Budget: €404,148
- Implementation Period: 2018 –2021
- Project Website: [Multi-Use Plan for Pasvik and Grense Jakobselv](#)

### **Primary Objective**

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The Multi-Use Plan (MUP) aims to sustain and improve the environmental status of the Pasvik and Grense Jakobselv catchments, which are critical transboundary river systems shared by Norway, Russia, and Finland.

### **Project Overview**

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The MUP project was developed to address the environmental management and sustainability of the Pasvik and Grense Jakobselv river systems, which flow across Norway, Russia, and Finland. The plan was created in collaboration with the relevant authorities from all three countries and is designed to guide the management of the transboundary rivers for the period 2021-2030.

The MUP is an essential tool for managing these river systems, focusing on preserving the ecological health of the rivers while balancing the needs of multiple uses such as fishing, tourism, and industry. The plan contains two main components: a descriptive part, which outlines the current environmental conditions and challenges in the area, and a Programme of Measures (PoM), which lists the actions that need to be taken over the next decade to protect and improve the river systems.

### Project Components

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- ✓ **Descriptive Part:** This section provides a detailed overview of the environmental status of the Pasvik and Grense Jakobselv rivers. It includes an analysis of water quality, biodiversity, and the challenges posed by human activities and climate change.
- ✓ **Programme of Measures (PoM):** The PoM outlines specific actions to be taken over the period 2021-2030. These actions include measures to improve water quality, enhance biodiversity conservation, and address pollution from industrial activities. The plan also emphasises sustainable use of the rivers for various purposes, such as fisheries and tourism, while ensuring environmental protection.

### Objectives and Outcomes

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- ✓ **Improved Environmental Status:** The MUP aims to reduce pollution levels, restore biodiversity, and enhance the ecological status of the Pasvik and Grense Jakobselv river systems.
- ✓ **Joint Management Framework:** The project fosters cross-border cooperation and coordination between Norway, Russia, and Finland, ensuring that management actions are aligned and that all parties are working toward common goals.
- ✓ **Sustainable Use of Resources:** By balancing environmental protection with the needs of local communities and industries, the MUP ensures that the rivers continue to provide vital resources for fishing, tourism, and other economic activities.
- ✓ **Long-Term Sustainability:** The plan sets clear objectives for the period 2021-2030, ensuring that actions are implemented in a timely and effective manner to protect the rivers for future generations.

### Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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- (1) **Cross-Border Cooperation:** The MUP project demonstrates the importance of joint management plans for transboundary natural resources. transboundary area managers can learn from this approach to create collaborative frameworks that involve multiple countries and stakeholders in managing shared landscapes.
- (2) **Sustainability and Balance:** The plan highlights the challenge of balancing environmental protection with human activities such as tourism, industry, and fishing. transboundary area managers should consider how to manage competing interests while maintaining the ecological integrity of the area.
- (3) **Long-Term Planning:** The Programme of Measures, which spans a decade, offers valuable insights into the importance of long-term planning in managing transboundary areas. transboundary area managers should aim to create strategies that look ahead and provide sustainable solutions for the future.
- (4) **Integration of Scientific Data and Local Knowledge:** Effective river management requires both scientific analysis and local knowledge. transboundary area managers should engage local communities and stakeholders to integrate diverse perspectives into planning and decision-making processes.
- (5) **Adaptive Management:** The MUP emphasises the need for adaptive management strategies that can respond to new challenges, such as the effects of climate change. transboundary



area managers should remain flexible and open to revising their management plans in response to changing environmental conditions.

By following the example of the Pasvik and Grense Jakobselv Multi-Use Plan, transboundary area managers can create effective governance frameworks that ensure the long-term health and sustainability of shared natural areas.

## **Podyjí and Thayatal National Parks Transboundary area: nATCZwork**

- Funding Programme: Interreg V-A Austria-Czech Republic programme
- Total Budget: €361,920
- Implementation Period: 2020 - 2022

The project "nATCZwork," which was funded through the Interreg V-A Austria-Czech Republic programme, aimed to strengthen cross-border cooperation between Podyjí National Park in the Czech Republic and Thayatal National Park in Austria. The project ran from 1st October 2020 to 31st December 2022, with a total budget of €361,920. The primary goal was to develop long-term cooperation between the two parks, with a focus on aligning conservation management, enhancing educational programmes, and improving stakeholder engagement across borders.

### **Project Objectives and Outputs**

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The project focused on several key areas:

#### **1. Establishing Long-Term Cooperation and Joint Goals**

One of the core objectives was to establish long-term cooperation between Podyjí and Thayatal, which was achieved through the creation of joint guidelines for conservation management and cross-border cooperation. These guidelines outlined the minimum scope of annual cooperation, providing a framework for both parks to collaborate efficiently in future years.

Output

- ✓ Joint guidelines for conservation management and cross-border cooperation were created, ensuring a solid foundation for long-term collaboration between the two national parks.

#### **2. Linking Educational Programmes and Institutions**

Another important objective was to connect educational programmes and institutions, fostering greater awareness of the parks' natural and cultural heritage. This was achieved through the organisation of educational camps and the production of digital content to engage the public.

Outputs

- ✓ A volunteer camp, where 11 volunteers from across Europe (including one from Mexico) spent time working in the parks while learning about conservation practices and local cultural history.
- ✓ A bilingual wilderness camp for children, where participants from both countries learned about the parks' ecosystems and principles of responsible nature interaction.



- ✓ The creation of the "Minutes from Podyjí" video series, which highlighted important natural phenomena in both parks. These videos were made available in both Czech and German, allowing a broad audience to learn about the parks' biodiversity.

### 3. Networking and Strengthening Stakeholder Cooperation

The project also aimed to enhance networking between local stakeholders, including schools and municipalities, to foster cross-border partnerships and collaboration. A meeting of mayors from municipalities on both sides of the border was held, encouraging them to develop joint projects for regional development. Furthermore, educational materials such as worksheets were produced and distributed to schools across the region.

#### Outputs

- ✓ The publication of 20 school worksheets, distributed in 1,000 copies each, helped raise awareness about the parks and their conservation. These worksheets were introduced to a network of schools in both countries.
- ✓ Continued engagement between national park staff from both countries, including Czech staff attending German language courses to improve cross-border communication.

### Project Outcome

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The "nATCZwork" project successfully established a framework for ongoing cooperation between Podyjí and Thayatal National Parks. The long-term cooperation, educational programmes, and stakeholder engagement achieved through the project ensure that both parks will continue to collaborate on conservation and sustainable development initiatives for years to come.

### Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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The "nATCZwork" project offers several valuable lessons for transboundary area managers seeking to improve cross-border cooperation, conservation management, and community engagement in other protected areas:

- (1) **Establishing Long-Term Cooperation through Clear Guidelines:** The creation of joint guidelines for conservation management and cross-border cooperation was key to ensuring long-term, effective collaboration between the two parks. Transboundary area managers can learn from this by drafting similar planning documents that clearly define cooperation goals and the scope of annual efforts. This helps maintain continuity in conservation practices and ensures that all partners are aligned in their objectives.

(2) **Building Capacity and Raising Awareness through Education:** The project demonstrated the power of educational activities in engaging local communities and raising awareness about conservation. By involving volunteers and children in hands-on conservation work and educational programs, the project helped foster a stronger connection between people and the protected areas. transboundary area managers can adopt this approach by offering educational programs that cater to different age groups and backgrounds, such as school worksheets, volunteer camps, and wilderness experiences.



*Credits: Volunteers, by Lenka Reiterová.*

(3) **Cross-Border Networking to Strengthen Collaboration:** The success of the project was partly due to the establishment of strong networks between educational institutions, local municipalities, and other stakeholders. This enhanced communication and collaboration, leading to a more unified approach to managing the parks. transboundary area managers should focus on building and maintaining these types of networks to ensure shared responsibility and cooperation across borders.

(4) **Utilising Technology and Media to Raise Awareness:** The creation of the "Minutes from Podyjí" video series was an effective way of promoting the parks' biodiversity and raising awareness beyond the local communities. transboundary area managers can replicate this by using digital platforms, such as videos, social media, and websites, to promote conservation efforts and engage a wider audience.



*Credits: Children paint with lichens, D. Kuchařík.*

(5) **Promoting Language Skills for Better Communication:** Language barriers can hinder effective cross-border cooperation. The project's success in encouraging staff to attend language courses highlights the importance of investing in language skills to facilitate smoother communication between partners. transboundary area managers should consider language training for staff to enhance collaboration and ensure clearer, more efficient communication across borders.

By incorporating these lessons into their management practices, transboundary area managers can enhance the effectiveness of their conservation efforts, create stronger cross-border partnerships, and engage local communities in meaningful ways. These actions will help ensure the long-term success of transboundary protected areas and their biodiversity conservation objectives.

## IV. Climate Change

 **Saxon-Bohemian Switzerland Transboundary Area: Cross-boundary assessment, communication, and management of wildfire risks in Central Europe**

- Project Name: Interreg
- Project Duration: 2024 – 2027
- Website: [Fighting wildfires better together across borders - Interreg Central Europe](#)

The “Wildfire CE” project aims to improve the cross-boundary assessment, communication, and management of wildfire risks in Central Europe. The project acknowledges that climate change has significantly increased the threat of wildfires in the region, with fires often affecting more than one country or region. Addressing these threats requires better cooperation and information sharing across borders.

The project is focused on mapping fire potentials, providing fire assessment manuals, and developing action plans for pilot regions in the Saxon-Bohemian Switzerland Transboundary area. These plans will support local authorities, emergency services, and communities in mitigating wildfire risks and responding to wildfires in a more coordinated manner.

### Objectives

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- ✓ **Enhance cross-border cooperation:** By sharing data and experiences, the project seeks to improve coordination between local communities, authorities, and emergency services in addressing wildfire threats.
- ✓ **Wildfire risk assessment:** The project aims to map fire risks and identify potential fire hazards in the region to better understand where and how fires might occur, aiding in preparation and prevention strategies.
- ✓ **Develop action plans:** Collaborative action plans for pilot regions will be created to guide emergency responses and mitigate risks.
- ✓ **Empower local communities:** The project focuses on increasing awareness and capabilities within local communities and organisations to better handle wildfires through shared tools, knowledge, and expertise.

### Key Activities

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- ✓ **Mapping Fire Potentials:** Creating detailed maps that show where wildfires are most likely to occur based on various environmental and climatic factors. These maps will help predict wildfire risks in the transboundary area and guide local responses.
- ✓ **Developing Fire Assessment Manuals:** The project will create and distribute manuals that provide best practices for wildfire prevention, response, and recovery.
- ✓ **Action Plans for Pilot Regions:** Tailored action plans will be developed for specific regions, considering local needs, environmental conditions, and emergency response capabilities.
- ✓ **Collaboration with Emergency Services:** Regional authorities and emergency services will be closely involved in the planning and implementation stages, ensuring that the action plans are practical and effective.
- ✓ **Community Empowerment and Training:** Training programmes and workshops will be organised for local communities and stakeholders to strengthen their ability to respond to wildfires.
- ✓ **Information Sharing:** Tools for data sharing and communication will be developed to improve cross-border coordination in the event of wildfires.

### Project Outcomes (Expected)

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- ✓ **Improved Coordination:** Better cooperation and information-sharing mechanisms between countries in the transboundary area, particularly in preparing for and responding to wildfires.

- ✓ **Increased Preparedness:** More informed and better-prepared local communities, authorities, and emergency responders for wildfire incidents.
- ✓ **Enhanced Wildfire Management:** A more coordinated approach to managing wildfire risks through shared knowledge, maps, and action plans.
- ✓ **Sustained Impact:** Long-term solutions for mitigating wildfire risks and reducing the impacts of climate change on the region's natural landscapes.

### Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

- (1) **Cross-Border Cooperation:** The Wildfire CE project emphasises the importance of cross-border cooperation, especially in the context of climate change, where environmental risks like wildfires often transcend national borders. Transboundary Area managers can learn from this project by creating cross-border mechanisms to address other shared environmental risks, such as invasive species or climate change adaptation strategies.
- (2) **Integrated Risk Assessment:** A key takeaway is the value of integrated risk assessment tools, such as fire potential maps, which enable informed decision-making and effective resource allocation. Transboundary Area managers can apply similar tools for other environmental risks, such as flooding, drought, or ecosystem degradation, to help prioritise action in high-risk areas.
- (3) **Community Engagement and Empowerment:** The focus on empowering local communities and organisations through training and tools is a crucial aspect of the project. Transboundary area managers should ensure that local stakeholders are actively involved in developing and implementing management strategies. Engaging local communities can enhance the effectiveness of conservation and risk mitigation efforts in the long term.



*Credits: Wildfire CE kick-off meeting, by Dr. Louis Georgi.*

- (4) **Capacity Building:** Developing manuals, action plans, and training programmes for communities, local authorities, and emergency responders builds local capacity. Transboundary area managers should invest in continuous capacity building, ensuring that all stakeholders have the necessary skills and knowledge to address climate-related challenges effectively.
- (5) **Data Sharing and Technology:** The use of technology, such as GIS-based maps and digital tools for data sharing, is essential for modern environmental management. Transboundary area



managers can adopt similar digital platforms for real-time data exchange, enabling faster and more coordinated responses to environmental crises, including climate-related risks.

## Conclusion

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The Wildfire CE project provides a model for how transboundary areas can collaborate to address the increasing risks posed by climate change, particularly in the context of wildfires. By combining risk mapping, cross-border communication, and community empowerment, the project is setting the foundation for more resilient landscapes in the Saxon-Bohemian Switzerland transboundary area. Transboundary area managers across Europe and beyond can draw lessons from this project to improve their own strategies for addressing climate change impacts in transboundary contexts.

## Pasvik- Inari and Haldi Transboundary areas: CLAP – Climate Change Communication and Adaptation of Arctic Protected Areas

- Funding Programme: Interreg
- Project Duration: 2024 –2026
- Budget: €2,013,233
- Participating Areas: National Parks and Nature Reserves in Northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland, *including 2 EUROPARC certified Transboundary Areas: Haldi Transboundary area and Vätsäri Wilderness Area*
- Website: [Climate change communication and adaptation in Arctic protected areas CLAP | Metsähallitus](#)

## Project Overview

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The CLAP project focuses on the adaptation of Arctic protected areas to the challenges posed by climate change. The ongoing climate crisis is affecting these areas in various ways, including the alteration of nature types, the degradation of recreational facilities, and the increasing risks both for management practices and visitors. These changes threaten the unique values of the protected areas, calling for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to climate change adaptation.

The primary objective of the project is to enhance the knowledge, capacity, and tools available to managers of Arctic protected areas, helping them adapt to these new conditions. This adaptation process will also include effective communication strategies to inform the public and visitors about climate change impacts and encourage climate-friendly behaviors. By addressing both adaptation measures and communication strategies, the project aims to improve the sustainability and safety of protected areas, while preserving their natural resources as much as possible.

## Objectives

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- ✓ **Climate Change Adaptation Planning:** To develop a systematic approach for climate change adaptation planning in Arctic protected areas.
- ✓ **Climate Adaptation Infrastructure:** To build and pilot climate-adapted infrastructure, including trails, electric maintenance equipment, and climate-wise campsites.
- ✓ **Communication Strategies:** To design and test innovative ways of communicating climate change impacts to visitors, ensuring that tourism activities contribute to sustainability goals.

- ✓ **Cross-Border Cooperation:** To strengthen collaboration between the partner organisations in northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland, creating lasting networks for future cooperation beyond the project duration.

### Key Activities

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- ✓ **Climate Adapted Trails and Facilities:** The project will focus on building climate-adapted trails and testing the use of electric equipment in maintenance work to reduce the ecological footprint of tourism activities in these areas.
- ✓ **Climate-Wise Campsites:** The partners will develop a model for campsites that are adapted to the changing climate, ensuring that they remain functional and sustainable despite the environmental shifts.
- ✓ **Visitor Centre Communication:** A key element of the project is the development and piloting of new communication methods at visitor centers, where tourists will be educated about climate change and its impacts on the protected areas. This includes creating informative exhibits and interactive materials that inspire climate-friendly behaviors.
- ✓ **Staff Exchange Programmes:** Cross-border staff exchanges will be conducted to share knowledge and best practices among the protected area managers, strengthening the capacity of staff to handle the challenges posed by climate change.
- ✓ **Collaboration Models:** The project will investigate potential models for future cooperation between the partner organisations, ensuring that the networks formed during the project will continue to thrive post-completion.

### Expected Outcomes

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- ✓ **Improved Climate Adaptation Capacity:** Protected area managers will be better equipped to manage the risks posed by climate change, thanks to increased knowledge, tools, and planning frameworks.
- ✓ **Sustainable Infrastructure:** Climate-adapted trails and facilities, along with electric maintenance tools, will reduce the environmental impact of human activities in the parks while maintaining high-quality visitor experiences.
- ✓ **Informed Visitors:** The communication efforts at visitor centres will raise awareness about the effects of climate change and encourage more sustainable behaviours from visitors.
- ✓ **Cross-Border Collaboration:** The project will lay the groundwork for sustained cross-border cooperation in the management of Arctic protected areas, ensuring that knowledge and best practices continue to be shared beyond the project's duration.

### Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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- (1) **Comprehensive Climate Adaptation:** The project highlights the importance of a holistic approach to climate adaptation that includes infrastructure, planning, and communication. Transboundary Area managers should integrate climate adaptation into all aspects of protected area management to ensure long-term sustainability.
- (2) **Collaboration Across Borders:** The project emphasises the benefits of cross-border cooperation, which helps address transboundary challenges like climate change more effectively. Managers should foster cross-border networks to share resources, knowledge, and expertise in dealing with common environmental threats.
- (3) **Engaging Visitors in Sustainability:** Effective communication is key to engaging visitors in climate action. Managers of transboundary areas can learn from the clap project's visitor center strategies to develop their own methods for educating visitors and encouraging climate-friendly behaviors.

- (4) **Innovative Infrastructure Solutions:** The pilot projects for climate-adapted trails and electric maintenance equipment provide valuable insights for adapting infrastructure to changing climatic conditions. Transboundary Area managers should explore similar solutions to ensure that tourism infrastructure remains resilient to climate impacts.
- (5) **Long-Term Adaptation Planning:** Developing long-term, systematic climate adaptation plans is essential for ensuring that protected areas are prepared for future challenges. Transboundary Area managers should consider similar planning frameworks to anticipate and address the future impacts of climate change on their own regions.

## Conclusion

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The CLAP project provides a model for how protected areas, particularly in climate-sensitive regions like the Arctic, can adapt to the ongoing effects of climate change. By integrating adaptation planning, infrastructure development, and communication strategies, the project will help safeguard the natural and cultural values of Arctic protected areas for future generations. The lessons learned from this project can be applied to other transboundary areas, offering a valuable framework for managing the complex challenges of climate change in protected areas worldwide.

## V. Digitalisation and Innovation

### **Binntal Veglia Devero Transboundary area: The Transboundary Map**

- Website: [Binntal Veglia Devero Transboundary Park Map](#)

Since 2022, Landschaftspark Binntal (LPB) and Ente di gestione delle Aree Protette dell'Ossola (APO) have collaborated to produce a shared Transboundary Map. This map is more than just a navigational tool—it's a comprehensive information resource designed to enhance the experience of visitors exploring the Binntal Veglia Devero Transboundary Park.

Available in German, French, Italian, and English, the map is a vital source of up-to-date information for tourists, hikers, and other visitors. It not only offers detailed geographic data but also highlights the cross-border cooperation between the two parks. The map showcases the common features that unite the two protected areas, emphasising the significance of their combined management and conservation efforts.

Compared to previous printed publications, the Transboundary Map has proven to be highly popular and appreciated by tourists. Its detailed yet user-friendly design makes it easy for visitors to understand the geography of the park, plan their hikes, and gain insights into the transnational cooperation that defines the Binntal Veglia Devero protected areas. This map serves as an essential tool for enhancing visitor engagement and promoting sustainable tourism within the Transboundary Park.

The map is available both in digital and paper formats, making it accessible to a broad range of users. It is distributed at various tourism offices, info points, hotels, B&Bs, and mountain huts, ensuring that visitors have easy access to it while on-site. Additionally, the map is freely distributed at fairs and events, expanding its reach and fostering greater awareness of the Transboundary Park.

### **Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers**

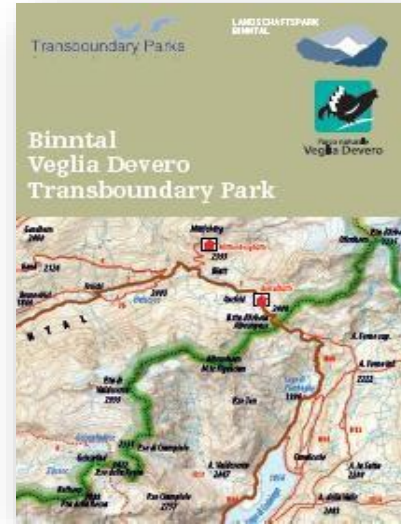
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- (1) **Centralised Information Sharing:** Creating a shared map that combines both digital and physical formats allows for easier access to essential information for tourists. This can be a model for



other transboundary park managers who wish to facilitate visitor access and enhance communication between neighbouring areas.

- (2) **Promoting Cross-Border Cooperation:** The map is a powerful tool in visually demonstrating cross-border cooperation. By showing the shared features of the parks, it not only guides visitors but also reinforces the partnership between the two regions.
- (3) **Digital and Physical Integration:** Offering the map in both digital and print formats provides flexibility to different audiences. Digital formats allow for immediate access, while printed copies are valuable in areas with limited internet access, ensuring all visitors are informed.
- (4) **Visitor Engagement:** By integrating information on hiking routes, tourist attractions, and local cultural heritage, the map engages visitors more fully in the transboundary experience. It serves as a way to encourage sustainable tourism while promoting the cultural and natural significance of the protected areas.
- (5) **Wider Distribution:** Making the map available at multiple points of contact—such as tourist offices, accommodation facilities, and events—ensures that it reaches a broad audience. Additionally, distributing the map at fairs and events can be a great way to engage with potential visitors and raise awareness of the Transboundary Park.



*Credits: Landschaftspark Binntal.*

This map is an excellent example of how digital tools and printed resources can complement each other in enhancing the visitor experience and promoting the goals of a transboundary protected area.

## **Maas-Schwalm-Nette Transboundary area "Bürger werden zu Forschern" (Citizens as Researchers)**

- Project Duration: 2023 – 2024

### **Project Overview**

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The "Bürger werden zu Forschern" (Citizens as Researchers) project aims to connect local citizens with nature and the surrounding environment in the Maas-Schwalm-Nette Transboundary area. This initiative combines citizen science, digital innovation, and regional economic development. The project enables local residents and visitors to contribute to scientific research by identifying plant and animal species through photos. The data collected will be validated and integrated into international databases, strengthening scientific knowledge and conservation efforts.

### **Objectives**

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- ✓ **Connect citizens with nature:** Encourage local communities and visitors to actively participate in monitoring and documenting biodiversity.

- ✓ **Scientific research:** Empower citizens to contribute to scientific studies by identifying species and collecting valuable data on local ecosystems.
- ✓ **Digitalisation of research:** Develop an innovative, user-friendly app that enables citizens to upload photos of species they encounter, contributing to an international database of biodiversity.
- ✓ **Regional economy and awareness:** Raise awareness of local wildlife and biodiversity, while also promoting eco-tourism and regional economic growth.

### Key Activities

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- ✓ **Species Identification via App:** The project offers a mobile app that allows users to take photos of plants and animals they encounter and upload them for identification. The app will automatically validate the data and add it to international biodiversity databases.
- ✓ **Mobile Displays:** Four mobile information displays will be set up throughout the region to inform the public and encourage participation in the citizen science project. These will feature species to look out for and instructions on how to use the app.
- ✓ **Creation of Guidelines and Training:** Instructional materials and training sessions will be developed for excursion leaders to guide participants on how to use the app and contribute to scientific research.
- ✓ **Public Engagement:** The app and project will be promoted through various public events, openings, and press releases. Additionally, the project will utilize social media platforms like Facebook and TikTok to reach a broader audience and engage younger generations.
- ✓ **Evaluation and Continuation:** The project will be evaluated to assess its success and potential for continuation beyond the project's formal timeline.

### Project Outcome

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The initiative encourages active public participation in biodiversity monitoring and engages citizens in research efforts. This project will contribute valuable data to national and international biodiversity databases, aiding scientific conservation efforts in the Maas-Schwalm-Nette transboundary Area. By using digital tools to involve the public, the project also promotes a deeper connection between local communities and their natural environment.

### Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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- (1) **Citizen Science for Enhanced Biodiversity Monitoring:** The Maas-Schwalm-Nette transboundary area project demonstrates how citizen science can play a pivotal role in biodiversity monitoring. transboundary area managers can integrate similar initiatives, allowing local communities to contribute valuable data for conservation while increasing public engagement.
- (2) **Digital Tools for Widespread Participation:** Developing a mobile app or digital platform for biodiversity identification can significantly increase public involvement in environmental monitoring. transboundary area managers should consider creating similar tools tailored to the species and habitats in their own regions, providing easy access to information and data collection.
- (3) **Strengthening Regional Economic Development:** By involving the public in scientific research and promoting eco-tourism, transboundary area managers can support sustainable regional economic development. Promoting biodiversity through digital engagement also helps build awareness of the ecological value of protected areas, potentially fostering tourism and community support.

- (4) Public Engagement through Social Media: Leveraging platforms such as Facebook and TikTok to promote citizen science and biodiversity awareness can help reach a broad audience, especially younger generations. Transboundary area managers can adopt similar social media strategies to raise awareness and encourage participation in environmental stewardship activities.
- (5) Educational Training and Materials: Providing educational resources, training for excursion leaders, and user-friendly guidelines ensures that participants understand how to engage with the project effectively. Transboundary area managers can replicate this approach by offering resources to help citizens become more involved in park management and conservation efforts.

## Conclusion

The "Bürger werden zu Forschern" initiative in the Maas-Schwalm- Nette transboundary area illustrates the potential of digital tools and citizen science to engage local communities in environmental monitoring.

The use of technology, combined with public education and social media outreach, provides a model for other transboundary areas to engage citizens, promote conservation, and enhance regional economic development through sustainable practices. Transboundary area managers should consider adopting or adapting these methods to strengthen local involvement and support transboundary conservation efforts.

## VI. Culture

### **Binntal Veglia Devero Transboundary Park: Shared Cultural Initiatives: The "Camminata dell'Arbola" and the Mineralp Interreg IT-CH Project**

The Binntal Veglia Devero Transboundary Park offers a variety of cultural initiatives that foster cross-border collaboration and enrich the relationship between residents, visitors, and local communities in both Italy and Switzerland. These initiatives aim to highlight the shared cultural heritage, celebrate the region's natural beauty, and promote sustainable tourism. Two significant cultural projects—the "Camminata dell'Arbola" and the Mineralp Interreg IT-CH Project—exemplify the power of shared cultural activities in transboundary areas.

#### *Camminata dell'Arbola: A Transboundary Walk Across the Alps*

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The "Camminata dell'Arbola" (Arbola Walk) is a key cultural initiative that highlights the connection between the two regions of Switzerland and Italy. Every year, around 50 participants join this unique walk, which crosses the Albrunpass, an alpine pass that has historically connected both countries for

trade and cultural exchange. The walk, which lasts about 8 hours, takes participants from Binn (Switzerland) to Alpe Devero (Italy) or vice versa, allowing them to experience the stunning alpine landscape while exploring the shared heritage of the region.

- ✓ **Cultural Exchange and Natural Discovery:** As walkers' journey through the dramatic landscapes of the Albrunpass, they are accompanied by expert guides who provide insight into the area's historical, cultural, and ecological significance. Participants also enjoy culinary breaks, sampling traditional mountain dairy products, such as local cheeses, which reflect the region's agricultural heritage. These moments of cultural exchange help participants appreciate the importance of pastoralism in preserving both the environment and the local economy. The well-organised logistics, including bus transportation to make the journey feasible in a single day, ensure the walk's accessibility and allow participants to fully immerse themselves in the experience.



*Credits: Daniele Piazza.*

- ✓ **Fostering Cultural Connections through Pastoralism:** A central theme of the Arbola Walk is the role of pastoralism—the herding of livestock in alpine pastures—in shaping the landscape and sustaining local communities. The production of local dairy products, such as cheese, not only contributes to the economy but also plays a vital role in maintaining the biodiversity of the region. This walk is an opportunity to celebrate the intersection of culture, agriculture, and conservation, and emphasises the importance of cross-border collaboration in preserving these traditions.



*Credits: Daniele Piazza.*

The Camminata dell'Arbola is more than just a walk; it is a celebration of the shared cultural, historical, and natural bonds between Binntal and Veglia Devero. The event exemplifies how shared cultural initiatives can promote a deeper understanding of local traditions and the significance of cross-border cooperation in safeguarding cultural and natural heritage. The walk also highlights the potential of transboundary tourism to foster sustainable practices and community engagement through immersive experiences.

### *Mineralp Interreg IT-CH Project: Rediscovering Geo-Mining Heritage*

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- Programme: Interreg

The Mineralp Interreg IT-CH Project is another example of a shared cultural initiative that brings together Switzerland and Italy to explore the historical mining heritage of the region. This project focused on the geo-mining history of the Antrona Valley (Italy) and Binn Valley (Switzerland), aiming to preserve and promote mining sites as key educational and touristic attractions. By restoring and revitalising mining heritage sites, the project engaged both local communities and visitors in a deeper appreciation of the region's cultural and natural heritage.

## Project Outputs

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- ✓ **Restoration of the Taglione Mine Gallery:** The restoration of the Taglione mine gallery in Valle Antrona and the creation of a visitor center helped bring the region's mining past to life. The project preserved the authenticity of the site while making it a space for public education.
- ✓ **Educational Video Clips:** To enhance visitor engagement, multimedia content, including videos about the mining activities in Antrona Valley and Binn Valley, was created. These videos, available both at the visitor centres and online, offer insights into the history of the region's mining heritage.



*Credits: Daniele Piazza.*

✓ **Musical and Visual Performance:** One of the innovative features of the project was a multimedia performance that combined stunning photographs of microminerals with music composed by renowned artists. This performance, which toured several locations in Switzerland and Italy, helped engage audiences with the region's geological and cultural history in a creative way.

## Project Outcome

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The Mineralp Project succeeded in bringing attention to the mining heritage of the Antrona and Binn Valleys, transforming these sites into key educational and touristic attractions. The project engaged both local and international visitors through a combination of restoration efforts, multimedia resources, and live performances.

- ✓ **Increased Visitor Engagement:** The restoration of mining sites, combined with educational resources and live performances, increased the public's interest and engagement in the area's mining history.
- ✓ **Enhanced Regional Tourism:** The project attracted a diverse range of visitors, contributing to the sustainable development of cross-border tourism by focusing on the cultural heritage of the region.
- ✓ **Strengthened Cross-Border Collaboration:** The collaboration between Binntal Landschaftspark (LPB) and Ente di Gestione delle Aree Protette dell'Ossola (APO) was essential in preserving the shared mining heritage and in building stronger cultural ties between Switzerland and Italy.

## Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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Both the Camminata dell'Arbola and the Mineralp Interreg IT-CH Project offer valuable lessons for managers of Transboundary areas, particularly in integrating cultural heritage and sustainable tourism into cross-border initiatives:

- (1) **Cross-Border Collaboration:** Both initiatives demonstrate the importance of collaborative projects between neighbouring regions to build stronger cultural, historical, and ecological ties.



- (2) **Cultural and Natural Heritage Integration:** Combining local cultural traditions (e.g., dairy products and mining history) with natural conservation efforts enhances both the educational value and appeal of the transboundary area.
- (3) **Engaging Visitors through Immersive Experiences:** By offering hands-on experiences—such as participating in the walk or exploring restored mining sites—these projects create lasting connections between visitors and the area’s cultural heritage.
- (4) **Sustainable Tourism:** Both projects emphasise sustainable tourism practices, promoting slow tourism and avoiding the negative impacts of mass tourism.
- (5) **Multimedia and Education:** Integrating multimedia content (videos, performances, etc.) into tourism projects engages a wider audience and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the area’s heritage.

By learning from these initiatives, transboundary area managers can develop meaningful cultural exchanges, stronger community ties, and sustainable tourism practices that enrich the visitor experience and preserve shared cultural and natural resources across borders.

## VII. Infrastructure

### Podyjí and Thayatal National Parks Transboundary area: Brücke Dyje

- Project Duration: 2024 – 2027
- Budget: €256,348.24

#### Project Objective

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The Brücke Dyje project focuses on the construction of a new pedestrian bridge to channel visitor traffic around Hardegg, enhancing access between the Podyjí (Czech Republic) and Thayatal (Austria) national parks. The project aims to improve cross-border tourism by creating a new tourist circuit that helps visitors better experience the natural and cultural heritage of both protected areas. The bridge, combined with a new tourist trail, will increase awareness of the cross-border nature of these protected areas, further promoting international cooperation and tourism. The addition of this infrastructure will also encourage visitors to explore both the Czech and Austrian sides of the parks, fostering a unified experience across the border.

By crossing the national boundary via the bridge or the nearby Hermitage footbridge, tourists will be able to experience a stronger sense of connection between the parks and their shared landscapes. The project will contribute to the development of a cross-border tourism product that enhances the visitor experience while supporting environmental awareness and cultural heritage preservation.

#### Project Outputs

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- ✓ **New pedestrian bridge ("Altes Bad" suspension bridge):** This bridge will connect the two parks, providing an accessible link for cross-border visitors. It will include a 120-meter access path and two tourist signposts in the Czech Republic and a 25-meter barrier-free path, railings, and a bench in Austria.
- ✓ **Development of a new tourist trail:** The trail will be marked to guide visitors through the natural and cultural values of the region.



- ✓ **Concept for maintenance of the cultural monument:** The cultural heritage of the bridge will be preserved, with long-term maintenance plans in place.
- ✓ **Neighbourhood celebrations:** A series of local events on the bridge will celebrate the completion of the project and strengthen community ties on both sides of the border.

### Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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The Brücke Dyje project offers valuable lessons for other transboundary area managers aiming to enhance cross-border tourism, improve visitor experience, and preserve natural and cultural heritage. Below are key takeaways:

- (1) **Integration of Visitor Infrastructure: Developing** cross-border infrastructure such as pedestrian bridges, cycling paths, and marked trails is essential to improving access and creating a seamless visitor experience. The Altes Bad Suspension Bridge will act as a vital link, enabling visitors to explore both the Czech and Austrian sides of the parks. By incorporating infrastructure that encourages exploration across borders, managers can enhance the sense of unity and shared identity between protected areas.
- (2) **Cross-Border Collaboration in Infrastructure Development:** Cooperation between the Podyjí National Park and the Thayatal National Park is essential for the success of this project. Both parks must align on maintenance standards, regulations, and project goals to create a cohesive experience for visitors. For other transboundary areas, establishing a clear management framework for cross-border infrastructure is crucial for sustainability and long-term success.
- (3) **Cultural and Community Engagement:** The neighbourhood celebrations planned for the bridge highlight the importance of involving local communities in cross-border projects. These events foster a sense of shared ownership and pride in the project. Managers should consider incorporating local community engagement in similar initiatives to strengthen bonds and promote awareness of the cultural heritage and natural treasures within the protected areas.
- (4) **Sustainable Tourism Practices:** Sustainability is central to this project, with the development of infrastructure designed to minimise environmental impact while promoting responsible tourism. The project aims to introduce a cross-border tourism product that attracts visitors interested in sustainable, slow tourism. By focusing on sustainability and eco-friendly practices, transboundary areas can ensure that their projects align with long-term conservation goals and reduce the pressures of mass tourism.
- (5) **Effective Communication and Signage:** Clear, multilingual signage is critical in ensuring that visitors can easily access information and appreciate the region's natural and cultural values. The project includes signage in Czech, German, and Hungarian, ensuring accessibility for international tourists. Managers in other transboundary areas should adopt similar strategies to provide essential information to visitors in multiple languages, making the experience more inclusive and accessible.
- (6) **Monitoring and Data Collection:** The inclusion of a traffic counting system in the project will track the number of visitors using the bridge and trails. Gathering data on visitor traffic and behaviours helps to monitor the success of the project, inform future decisions, and ensure that the infrastructure remains effective. Transboundary areas can implement similar monitoring systems to assess the impact of their tourism projects and make adjustments as needed.
- (7) **Long-Term Viability through Cross-Border Solutions:** The success of the project relies on the continued cooperation between the two countries and regional stakeholders, such as the Tourismusverband Nordburgenland. The combined expertise of national park authorities and tourism partners ensures that the infrastructure and services meet the needs of visitors while maintaining long-term sustainability. For transboundary areas, long-term partnerships are essential to develop effective and sustainable cross-border tourism products.

## Conclusion

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The Brücke Dyje project exemplifies the power of cross-border collaboration in developing infrastructure that enhances the visitor experience while promoting environmental conservation and cultural heritage. By focusing on sustainable tourism, community engagement, and effective management, transboundary areas can successfully integrate tourism with conservation, creating shared experiences for international visitors and strengthening the bonds between neighbouring protected areas. The lessons learned from this project can serve as a model for other transboundary areas aiming to develop cross-border tourism infrastructure while ensuring long-term environmental and community benefits.



*Credits: Representatives of both National Parks and politics at the bridge celebration in May 2024, by Astrid Bartl.*

## VIII. Youth Programme

### **Transboundary area Julian Alps: Junior Ranger Activities**

➤ Project Duration: From 2023

#### **Project Objective**

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The TB Junior Ranger Activities initiative in the Julian Alps Transboundary area aims to connect young people from both Slovenia and Italy. The primary objectives are to provide education, foster networking opportunities, and overcome language barriers, thereby building connections between youth across borders. This initiative also aims to create opportunities for future joint work in the transboundary area, with a focus on environmental conservation and sustainable practices. By engaging youth early, the project lays the foundation for long-term cooperation and shared responsibility in managing the region's natural resources.

## Project Outcome

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The project has successfully organised joint field trips within the Julian Alps transboundary area, with one field trip held annually. These trips serve as educational experiences that bring together young participants from both countries to learn about the unique ecosystems and conservation challenges of the region. They also offer a chance for youth to network, share ideas, and engage with the natural environment in a hands-on way. The field trips help instill a sense of environmental responsibility and cross-border collaboration among the younger generation.



*Credits: Junior Rangers, by Mojca Pintar.*

## Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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- (1) **Youth Engagement for Future Conservation Leaders:** The TB Junior Ranger Activities serve as an excellent example of how to involve young people in transboundary area management. For transboundary area managers in other regions, engaging youth in practical conservation work can help build a new generation of environmental stewards who will continue to care for the transboundary area in the future.
- (2) **Overcoming Language Barriers in Cross-Border Programmes:** A key focus of the project is overcoming language barriers. In regions with diverse linguistic backgrounds, transboundary area managers should invest in creating multilingual educational programs and materials. Bilingual guides and facilitators can help bridge communication gaps, ensuring that all participants are included and able to fully engage with the program.
- (3) **Building Cross-Border Networks of Youth:** By connecting young people from Slovenia and Italy, this project fosters a sense of unity and shared responsibility across borders. Transboundary area managers can replicate this model by creating similar cross-border initiatives that encourage youth from different regions to collaborate on conservation issues, exchange knowledge, and build lasting relationships.
- (4) **Hands-On Field Trips and Experiential Learning:** The annual field trips are an essential component of the Junior Ranger programme, offering youth the opportunity to learn through experience. Transboundary area managers should prioritise field-based learning in youth engagement programs, as it provides a more impactful and memorable learning experience compared to traditional classroom instruction.
- (5) **Sustainable Future Through Youth Engagement:** The TB Junior Ranger initiative highlights the importance of involving young people in sustainable development and conservation. Transboundary area managers can benefit from this approach by integrating sustainability into youth programs, ensuring that the future generation of leaders is well-versed in environmentally responsible practices.

In conclusion, the TB Junior Ranger Activities in the Julian Alps Transboundary area offer valuable lessons for transboundary area managers looking to engage youth, overcome language barriers, and build strong networks for future conservation efforts. By implementing similar initiatives, managers can foster long-term cooperation, create future environmental leaders, and strengthen the shared commitment to protecting transboundary ecosystems.

## Other success stories

### **Pasvik-Inary Transboundary area: International Dark Sky and Museum of the Year Awards**

#### **1. International Dark Sky Award**

➤ **Website:** [Øvre Pasvik National Park | DarkSky International](#)

In 2024, Øvre Pasvik National Park, located in Norway's Pasvik Valley, has been certified as the country's first International Dark Sky Place. Spanning 119 square kilometers in the far northeast of Norway, the park offers exceptional opportunities for stargazing and observing the Aurora Borealis, particularly during the polar night when the sun does not rise for two months. Its high latitude and minimal artificial light create an unparalleled night sky experience.

The park's leadership has taken proactive steps to preserve its pristine skies through education and community engagement. Initiatives include collaboration with local schools to incorporate STEM-based dark sky education and support from the Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy (NIBIO) to spread awareness through nature schools, citizen science programmes, and public lectures. The park's visitor centers, at NIBIO Svanhovd and Gjøken, enhance public access to these experiences, although visitors are advised to prepare for extreme winter conditions.

This designation not only celebrates the park's natural beauty but also highlights the importance of protecting dark skies for both ecological and cultural reasons.

#### **2. Sámi Museum and Northern Lapland Nature Centre Siida: Museum of the Year 2024**

The Sámi Museum and Northern Lapland Nature Centre Siida, located in Finland, has been recognised as the Museum of the Year 2024 and also holds the title of European Museum of the Year 2024. This dual recognition celebrates its exceptional contribution to preserving and showcasing the Sámi culture and the unique biodiversity of Northern Lapland.

Siida serves as a hub for both cultural and environmental education, offering exhibits that delve into Sámi heritage, traditional lifestyles, and the natural ecosystems of the region. Through innovative storytelling and interactive displays, the museum fosters a deeper understanding of the relationship between indigenous communities and their environment. Its accolade underscores its role as an inspiring model for cultural and environmental integration in the Arctic region.

## **Transboundary area Julian Alps: UNESCO's MaB Programme**

- **Project Duration:** Starting in 2024, with a 10-year re-evaluation cycle

In 2024, the Julian Alps Transboundary Biosphere Reserve joined the UNESCO's MaB Programme. This initiative exemplifies the principles of cross-border conservation, cultural preservation, and sustainable development, establishing a model for transboundary cooperation worldwide.

### **Project Objective**

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At the core of this initiative lies a shared vision to:

- ✓ **Preserve Species and Habitats:** By respecting cross-border ecological connectivity, the Julian Alps Reserve ensures the protection of diverse species and their habitats, creating a robust framework for long-term conservation.
- ✓ **Enhance Shared History and Traditions:** This project acknowledges the unique cultural and historical ties of the Julian Alps, fostering mutual respect and cooperation across national borders.
- ✓ **Promote Sustainable Development:** Through the exchange of expertise and good practices, the initiative seeks to encourage sustainable practices that benefit both local communities and the environment.
- ✓ **Set an International Example:** As part of the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme, the reserve aims to demonstrate how transboundary cooperation can effectively balance conservation goals with sustainable regional development.

### **Project Outcomes**

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Over the next decade, 49 cooperation actions will be implemented, focusing on key areas such as ecological conservation, cultural heritage, education, and sustainable tourism. These actions will involve stakeholders from both nations, ensuring broad participation and shared ownership of the reserve's future.

Key achievements already include the establishment of joint management structures, the initiation of cross-border monitoring programmes, and the active promotion of local traditions and sustainable practices. The reserve has become a beacon of collaboration, showing how protected areas can work together to achieve common goals.

### **Recognition and Community Engagement**

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The Julian Alps Transboundary Biosphere Reserve received formal recognition during a ceremony in Agadir, marking its inclusion in UNESCO's prestigious network of biosphere reserves. A welcoming event was later held in Trenta, celebrating this milestone with local communities, stakeholders, and international representatives. These events underscored the importance of fostering local pride and involvement in the reserve's activities.

### **Looking Ahead**

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The Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve embodies the spirit of cross-border cooperation, balancing conservation, culture, and sustainable development. As it enters its 10-year evaluation cycle, the reserve will continue to inspire other transboundary initiatives worldwide, proving that collaboration knows no borders.





*Credits: UNESCO Award Ceremony, by Fabrizio Amador Caddeo – PNPG Archive.*

## **Neusiedler See- Seewinkel National Park and Fertő-Hanság National Park Transboundary area: NP30**

- Funding Programme: Interreg
- Project Duration: 2024
- Budget: €199,857

### **Project Overview**

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In 2024, Neusiedler See-Seewinkel and Fertő-Hanság National Park Transboundary area celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Over its 30-year history, the two administrative bodies managing the park have established strong collaboration. However, the physical and mental border still presents challenges to unified nature presentation and communication. For this reason, they are supporting their further cooperation with the anniversary NP30 project.

### **Key Aims**

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- ✓ **Enhancing Cross-Border Collaboration:** Strengthen the partnership between Austrian and Hungarian administrative bodies to deliver unified management and nature conservation.
- ✓ **Promoting Shared Natural Heritage:** Increase public awareness and appreciation for the unique habitats and biodiversity of the park as a single ecological entity.



- ✓ **Improving Visitor Experience:** Develop a framework for cross-border guided tours and events to provide seamless ecotourism experiences.
- ✓ **Public Engagement:** Break down mental barriers through targeted joint marketing campaigns and innovative public activities.

### Key Outcomes

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- ✓ **Joint Training for Guides:** Six cross-border field training sessions for 25 guides to enable them to offer comprehensive tours across the entire park.
- ✓ **Enhanced Visitor Interaction:** Implementation of simultaneous test tours and innovative public events to connect visitors with the shared natural and cultural identity of the area.
- ✓ **Comprehensive Marketing Campaign:** Launch of multilingual image films, social media, and poster campaigns to promote the unified identity of the national park.
- ✓ **Educational Initiatives:** Joint school campaigns and activities like stamp collection campaigns and cross-border farm days to engage diverse audiences.
- ✓ **Sustained Awareness:** Activities and materials designed to impact perceptions and attitudes well beyond the project duration.

### Lessons for Transboundary Protected Area Managers

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- (1) **Celebrate Milestones:** Anniversaries and significant dates provide excellent platforms for large-scale public engagement and promotional activities.
- (2) **Leverage Common Identity:** Highlighting shared natural and cultural heritage strengthens public engagement and fosters a sense of unity despite physical borders.
- (3) **Joint Capacity Building:** Training programmes for field staff ensure consistent messaging and visitor experiences across Transboundary areas.
- (4) **Integrated Visitor Experiences:** Seamless tours and events can transform perceived barriers into opportunities for deeper connection with the landscape.
- (5) **Innovative Outreach:** Multilingual, multimedia campaigns reach broader audiences and ensure lasting impact.

This project serves as a powerful example of how transboundary collaboration can overcome challenges posed by physical and mental barriers to achieve integrated and effective conservation, tourism, and public engagement.



## Conclusion

The case studies presented in this document illustrate the transformative potential of collaborative efforts in managing transboundary areas. From conservation initiatives that harmonise approaches across borders to innovative projects in tourism, governance, and digitalisation, each example offers a wealth of lessons for transboundary area managers.

Several core themes emerge—sustainability, education, community engagement, and cultural heritage—underscoring the multifaceted nature of transboundary area management. These themes, however, are isolated; they weave together into a complex tapestry where solutions to environmental and social challenges must operate synergistically.

By learning from the successes and innovations showcased in these EUROPARC-certified transboundary areas, cross-border protected area managers throughout the world can strengthen their own practices, fostering ecological, social, and cultural benefits that transcend borders. Ultimately, these insights reaffirm the importance of unity and cooperation in safeguarding our shared natural heritage for future generations.

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