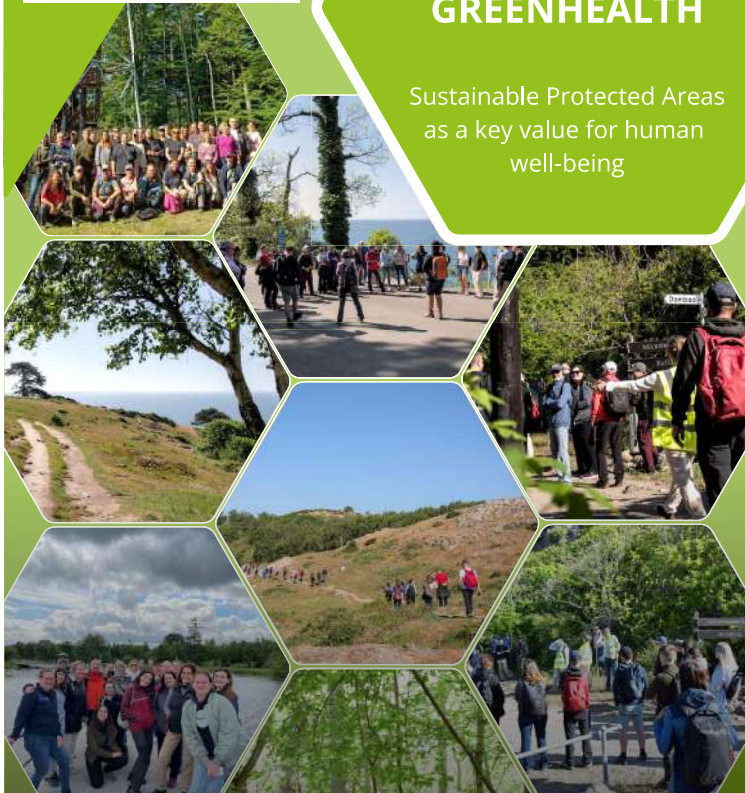


Interreg Europe GREENHEALTH

Sustainable Protected Areas as a key value for human well-being



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Interreg Europe GREENHEALTH

GREENHEALTH is an Interreg Europe project aiming to make EU regions **more biodiversity resilient** by **improving the management of sustainable protected areas** as a **key value for human well-being**.

01 Mar 2023
-
31 May 2027

7 partners
from 7
countries

25 Good
Practices
identified

Objectives

- ▶ **Identify, transfer and adopt innovative and successful Good Practices (GPS)** in the partners' regions to **improve regional policy instruments**
- ▶ Create the adequate regional contexts to maximise the **links between Protected Areas and health and wellbeing**

Who are the GREENHEALTH partners?

Lead Partner:
Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia – General Directorate of the Natural Environment, (Spain)

Partners:
Podkarpackie Region (Poland)
Public Institution for the management of Protected Natural Areas of Dubrovnik-Neretva County (Croatia)
Northern and Western Regional Assembly (Ireland)
The Prešov Self-Governing Region (Slovakia)
Kullaberg Nature Reserve (Sweden)
EUROPARC Federation (Germany) / Advisory Partner



Interreg Europe GREENHEALTH



Photo credit: © iStockphoto.com/Andreas Kuchler

Our final goal is to **improve regional public policies**, creating new contexts and **linking Protected Areas and the health and well-being of people**.

How?

- ▶ Identifying, transferring, and adopting innovative and successful nature & health practices from across Europe
- ▶ Better linking health and environmental policies
- ▶ Working together with the health sector and universities

METHODOLOGY

Selection of Good Practices in the partners' regions through dialogue with local stakeholders

Introduction of these GPs during Interregional Learning Workshops

Realisation of a questionnaire to choose which GP each partner wishes to import in their context

Peer-reviews to facilitate the import of the Good Practices

Policy improvement in the partners' regions inspired by the Good Practices

The technical approach is backed by the expertise and groundwork of **Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe** programme from the EUROPARC Federation, which brings over a decade of experience.

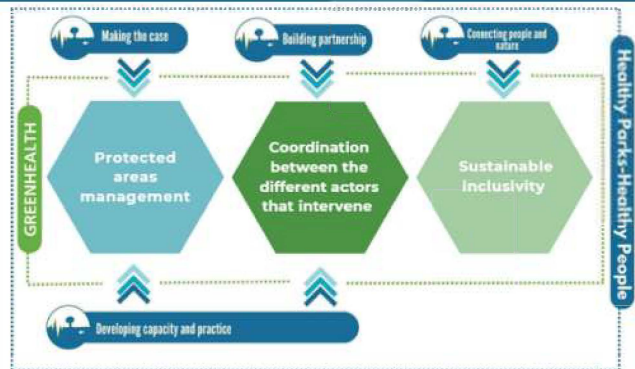
GREENHEALTH & Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe



Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe (HPHPe) is a EUROPARC programme that aims to **support Parks and Protected Areas** at the national, regional and local level to **deliver better outcomes for the health of people and nature**.



How GREENHEALTH Technical Areas (TA) are underpinned by the HPHPe pillars



[Learn more about HPHPe](#)

HPHPe TOOLKIT

The HPHPe developed a **toolkit** that serves as a **methodological compass** for the GREENHEALTH partners, enabling the following:

- ▶ Creation of criteria for identifying good practices
- ▶ Capacity building for protected area managers
- ▶ Developing effective stakeholder engagement processes and communication strategies to influence policy makers and public opinion
- ▶ Strengthen connections with the health sector

In the next pages we will focus on **seven of the selected Good Practices** identified in the partners' territories, all linked to one of **GREENHEALTH Technical Areas (TA)**.



TA1 - Protected Areas Management

- 1) Regional Ministries collaboration to develop coordinated innovative actions in health & environment (Spain)
- 2) Forest bath therapy for nurses from Slovak private hospital in Carpathian beech forests (Slovakia)

TA3 - Sustainable inclusivity

- 5) Tourist paths for persons with visual impairment in the Podkarpackie Region (Poland)
- 6) Projects TOURISM+ and LOKRUM4YOU (Croatia)
- 7) Social readaptation of inmates in prisons located at the protected areas in the Podkarpackie Region (Poland)



TA2 - Coordination between actors

- 3) Ensuring Accessibility and Promoting Well-being Through Nature-Based Collaboration in Kullaberg NR (Sweden)
- 4) The National Trail Conference (Ireland)



To discover more
GREENHEALTH Good Practices

Regional Ministries collaboration to develop coordinated innovative actions in health & environment (Spain)



Photo credit: Francisco Sánchez Nieto, Sierra Espuña



Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia General Directorate of the Natural Environment (CARM)

IN A NUTSHELL

This agreement between Regional Ministries of Health and Environment aims to **pool resources from key stakeholders** to realise **innovative programs on health and nature**, focusing on:

- ▶ Using nature to prevent and treat chronic diseases in children.
- ▶ Researching the effects of natural environments on human health.
- ▶ Promoting the use and care of protected areas and urban green spaces to enhance health.
- ▶ Preventing alcohol and drug use among teenagers.



Photo credit: CARM

WHY IS THIS PROJECT SPECIAL?

This tool constitutes a reference at both national and European levels by establishing **inter-administrative coordination mechanisms**, criteria for evaluating health interventions in natural areas, and protocols for training and sensitising technical staff and citizens



Photo credit: Pedro Espinosa Nieto



Photo credit: CARM



SUCCESS

This agreement allowed the launch of five major initiatives:

- ▶ “Forests for Health”: all children born in Murcia grow up linked to a tree planted when they were born.
- ▶ “Path for the Senses” in the surroundings of the Arrixaca hospital.
- ▶ “Natur-Activate”: promoting physical activities while showing the natural values of protected areas.
- ▶ Synergy with Yecla Health Centre in a geocaching project.
- ▶ Activities in regional protected areas in collaboration with the Hospitals of Murcia and Cartagena.



Image credit: CARM, Project Natur-Activate

REPLICABILITY

- ▶ Signing a **mutual agreement among authorities** is a recommended and essential first step.
- ▶ The agreement model is **adaptable** and **replicable** in different European regions.
- ▶ A **monitoring committee** with representatives from all parties is advised to:
 - Oversee the agreement's development,
 - Ensure objectives are met,
 - Support implementation of agreed measures.



BOSQUES PARA LA SALUD



Image credit: Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit, Arrixaca Hospital

More information on this Good Practice

Forest bath therapy for nurses from Slovak private hospital in Carpathian beech forests (Slovakia)



Photo credit: Jolán Prerogajová. Crowns of tall beeches in the primeval forest of Havelčovo, Poloniny National Park.



The Prešov Self-Governing Region



IN A NUTSHELL

- ▶ In recent decades, a growing number of individuals are experiencing **chronic stress**, which impacts both **mental and physical health**. Often, this can result in burnout.
- ▶ The director of a local hospital chose to **support his nursing staff through coping and stress mitigation programmes**. He partnered with a Forest Pedagogy NGO to offer **forest bathing services** in a serene forest setting.



Photo credit: Lenka pedagógia

WHY IS THIS PROJECT SPECIAL?

This initiative promotes **forest bathing and therapy for the healthcare workforce** and others facing chronic stress. Training park staff enhances sustainability and paves the way for parks to become Natural Health Centres.

Photos credit: Lenka pedagógia



SUCCESS

- ▶ Positive feedback from 40 nurses.
- ▶ **Feedback evaluation by POMS method** (Profile of Mood States) – the questionnaire covered 8 areas of feelings that were recorded before and after the forest bath – in each of these areas the nurses noted a smaller or larger improvement.
- ▶ National Park Administration trained staff with forest bath certification.

REPLICABILITY

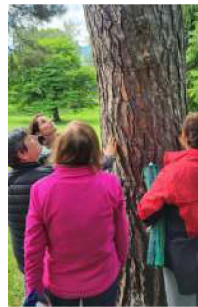


Photo credit: Lenka pedagógia

- ▶ This cooperation model can be **replicated** in any country. The target audience can include not only medical professionals but also school teachers, corporate managers, and state administration employees.
- ▶ Key elements to consider include:
 - **Certified and trained personnel:** It's essential that the service is provided by qualified workers.
 - **Appropriate environment:** Equally important is the setting in which the service is delivered, ideally in a protected forest area as it was in this case.

More information on this Good Practice

Ensuring Accessibility and Promoting Well-being Through Nature-Based Collaboration in Kullaberg (Sweden)



Länsstyrelsen
Skåne

Kullaberg Nature Reserve



IN A NUTSHELL

- ▶ Kullaberg Nature Reserve fosters collaboration with key stakeholders to provide **accessible nature experiences for individuals of all ages and abilities**, focusing on biodiversity conservation, visitor experiences and accessibility
- ▶ Examples of actions:
 - **Nature walks** for the elderly and individuals with disabilities.
 - **Inclusive education sessions** for school classes with diverse requirements.
 - Free provision of **all-terrain wheelchairs**.
 - **Adapted trail** for people with visual impairment.



Photo credit: Orlaine Bailly, EURDPARC

WHY IS THIS PROJECT SPECIAL?

Kullaberg Nature Reserve fosters **strong collaboration with multiple stakeholders** including schools, tourism companies, and the Högånäs municipality, which encompasses social services and health departments. Additionally, a volunteer network was established to support nature conservation efforts and provide visitor guidance.

Photo credit: Kullaberg Nature Reserve



Photo credit: Orlaine Bailly, EURDPARC



SUCCESS

Kullaberg Nature Reserve managed to foster universal accessibility in the region by:

- ▶ **Removing physical barriers:** In cooperation with the Municipality, the Kullaberg Nature Reserve Management office developed a 2,8 kilometres loop accessible with all-terrain wheelchairs.
- ▶ **Removing sensorial barriers:** Created of an adapted trail with 21 sensors related to the "KWENDA" system for information and guidance for people with visual impairment.
- ▶ **Engaging persons with disabilities** so that they can pre-test these measures.
- ▶ **Increasing safety and preventing erosion** through the use dead hedges to guide the walk in nature, while also providing ecological benefits by fostering biodiversity and utilizing natural, local materials. This was implemented by landscape architecture students from INSA Centre Val de Loire University (France).

REPLICABILITY



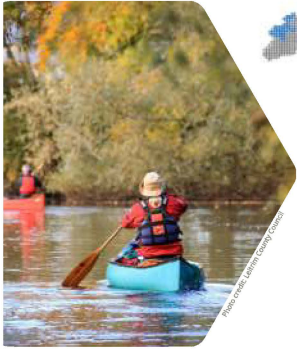
Photo credit: Orlaine Bailly, EURDPARC

- ▶ Collaborating with the **municipalities**, including **health and social services**, helps identify specific groups such as the elderly and individuals with disabilities. Engaging these groups enables tailored actions that align green space initiatives with the diverse needs of the communities.
- ▶ The adaptability of this model highlights **how parks and green spaces can be effectively adapted** to promote health and well-being across various communities.

More information on this Good Practice

Good Practices in the spotlight

The National Trail Conference (Ireland)



Northern & Western Regional Assembly

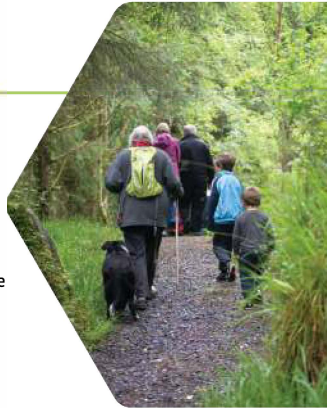
Leitrim Development Company

Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA)

IN A NUTSHELL

The Conference is organized by **Leitrim Development Company**, the Irish Local Development Network, and Rural Recreational Officers. Its purpose is to **enhance knowledge for improving existing trails and creating new ones**. Key objectives include:

- ▶ **Inclusion and Accessibility:** Promoting trail use among marginalised groups.
- ▶ **Mental Health Benefits:** Enhancing well-being through trail improvements.
- ▶ **Knowledge Sharing:** Learning and sharing best practices for the region.



WHY IS THIS PROJECT SPECIAL?

This event marked **Leitrim's largest outdoor recreational gathering**, drawing in more than 2 000 farmers, landowners, outdoor enthusiasts, and community groups over the course of four days.



Northern & Western Regional Assembly

SUCCESS

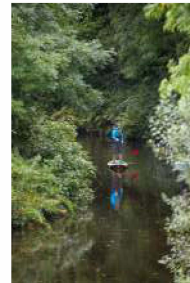
The conference was deemed a success based on:

- ▶ **Attendance:** 2,700 participants over four days.
- ▶ **Feedback forms:** 97% received a five-star rating.
- ▶ **Stakeholder/Funder Feedback:** All responses were overwhelmingly positive.

REPLICABILITY

Countries interested in hosting a similar conference should focus on themes such as:

- ▶ **Inclusion:** Improve trail accessibility for all hikers.
- ▶ **Education:** Teach hikers about maintenance and conservation practices.
- ▶ **Community Engagement:** Build a sense of community among outdoor enthusiasts.
- ▶ **Networking:** Connect individuals pursuing careers in trail maintenance.
- ▶ **Conservation Promotion:** Collaborate on preserving natural landscapes and wildlife.
- ▶ **Sustainability:** Discuss the future of trail networks with stakeholders.



Ireland12_sup (from Canva)

More information on this Good Practice

Tourist paths for persons with visual impairment in the Podkarpackie Region (Poland)



Photo credit: Podkarpackie Region, Podkarpackie Region, Podkarpackie Region



Podkarpackie Region

IN A NUTSHELL

Since 2021, **three new paths** have been established to cater to the **needs of visually impaired individuals** in the Podkarpackie Region. These trails feature essential infrastructure, including:

- ▶ **Electronic devices** with the TOTUPOINT system, that includes markers that emit sounds, offering users location information through text or voice messages.
- ▶ **Convex information boards** displaying information in Braille.
- ▶ **Maps** illustrating the route of each path.



Photo credit: Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue Bieszczady Group

WHY IS THIS PROJECT SPECIAL?

“This good practice demonstrates how innovative technologies, combined with collaborative governance, can create inclusive tourist experiences, empowering persons with disabilities to explore and enjoy previously inaccessible regions.”

Erik Gløersen, Expert at the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform

Photo credit: Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue Bieszczady Group



SUCCESS

- ▶ **Development of three tourist routes** featuring the TOTUPOINT system, designed specifically for individuals with visual impairments—an innovative solution on a national level in Poland.
- ▶ **Increase in the number of tourists with disabilities:** more than 360 individuals have utilised these trails since their launch in 2021.
- ▶ **Collaboration efforts** between the Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue (the trail's ideator and manager) and the Forestry Districts (landowners and proprietors of the observation towers) to create a new, universally accessible tourist product.

REPLICABILITY

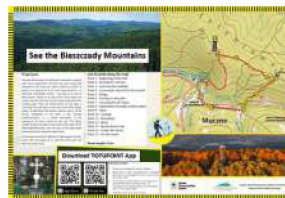


Photo credit: Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue Bieszczady Group

- ▶ **Close collaboration** among stakeholders to improve life quality for the visually impaired, including path placement coordination with landowners.
- ▶ **Leadership** by the Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue Bieszczady Group.
- ▶ **Technology integration** to make tourist routes accessible.
- ▶ **Trail maintenance** to ensure excellent condition.
- ▶ **Care for TOTUPOINT markers** for better navigation and safety.

More information on this Good Practice

Projects TOURISM+ and LOKRUM4YOU (Croatia)



Public Institution for the Management of Protected Natural Areas of Dubrovnik-Neretva County



Public Institution for the management of Protected Natural Areas of Dubrovnik-Neretva County (PIDNC)



IN A NUTSHELL

- ▶ Lokrum Island, recognized as a Special Reserve for its forest vegetation, offers **individuals with visual impairments** the chance to **explore natural areas**.
- ▶ The objectives of the projects were the following:
 - Providing **access to the protected natural area** for blind and partially sighted individuals
 - Reducing **social isolation** amongst people with disabilities while improving their overall well-being
 - Overcoming both **architectural and social barriers** to experiencing nature



Photo credit: Public Institution Lokrum Reserve

WHY IS THIS PROJECT SPECIAL?

The projects **trained one tourism worker** to enhance services for blind and partially sighted individuals and **employed two people with disabilities**. It also developed relief maps, tactile postcard models, and organized guided tours that emphasize the island's natural and cultural values.



Public Institution for the Management of Protected Natural Areas of Dubrovnik-Neretva County

Photo credit: Public Institution Lokrum Reserve

SUCCESS

- ▶ Individuals with disabilities are enthusiastic about the opportunity to experience nature that is often inaccessible to them.
- ▶ The Island of Lokrum has emerged as a **tourist destination** intentionally designed **for individuals with disabilities**.
- ▶ In the years 2022-2023, around **500 blind or partially sighted visitors** explored the island.

REPLICABILITY



Photo credit: Public Institution Lokrum Reserve

- ▶ Accessibility initiatives on Lokrum Island have made it a popular destination for individuals with disabilities, particularly benefiting blind and partially sighted visitors. This approach enhances tourism, reduces social isolation, and improves well-being by addressing barriers to nature.
- ▶ For successful replication in other contexts, organizations must prioritize intentionality in their planning and execution to promote inclusivity and accessibility.

More information on this Good Practice

Social readaptation of inmates in prisons located at the protected areas in the Podkarpackie Region (Poland)



Podkarpackie Region

IN A NUTSHELL

- ▶ This project aims to **engage inmates in nature and community activities**, as a way to prepare them for reintegration into society while reducing the likelihood of reoffending.
- ▶ Collaboration between **Landscape Park Complexes** and **Penitentiaries** offer a variety of activities for inmates, such as:
 - Walking rallies
 - Clean-up campaigns
 - Restoration projects at cultural sites (e.g., Orthodox churches)
 - Repair and renewal of tourist infrastructure along routes
 - Installation of nesting boxes for birds



WHY IS THIS PROJECT SPECIAL?

“As this collaborative initiative has been in use for over a decade it shows that a proven model (small groups, nature guides, etc.) has been found and there are rich insights that can be shared with other regions seeking to provide new innovative social services to inmates.”

Mart Veliste, Expert at the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform



SUCCESS

- ▶ Increased prisoners' **awareness** of the positive impact of physical activity and work in nature on their well-being, along with their role in aiding biodiversity protection.
- ▶ Since 2012, an average of 10 inmates have participated in each activity, and approximately **300 prisoners** have taken part since the programme's inception. There have been **no reported incidents** during these activities.
- ▶ Many prisoners express a **desire to engage in activities**, and those who have participated previously wish to join again.
- ▶ Prison managers also indicate a **positive impact of activities on detainees' behaviour**.

REPLICABILITY



- ▶ This approach can be adapted for various groups and institutions, such as senior citizen clubs and nursing homes.
- ▶ The main **challenge in working with detainees is ensuring order and safety** during activities. To address this, **small groups** are supervised by prison guards. The structure of these groups can be adapted for various settings

More information on this Good Practice

GREENHEALTH Interregional Events in pictures



Kick-off Meeting in Spain. May 2023.



1st Interregional Learning Workshop in Croatia. November 2023.



3rd Interregional Learning Workshop in Poland. September 2024.



2nd Interregional Learning Workshop in Ireland. May 2024.



4th Interregional Learning Workshop in Sweden. May 2025.

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