Guidelines for interpretation based on practical experience in the Slītere National Park

The content of the outdoor information stand

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-2010-

1. Content

2.<u>Introduction</u>

The aim of the guidelines „How to Design an Outdoor Panel" is to provide an example of visitor friendly, understandable interpretation which is not oversaturated with academic terminology but is still educational and offers useful and practical information on the given territory or object.

An outdoor panel interpretation provides visual image of the nature area, including protected nature sites, informs and educates visitors and local community, directs visitor flow and represents tourism infrastructure reducing the negative impact on the nature.

The guidelines are based on the experience of the Project partner „European Centre for Eco and Agro Tourism" (ECEAT, the Netherlands, chapters 1,2,3,4 and 5.1.) and complemented with practical experience examples of the Latvian Country Tourism Association (chapters 2.1, 5.2, and 6) developing and installing outdoor panels in the Slītere National Park, and surveying outdoor panel interpretations in national parks and other Natura2000 sites in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway and other countries. The guidelines are written in 2009-2010. Texts are illustrated with photos by Juris Smaļinskis and from ECEAT.

The outdoor panels in the Slītere National Park follow the „Unified style for specially protected nature territories" (2007) provided by the Latvian Nature Conservation Agency. During the updating process of the guidelines, the project representatives participated in a seminar discussion of the Unified style regarding changes and additions concerning outdoor panel interpretations. The seminar was organised by the Latvian Nature Conservation Agency.

This document is produced under the EC Life+ programme project "Proposals for environmental policy and governance based on demonstration of environmental, social and economic benefits from tourism in the Slītere National Park - a NATURA 2000 territory" (LIFE07 ENV/LV/000981).

3. Key interpretive planning issues

Why do you want to interpret something?

You need to ask yourself why you want to interpret your collection, feature or site.

Your reasons could include education, conservation, marketing and promotion, raising funds or visitor management. Or simply to give your visitors a more enjoyable experience.

Who should be involved in the interpretive process?

It is important the right people are involved in the interpretive plan. In particular, different people may have quite different views about what messages should be communicated to visitors.

In a large area there may be several agencies, local communities and voluntary groups who should be involved. If so, you will need to decide how they can have an input. At the other end of the scale, only one person may be needed to plan a simple piece of interpretation.

What are you interpreting?

You need to think carefully about what you want to interpret. The key question to ask is:

- What is special about your site, feature or collection?

In addition, you should also consider:

- What visitor facilities like car parks, access, signage and toilets are already provided (or will be in future)?
- What other interpretation is available in the area?
- What staff, money and other resources are available?

Who are you interpreting for?

It is essential to understand your visitors so that your interpretation is relevant to them.

The sorts of questions you should ask are:
- Who are they?
- Why do they come?
- How many of them are there?
- How often do they come?
- Where are they from?
- What interests them?
- How long do they stay?

Some key points include:

- If you have many families and school groups you should do something specific for children.
- If you have lots of foreign visitors you should translate some of your interpretation.
- If you have lots of repeat visitors you could change part of your interpretation each year, or use arts media that can be equally enjoyed every visit.
- If you have visitors with particular interests you should interpret what they are interested in.

You may also wish to consider potential future visitors as well as your current audience.

What stories do you want to tell?

This is when you start to prepare the actual interpretation. You need to refine what you wish to communicate into 'themes' – the ideas that you want visitors to take away with them. Themes should be stated as complete sentences that contain one main idea. You might interpret several main themes at a single site.

As a guide, you should be able to complete the following sentence for each theme:
"The thing I want people to learn from this interpretation is…"

What are your objectives?

Your objectives will now determine exactly what the interpretation is meant to achieve.

There are four kinds of interpretive objectives:
- Learning objectives – what you want your visitors to *know*
- Emotional objectives – what you want your visitors to *feel*
- Behavioral objectives – what you want your visitors to *do*
- Promotional objectives – how you want to *present* your *organization*

Your objectives should be specific, measurable and achievable. They are essential to justify the resources to be spent on the interpretation, and are a critical reference for your future evaluation.

How will your interpretation be implemented?

You'll need to cost and timetable the interpretation, and to identify who will manage it.

You should consider what can be done in house and what will need to be contracted out. Interpretation is a skilled process and you should chose writers and designers with experience of producing good quality interpretation. Do not be tempted to write material yourself without adequate training. Effective interpretive writing is lively, incisive and personal - and much harder than it seems!

See the guidance notes on interpretive writing for more detailed help.

How will it be monitored and evaluated?

It is important to assess whether your interpretation meets the objectives you set for it.

Some evaluation can be undertaken as you develop the interpretation to test its effectiveness. Otherwise, you should check how well it's working once installed. Any changes should feed into your next interpretive programme.

How will it be maintained?

It is important there are clear responsibilities for maintaining and eventually replacing the interpretation. Maintenance needs might include, for example, clearing vegetation around a panel, making sure all interactive are in working order, re-touching paintwork, and ensuring all lights and fixings are working properly.

4. Developing interpretation contents

Be concise! A helpful approach is to decide on just two or three points you want to get across, and summarise them in a clear theme, e.g. 'Miners who worked here led hard and demanding lives, but their comradeship is still remembered and valued in the village two generations later'. Keep this theme in mind as you plan your panel and make sure that all the words and images contribute to developing it.

Consider carefully how best to express your message – perhaps an annotated image is better than an account with words.

Don't use illustrations which simply duplicate what people can see for themselves, unless you want to annotate a view. Use illustrations to show things they cannot see, or what things looked like at another time.

Don't use illustrations just to fill up space. Too many panels are cluttered with wild flowers here and there. Good design needs space to breathe.

Many people find oblique views easier to read than conventional maps. These are not easy to draw and need careful thought about what to include. Leaving out unnecessary detail makes the essential parts clearer. Before drawing an oblique view or map you need to have decided how the panel will be oriented on site. Orientate your map the same way, so that people looking at the map are facing in the right direction.

Line drawings work well, especially to show reconstructions and how things worked. Use graphics to explain processes e.g. the build up of land by tidal deposits, but take care to keep it simple.

Consider the range of materials, manufacturing and printing techniques at the start and discuss with the manufacturers. This will avoid disappointments such as producing beautiful artwork only to discover that the detail cannot be reproduced. An experienced designer can help you here, since they will have an overview of what is available. If you are doing it yourself, talk to several manufacturers: companies who deal with one process will not necessarily tell you what is possible in others.

Display text needs to be big, with letters at least 8 mm. high. Arrange text in blocks or paragraphs of about 50 words. Use headings to attract attention and emphasise main points.

Always choose and check colours outdoors because they look quite different indoors. Be very careful about using a white background, it can glare and be too noticeable from far away.

Ensure that someone will check the panel regularly, and clean, repair, or remove it if necessary.

Interpretation template

Interpretation is presented in the original language and in at least one foreign language with foreign visitors in mind. Before taking the decision on the foreign language choice, consider, which of the foreign languages is the most relevant in the area and what is the language used by the majority of foreign visitors at present and in future.

The name of the author should be provided with the photos.

If the stand is with three parts, then this might be the plan:

1) Cartographic information + general information about the territory (in the context of the place where the stand is situated);
2) Information on attraction sites or the route;
3) Information on the services in vicinity;
4) Your location site (marked on the map and explained: „you are here").

The text may not cover more than 50% of the field on the stand.

General information (header of the stand)	• The title of the interpretation; • The name of the territory; • The logo of the specially protected nature area or cultural/historical heritage site (oak leave or other) and an explaining text (foreign guests have no idea of the meaning of the oak leave logo); • The logo of Natura2000 or the logo of a bird site, if relevant; • Other important information telling about the unique assets of the territory, e.g., in case of the Slītere National Park – highlighting the Livonian coast.
General information about the territory	• About the territory (nature park, etc.) – when the protected territory was established and why, the unique and main resources of the territory.
Cartographic information	• Roads, villages, waters, homesteads, tourist attractions and other objects are marked on the map according to its scale; • Text in the original language; • The location of the stand is marked with "You Are Here." • Map legend or explanation of symbols; • Scale; • Service providers cited in the text of the stand (accommodations, etc.). Car parks. Other objects of interest that are nearby. • Routes marked.
Activities – hiking, bike trails, bird-watching	A map of trails and routes: A more detailed map of the trail – is it linear or circular, does it hook up with other trails, where there are places to relax or have a picnic, lavatories, swimming locations; the map marks the beginning of the trail, noting points of interest by number; the stand contains brief information about each object. Information about trails and routes: • The name of the trail; • Length of trail km/m; • Amount of time needed; • Level of difficulty (pictograms); • What is the marking in the nature for orientation – specific pictogram (e.g., a cyclist) or colour marking on trees; • Infrastructure: Road cover on the trail, obstacles (steps), accessibility for people with special needs, people with baby carriages or bicycles
Points of interest – cultural, architectural	• Location on the map • Photographs

monuments and the like	- A brief description about the object – history, use over time, perhaps interesting stories or legends; - Historical photographs
Nature attraction object or site	- A map, including a notation of the location of the stand; - A brief description of the object and why it is unique; - Plants, animals and birds in the area – those that are not protected and can be seen; - Historical maps, photos for comparison to see how the territory has changed over the course of time; - For bird-watchers – the most commonly found birds and their photographs;
Services	- Accommodation – shown on map, in text – name, contact numbers; - Dining facilities - shown on map, name; - Shops – shown on map; - Guide services with telephone numbers; - Bicycle rental, service, boat, trekking stick or other inventory rent – shown on map, in text – name, contact numbers; - Tourist information offices or travel agencies providing visitor information – marked on the map, contact details provided; - The 112 emergency telephone number;
Green advice (limitations)	- Bans can be noted with pictograms which take up less room, understandable in any language; - Focus on positive things – activities allowed; - Alternatives to restrictions. If no tenting is allowed in a particular site, information shall be provided on the nearest tenting site.
An information band at the bottom	Information about the administration of the protected nature territory, the author of the interpretation, co-operation partners, funding sources and their logos, contact details

5.Sitting panels

Consider whether to use an upright or an angled panel – lectern style is best. If possible mount a panel onto an existing structure such as a ticket kiosk or a wall rather than make a separate structure. Extending the roof of a building to provide an overhang or verandah creates shelter for viewers and panels alike.

Do not put up panels which obscure the view. If possible site them against a wall, bank or foliage so that they do not stand above the horizon. On a very open site consider using a panel angled to the desired line of sight, but almost at ground level so that visitors only come across it when they need it. This makes it easy for children to read too!

Avoid putting panels in full sunlight as this will speed up the deterioration of most materials.

6.Standards for information stands

The natural protected area shall have sufficient and adequately distributed information points located in the main accesses to the natural protected area and/or the main centres of interest. Precise and objective information about the following shall be available to the visitor:

- Regulation of public use
- Location and accessibility of public use facilities.
- Natural values of the natural protected area.
- Emergency telephone number – 112

The information relating to any commercial activity that is not part of the offer of the public use of the natural protected area and that the management considers should be provided to the visitor shall be as ample as possible. The offer that comes closest to the management strategy of the natural protected area and to its standards for regulating activities is recommended.

7.Outdoor panel information examples

Worlds' experience and examples

Mount Rainier, Washington State, USA: a sense of humour helps when you're trying to influence people'

Fig.1. Outdoor panel in Mount Rainer NP, USA

Attractive illustrations on panels help visitors understand archaeological remains such as here at the Broch of Gurness in Orkney.

Fig.2. Outdoor panel in Broch of Gurness, Scotland

The panel at Mount St. Helens, USA, uses a clear hierarchy of text.

*Fig.3. Outdoor panel in Mount St. Helens, USA*

These temporary interpretive panels in the car park at the Stonehenge World Heritage Site in England provide interpretation on some of the upcoming design changes to the site. Critical issues: keeping visitors aware of the changing access to the site (new paths, etc.), and resource protection (why they can't touch the stones).

Fig.4. Temporary outdoor panels at the Stonehenge

This mock-up interpretive panel (from a course on interpretive panel planning & design), was planned to interpret a "critical issue". Local residents were not aware of the resource management planning for this community woodland, particularly the planting of new trees and "what the plastic tubes were". They didn't like seeing all the plastic tubes! The copy says "The local school children and adults who planted these trees do not see the tubes – they see the future". Critical issue – community understanding and support of the woodland management.

Fig.5. Mock-up of outdoor panel
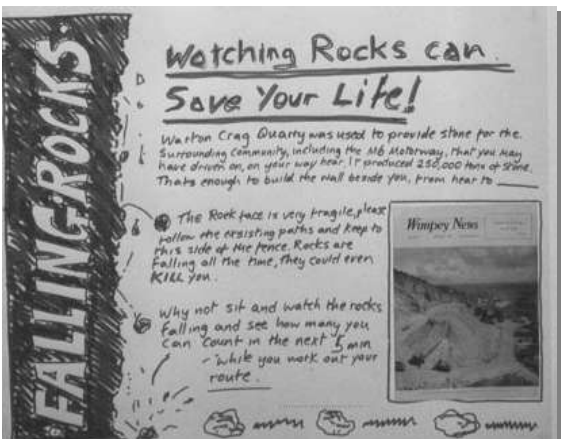
The critical issue for this draft interpretive panel is obvious – a safety problem from falling rocks. They want visitors to keep to specific paths, and to be aware that rocks are falling all of the time. This mock-up panel, similar to the previous one, will be pre-tested with visitors prior to final design and installation.

Fig.6. Mock-up of outdoor panel

Interpretation which is not maintained is worse than providing nothing.

Fig.7.Damaged outdoor panels

Baltic countries' experience and examples

The Latvian Nature Conservation agency has produced a manual of unified interpretation style for specially protected nature sites. The style manual is available as a download from the home page of the Nature Conservation Agency: www.daba.gov.lv . The aim of the manual is to establish a uniform image of protected nature areas in Latvia. The manual offers guidelines for development of efficient interpretation in outdoor panels and promotional publications. The guidelines provide technical information regarding the size, materials, assembly and installation of outdoor panels, but do not offer advice on interpretation. There are several bodies which install outdoor panels following these guidelines: the Latvian State Forests, the Riga Forests, local municipalities, etc.

The outdoor panel „The Flood land Meadows of the River Lielupe" (Fig. 11) which is made according to the guidelines. It contains information in Latvian and in English. Rich informational material is supplemented by photos and drawings. At the bottom, there are pictograms illustrating the rules regarding visitor pets in the given protected nature site.

Fig.11. Outdoor panel in the Flood land Meadows of the River Lielupe, Latvia

The outdoor panel "The Plieņciems dune" (Fig. 12) installed by the Latvian State Forests has an outline map of Latvia (upper right corner) showing the location of the protected area. There are pictograms and their explanations in the bottom right corner. The pictograms should be understandable without clarifications.

Fig. 12. The outdoor panel "The Plieņciems dune", Latvia

Interpretation can help to notice or recognise the objects of interest in distance, e.g., hills, hillforts, settlements, farmsteads, etc. like in the example from the Karula national park in Estonia (Fig. 13).

Fig. 13. Outdoor panel in the Karula National Park, Estonia

Works of popular local artists can be used in interpretation (see Fig. 14 and 15). Children would like drawings. An artist may help to find attractive ways how to show nature values. An interpretation in the Lahemaa National Park in Estonia shows enlarged images of objects of natural interest as if through a magnifying glass (see Fig. 14)..

Fig. 14. Outdoor panel in the Lahemaa National Park, Estonia.

Fig 15. Outdoor panel in the restricted nature site "Stikli bogs".

Interpretation in the Soomaa National Park in Estonia (Fig. 16) offers information in Estonian and English. Artist's work is used for illustration instead of photos. You have to be an expert in maps to clearly understand where exactly the described nature trails are located (Fig. 16). Interpretation focusses on the history of the national park, nature values, behaviour rules. Interpretation is educational, but it is not helpful for touring the park.

Fig. 16. Outdoor panel "Soomaa Rahvuspark", Estonia

The caricatures show what is allowed and what is not allowed in the Soomaa National Park (Fig. 17). There is a red line around the examples of restrictions and a green line around the examples of allowed actions. Caricatures are a good alternative to pictograms.

Fig. 17. Caricatures on the outdoor panel, Estonia

Map is the dominating element in this example of interpretation in the Žemaitija national park in Lithuania. For visitors it is always important to understand where they are, therefore the map shows the location of the stand. Accommodations, attraction sites and other objects are marked on the map. Only Lithuanian language speakers will be able to use this interpretation.

Fig. 18. Outdoor panel in the Žemaitija National Park, Lithuania.

8. Designing outdoor panels in the Slītere National Park

Choice of location and purpose of interpretation

Latvian country tourism association "Lauku ceļotājs" produced and installed 5 outdoor panels in the Slītere National Park (SNP) in 2010 under the project "Proposals for environmental policy and governance based on demonstration of environmental, social and economic benefits from tourism in the Slītere National Park - a NATURA 2000 territory (LIFE07 ENV/LV/000981).

The locations of the new stands were carefully considered taking into account where outdoor panels already existed and finding out where new outdoor panels were the most necessary. Installation was approved with the land owners, with the administration of the national park, with the local municipality and with local residents during public discussion. Involvement of all stakeholders resulted in high level local acceptance of the new outdoor panels. Interpretation was written depending on the stand location and the following recommendations of this guideline document.

The aim of the new interpretations is to provide information to visitors on new touring routes and tourism products in the Slītere National Park. The process initiates a new approach to interpretation in terms of the layout, contents and design of outdoor panels in the Natura2000 sites. The new concept offers visitor friendly, practical information. The text is not oversaturated with academic terms while still containing rich information on natural, cultural and social values in the Slītere National Park.

The target audience of these outdoor panels are visitors preferring active holidays, enjoying nature and interested to learn about it.

Developing interpretation

The following criteria were set for interpretation of the outdoor panels in the Slītere National Park:

- Good quality cartographic information;
- Use of two languages – interpretation in Latvian for domestic visitors, and in English for foreign visitors;
- Texts should be complemented with good quality photos of the objects described;
- Information should be included on the national park, its nature values, services available, regulations in the park and funding sources;
- Interpretation should contain information on what is allowed in the park as most of the existing stands only inform about restrictions and prohibitions;
- Each outdoor panel should contain unique information and combination of facts, without repeating what is in other interpretations.

In general, the interpretation concept includes a map, photos of the attraction objects, the text in Latvian and English, pictograms, highlighted headings of descriptions, the logos of the funding sources and of the protected nature area stressing the importance of the area in terms of biological diversity.

The interpretation was produced by the specialists of the Latvian Country Tourism Association involving professionals from the administration of the Slītere National Park to write specific information on birds and plants. The interpretation was coordinated and approved also with the local residents, bringing in their corrections.

Steps in development of interpretation:

1) Conceptual agreement on location of the outdoor panels and the interpretation contents;

2) Setting the purpose of each outdoor panel and careful development of the interpretation. In particular:

   a. The panel in the Kolkasrags trail – a bird watching site;

   b. The panel in Kolka village – information about Kolka village, the hiking route "Kolkasrags circle";

   c. The panel in Košrags village – information about Košrags village, directions to the public access to the Sea, cycling route "Liv villages";

   d. The panel in Mazirbe village – information about the military regime during the Soviet time in the restricted coastal area, and botanical information about the plants found in dunes;

   e. The panel by the Mazirbe church – surroundings of the Mazirbe parsonage: cultural history, hiking route "Learn about Mazirbe".

3) Writing texts, preparation of maps, selection of photos;

4) Listing the available services (accommodations, shops, food services, tourist information offices, rentals, etc.) and marking them on the map;

5) Editing and translation;

6) Layout design;

7) Layout editing;

8) Approvement of the layout with the administration of the Slītere National Park.

In case of the SNP, good quality maps are the most important for interpretation to show attraction objects. Next to the map are concise descriptions – one or two sentences characterising each object. Each object is marked on the map, the same numbers are by the descriptions. Brief description of the route, photos, list of accommodations and emergency service phone number are added. It is important to provide the information that is essential to a visitor when he/she is at the particular location.

About the Slītere National Park

A new description of the Slītere National Park was produced to address the visitors in everyday language while still informing about the unique values in the natural park and nature protection goals:

„*The Slītere National Park is known, with good reason, as an open-air museum which shows the historical development of the Baltic Sea. Nowadays evidence of geological events is seen in the Blue Hills of Slītere, which stand 20 to 30 metres high above what was the shore of the Baltic lake of ice 10,000 years ago. The Stiebri hills were formed 8,000 or 9,000 years ago, while the Littorina Sea formed Europe's largest set of dune ramparts and damp hollows*

between those ramparts. This occurred between 4,000 and 7,000 years ago.). The gentle climate of Northern Kurzeme is the reason why so many rare plants are found in the park – some 860 species in all. During the spring migration of birds, tens of thousands of birds fly over the cape within one hour. Along the shore of the Baltic Sea is the so-called Livonian coast. Fishing villages and other cultural objects established by the world's smallest ethnic minority, the Livonians, can be found here."

Above this text, each interpretation contains a map of the Slītere National Park (1:100 000). On each map one of the touring routes developed under the project is marked. The route is selected depending on the stand location, namely: The panel by the Mazirbe church – "Learn about Mazirbe", the panel in Košrags village – "Liv villages", the panel in Kolka village – "Kolkasrags circle", the panel on seacoast at Mazirbe – "Along the seashore", the panel in the Kolkasrags Pine trail – bird watching spots (see Fig. 19).

Fig. 19. The map of the Slītere National Park on the Bird watching outdoor panel.

Accommodations, shops, food services were all marked on the map. The accommodation information included contact details and the name of the respective village (see Fig. 20a). Web sites were included with useful information and telephone numbers of the tourist information offices in Kolkasrags and Dundaga, and the Latvian Country Tourism Association (see Fig. 20b).

🏠 Naktsmītnes / Accomodations

Sīkrags
Jaunklāvi +371 29469614

Lapmežciems
Jaunlīdumi + 371 29467556

Mazirbe
Upeskalni + 371 29259510,
Mazirbes Kalēji + 371 28829474, 29213412
Dzintariņi + 371 26173009

Košrags
Jauntilmači + 371 29412974
Pītagi + 371 29372728

Saunags
Krūmiņi + 371 29452512

Vaide
Purvziedi + 371 63200179, 29395624

Kolka
Ūši + 371 63276507, 29475692
Zītari + 371 63220450; 29464163

Fig. 20. Contact details of accommodations and tourist information offices in the outdoor panel in the Slītere National Park.

Informācija / For more information:

www.kolkasrags.lv +371 29149105
www.ziemelkurzeme.lv +371 63232293, 29444395
www.celotajs.lv +371 67617600
Neatliekamās palīdzības dienests/Emergency services:112

The Slītere National Park covers a unique area. The Liv people – the world's smallest ethnic minority lives here. It was essential to show the Liv identity on the outdoor panels. That is why the upper band includes, along with the title of the panel, also the national flag of the Livs. Names of particular objects and the names of the villages on the map are translated into Liv language. Integration of the Liv language in the interpretation was essential for the local Liv community; this is also one of the sustainability aspects.

Symbols or pictograms used in interpretation

Pictograms were used to inform the visitors about the regulations and public activity facilities in the park. The pictograms were those according to the unified style of specially protected nature areas (www.daba.gov.lv). There are restrictions in the national parks, but at the same time we tried to inform the visitors about opportunities including more positive information (activities and behaviour allowed) and less negative information (restrictions and prohibitions). The pictograms included in the outdoor panels in the Slītere National Park are shown in Fig. 21. Pictograms are preferred to textual information as they need less space, are understandable without translation, and are visually attractive. Caricatures can be used instead of pictograms, but it is not always easy to convey the message.

🚶	hiking trail	🗼	viewing tower
🚴	cycling road (our interpretation – cycling route)	🚗	driving road
🗑	deposit waste here	⛺	no tenting
🚤	boats	🔥	no bonfires
🐟	fishing allowed here	🌿	do not pick plants

Fig. 21. Pictograms and their explanations in the outdoor panel in the Slītere National Park

The upper band includes oak tree leave symbol - the logo of specially protected nature territories. Domestic visitors recognise the logo while foreign visitors are not familiar with it. Therefore textual explanation was included (Fig. 22).

Fig. 22. The logo of specially protected nature territories in the outdoor panel

In the other side the logo of Natura2000 logo was placed (see Fig. 23), designating protected nature areas of European importance.

Fig. 23. The logo of Natura2000

The bottom part of the stand contains information about funding sources, the project and partners. (see Fig. 24)

Fig. 24. The bottom band of the stand in the SNP.

Interpretation by the church in Mazirbe

The Mazirbe interpretation (Fig. 25 and Annex 1) contains two maps: the map of the SNP (1: 100 000) and the map of surroundings of Mazirbe (1:20 000). The maps are detailed enough for the visitors to understand and do the described touring route. The map shows the panel location. The map and text/photos include corresponding numbers of the objects. The interpretation offers to do the hiking route "Learn about Mazirbe", focussing on the objects in the vicinity of the Mazirbe church.

Fig. 25. Outdoor panel by the church in Mazirbe

Interpretation in the Košrags village

During meetings in Košrags the local residents pointed that visitors cannot find the way from the village centre to the sea which is in 800m. One of the tasks was to structure the map information so that the visitors could find the way without asking to the locals.

Fig. 26. Outdoor panel in the Košrags village

The problem here was that no digital maps so far have been made for the Košrags village. We choose to use aerophoto basis on which we marked the key objects (homesteads and roads) so that visitors could orientate (see Fig. 26 and Annex 2). The Košrags village is the monument of architecture. We marked its territory on lighter background in the map. The use of aerophoto was approved with the Nature Conservation Agency having an agreement with the Latvian Geospatial Agency providing aerophotos.

As the cycling route goes through the Košrags village, it was marked on the map in this interpretation panel highlighting the most significant objects of interest especially in the vicinity of the village.

Interpretation on the seacoast in Mazirbe

In Slītere, except Kolkasrags, there is no information exposed about the former restricted regime during the Soviet time. The military presence influenced development of the park and the coastal areas, therefore it was important to include this information in the interpretation. The panel on the seacoast is ideally suited to carry information on the coastline nature values and on the former military regime (see Fig. 27 and Annex 3)

Fig.27. Outdoor panel on the seacoast in Mazirbe

This interpretation serves three goals: telling the visitors how this area was under the military restrictions in Soviet time, informing about the natural values in coastal dunes, and inviting to enjoy a longer hike along the shoreline (distances between seaside villages are given).

There is a brief information about the Irbe straight using a map scheme for demonstration of the strategically location of the Kolka cape and the coast.

Being isolated in the closed military territory left impact on the local community, the culture and habits of the people, therefore we regard it as a part of the cultural and also natural history of the SNP.

Interpretation in Kolka village

It was important to have an interpretation in the centre of the Kolka village (Fig. 28 and Annex 4) as there was no visitor information here. Kolka is the first and largest, also the most popular place in Slītere visitors reach arriving from the direction of Riga along the coastline of the Gulf of Riga. Usually visitors do not associate Kolka village and the Cape of Kolka with the Slītere National Park; therefore it was especially important to provide the national park information in this interpretation.

Kolka being the largest of the coastal villages in the national park, a detailed map (1: 20 000) is useful here. The most attractive sights in the village and a hiking route are marked on the map. To invite the visitors to enjoy the nature values (not only the Cape of Kolka which is highly popular), the hiking route "The Kolkasrags circle" was developed which is linked with the Kolkasrags Pine trail – one of the most beautiful nature trails in the Slītere National Park.

Fig 28. Outdoor panel in Kolka village

The Bird watching interpretation on the Kolkasrags trail

The interpretation on the Kolkasrags trail (see Fig. 29 and Annex 5) focuses on bird watching. The Slītere National Park is crossed by the Baltic-White sea bird migration route. Under the project we developed a new bird watching product "The birds in Slītere". The product is attractive to general public, not only to special interest audience like ornithologists.

Fig. 29. The Bird watching panel

The interpretation includes descriptions and photos of the birds which can be seen around on site. No rare or protected species are described here which could in any way be harmed by visitors. Contact details of the guides – ornithologists of the SNP are included. The symbol

 marks the recommended bird watching sites on the map. The bird watching calendar was made to inform visitors about which bird species can be observed in which time of a year (see Fig. 30).

Putni gada laikā / Birds during the year

Vērojamā suga Species	Vērošanas vieta Place to spot	Laiks / Time											
		Mēneši / Month											
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Mai	Jūn	Jūl	Aug	Sep	Okt	Nov	Dec
Mednis Capercaillie	Priežu mežs, ceļmala Pine forest, roadside												
Sāmsalas pīle Shelduck	Jūras mala Seaside												
Zivju gārnis Gray Heron	Jūras mala Seaside												
Baltā cielava White/Pied Wagtail	Jūras mala un zvejniekciemi Seaside and fishing villages												
Upes tārtiņš Little Ringed Plover	Jūras mala Seaside												
Jūras krauklis Cormorant	Jūras akvatorija un jūras mala Sea, seaside												
Jūras ērglis White-Tailed Eagle	Viscaur teritorijā Entire territory												
Sudrabkaija Herring Gull	Jūras mala Seaside												
Melnā dzilna Black Woodpecker	Priežu meži Pine forests												

suga novērojama regulāri / bird can be seen regularly   suga novērojama neregulāri / bird is not seen regularly

Fig. 30. Bird watching calendar throughout a year

Visitor feedback on the new interpretations

Visitors were asked to give their feedback during public discussion on the Travel Day to Slītere. 176 responses were received. 83% of the respondents said they have stopped to read the stand information (Fig. 31). The visitors assessed maps and descriptions of the attraction objects as the most important part of interpretation. There is also interest in the national park information and photos. There is less interest in services (see Fig. 32).
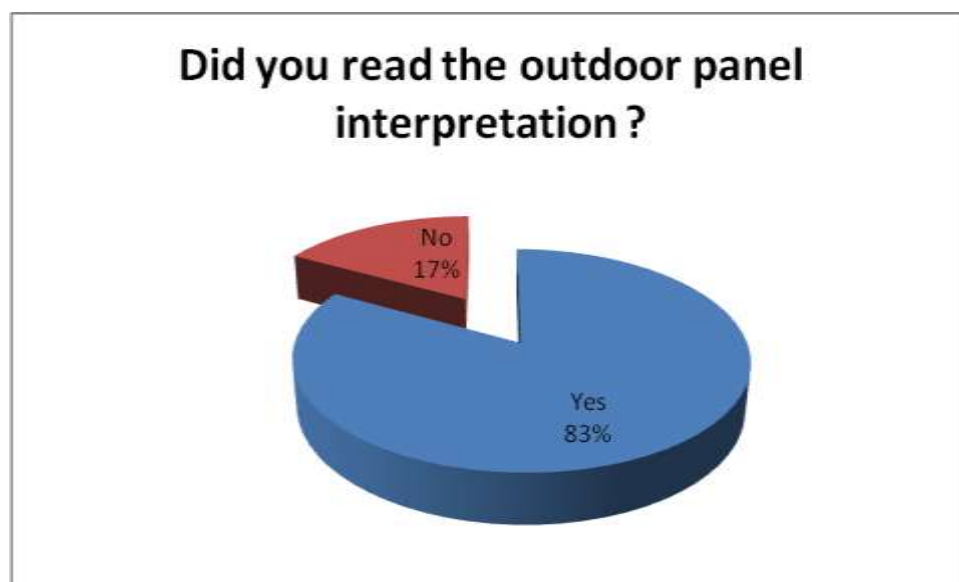
Did you read the outdoor panel interpretation?

No 17%

Yes 83%

Fig. 31. Responses to the question if the visitors stopped to read the interpretation

The most useful information on outdoor panels

■ Series1

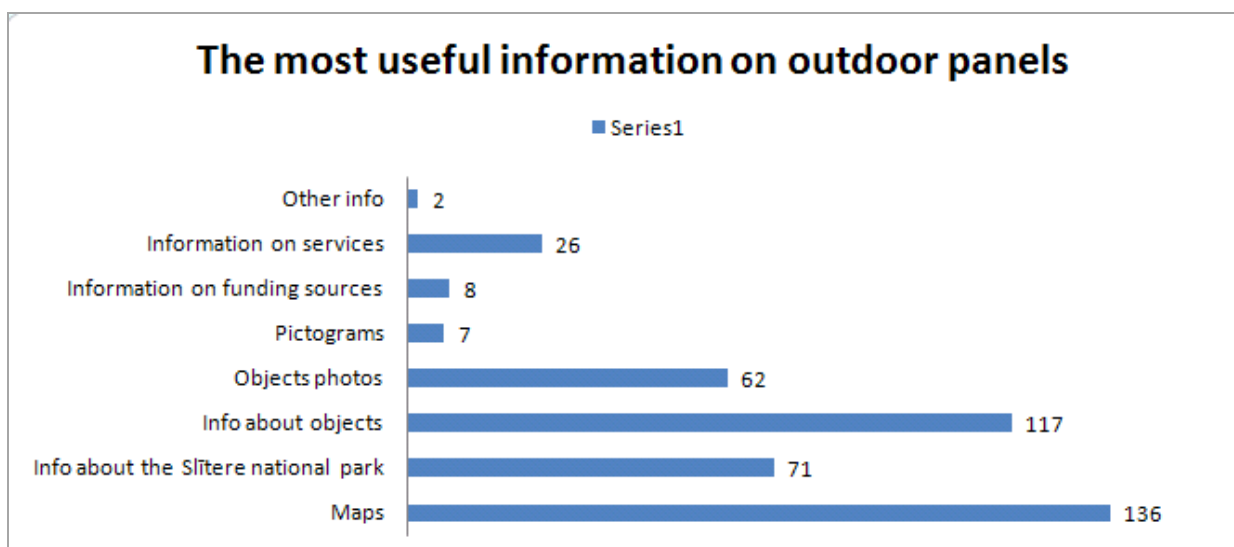|	
Other info	2
Information on services	26
Information on funding sources	8
Pictograms	7
Objects photos	62
Info about objects	117
Info about the Slītere national park	71
Maps	136

Fig. 32. The most useful information in the interpretation.

Production and installation of the outdoor panels in the Slītere National Park

The panels are designed according to the unified style for specially protected nature areas (see Annex 6). Three column structures were chosen, information printed on one side. The panel base is one piece; it is not divided in parts (see Fig. 33). This solution allowed to avoid repeating the head and bottom band in each of the three columns.

Fig. 33. Outdoor panels on the Slītere National Park. Right side: interpretation produced by Lauku ceļotājs under this project – single-piece base. Left side: the Slītere National Park interpretation before the project – three-piece layout.

The panels are oriented vertically (Fig. 25-29), avoiding to block the views or sites.

Interpretation is printed on self-adhesive film (MACTAC 529) which is suitable for outdoor use in climate conditions of Latvia. The colours are resistant against fading in sunrays as the paint reacts with the film. There are different types of self-adhesive films as well as printers differ. Professionals should know what materials can be used together and what expected results are. Different manufacturers use different codes. Self-adhesive film is attached to laminated plywood which is used for production of outdoor banners and stands.