



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”

POLPROP-NATURA”, LIFE07 ENV/LV/000981
www.polprop.celotajs.lv

AFTER-LIFE COMMUNICATION PLAN



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1. BACKGROUND

1.1. LOCATION

The Slītere National Park was formed in 1957 as a nature reserve. In 2000 it was reorganised as a national park. In 1945 – 1993 the area was a borderland, and a restricted military zone. The national park covers an area of 16,360 ha on land and 10,130 ha in the sea. Located in the Kolka and Dundaga parishes of the Dundaga administrative district in Kurzeme region. Status: especially protected nature territory, Natura2000 site, Important Bird Area.

1.2. LOCAL SITUATION BEFORE THE PROJECT

- Growing public interest in the former closed military zone, increasing numbers of visits, lack of visitor management;
- General public belief that Slītere is a nature reserve and a restricted access territory. Visitors are mostly in transit, making a stop-over to see the Cape Kolka;
- Poor tourism infrastructure and services due to low and seasonal demand;
- Conflicts involving the national park's administration, the local municipality, local community, businesses. Lack of local cooperation and common effort for territory development planning;
- Road reconstruction and paving expected which would increase the numbers of visitors in transit;
- Vast and unused natural, cultural and historical resources available for the development of sustainable tourism to generate local income and conserve the local environment.

2. ABOUT THE PROJECT

2.1. PROJECT GOAL

The goal of the project was to draft proposals on how tourism can be developed and environmental protection policies can be documented on the basis of realistic and long-term tourism targets. The purpose was to establish tourism products in the Slītere National Park while also ensuring supervision over the way in which tourism affects natural, social and economic aspects in the region.

2.2. PROJECT RESULTS

The project has achieved three main results:

1. Sustainable tourism development model for protected nature areas created through practical experiences in the Slītere National Park in Latvia.
2. Environmental Policy and Governance proposals for tourism development in protected nature areas based on experiences in the Slītere National park and other nature protected areas in Latvia.
3. Increased positive Natura2000 awareness through communication of benefits to local communities and general public.

2.3. PROJECT PARTNERS



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3. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT METHODOLOGY AND REPLICATION POTENTIAL

1. The Memorandum of Understanding signed with the SNP administration gave the “Green Light” to project activities and prevented conflicts with nature conservation sector;
2. Design and test 5 sustainable tourism products according to international sustainable tourism product criteria. The products are built combining the local knowledge, expertise of tourism professionals and nature conservationists. This method saves costs through local community involvement and sense of ownership. The method also guarantees viability of the products as they are of high quality, well tested and up to market needs. The sustainable tourism products are the tool to bring income to local community after the end of the project. The products and their description can be replicated, diversified and further developed, they serve as an example.
3. Print the publication - the Slitere NP guide with information about tourism products and tourist services in the SNP. The methodology is efficient as common work with all stakeholder involvement reduced local conflicts and produced a unique publication promoting N2K values in the local heritage context to serve as an example for others.
4. The product information was inserted in several web sites upon the local stakeholder initiative and with their own effort. The method is efficient as these information channels will be used after the end of the project to promote tourism in SNP as a N2K site.
5. To make and install 5 outdoor information stands in the SNP, based on the designed template content structure. Information stands bring innovation in outdoor interpretation contents in Latvia as the stands inform visitors about nature values, local heritage and services in SNP opposite to previous practice of informing mostly about restrictions and penalties in nature protected areas and nature values in “dry”, scientific terms. Cost efficiency – the construction allows for easy and inexpensive replacement of information in case of changes. Due to local involvement, the information is highly reliable. The stand locations have been negotiated with the local community and strong sense of ownership is present. Cost efficiency – the stand constructions are produced locally with the lowest possible costs.
6. To implement tourism monitoring according to the methodology, which is updated and improved during the project. The monitoring methodology is efficient as it is based on best available visitor monitoring practices in nature protected areas in Europe and therefore the data allow for international interpretation and comparison. The methods are easy to implement and the collected data generate applicable information helpful in further planning of tourism development. Cost efficiency – the monitoring method involves local businesses and volunteer work in data collection.
7. The “Plant finder”. The plant finder represents an innovative example of how N2K biological diversity can be attractively presented to general public in plant watching tourism products.
8. Publish a brochure “Baltic National park guide” on sustainable tourism products in 14 national parks, the Natura 2000 sites in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and upload information on www.celotajs.lv. Inspections to each park and its tourism products in different times of a year, meetings with administrations, assessment of the situation and relating to SNP and Latvian situation proved to be an efficient method to collect reliable information on tourism products, gain experience and network with the national parks.
9. European best practice integration has taken place in relevant way, adequate to local conditions. The expertise input has been tested in practice, improved and returned into users’ circles in nature tourism and nature conservation sector through the best practice manual “A starter guide to developing sustainable tourism in protected areas”. The manual is largely based on SNP experiences. It will be distributed as follows:
 - Printed versions will be distributed at the Europarks Federation annual conference in Genk, Belgium in September 2012, and at different other events. They also will be provided to each member protected area.
 - ECEAT will distribute the manuals through its national members in 15 European countries. ECEAT will also disseminate through its global network, for example through the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and through the IUCN committee on tourism in protected areas.



- The European Ecotourism Network (of which ECEAT is a founding member) will distribute the manual electronically to its more than 250 European members.
10. Development of the Policy proposal started with formation of the drafting team. The methodology is efficient as the policy proposal drafting team provides the sometimes missing link and coordination between state institutions. To approve the policy proposal draft with stakeholders - local community of the SNP and the administrations of the Natura2000 sites in Latvia. The methodology provides for consequent and regular communication between all stakeholder levels with feedback and continuity.
 11. To develop environmental and tourism policy proposal and Sustainable tourism management model based on the analysis of the acquired monitoring data in SNP, the local stakeholder seminar summary and the recommendations of the European environmental experts and sustainable tourism development experience of the national parks in the Baltic countries. The methodology is efficient as it is based on practical experiences and consists of several guidelines which are applicable as a whole or in parts to other nature protected areas. There is high level of cost efficiency for the followers as practical advice and explanations in the guidelines saves the costs of mistakes and trials.
 12. Every possible effort was made to explain Natura2000 values in all the project documentation and events. One project is not enough to achieve overall 100% positive awareness of biodiversity and importance of Natura2000. However, the project made serious steps in initiating stakeholder dialogue and exchanging practical experiences internationally. Natura2000 positive awareness can be achieved in long term and through a complex of activities. Regulations and directives should be adequately explained in understandable, simple terms, demonstrating specific and concrete benefits society and involved communities gain from nature conservation. Problems should be defined, discussed and solutions found in public consultation, listening and attending to interests of all involved stakeholders. Positive and adequate communication messages and practices is the key to increasingly positive Natura2000 awareness.

4. PROJECT DISSEMINATION STRATEGY

The project has been widely promoted and results disseminated during its implementation:

4.1. NATIONAL LEVEL DISSEMINATION:

- Project website was developed with project activities and results www.polprop.celotajs.lv in LV and EN;
- Local and regional awareness raising seminars;
- Public discussion events;
- National rural and nature based conferences;
- Participation in the Trade fairs;
- Media trips to Natura2000 areas to explain nature values;
- Press conferences before large events to explain project activities and aims;
- Other dissemination activities – roundmails and electronic newspapers sent to different stakeholder groups, advertisements and articles in the local newspapers, press releases sent to media, video rolls produced. Total media coverages achieved: ~ 250 press articles, 10 radio stories, 3 TV programs.

4.2. INTERNATIONAL DISSEMINATION:

- Networking activities, visiting conferences on Natura 2000 topics, trade fairs, assemblies, workshops and similar relevant events of international organisations, contacting and meeting tour operators for Natura2000 product awareness raising;
- Organising the Baltic nature tourism conference;
- The Baltic Nature Tourism conference gathered 258 participants from 18 countries representing tourism and nature protection professionals.



5. AFTER-LIFE DISSEMINATION

The project success story has become popular in nature conservation and rural tourism community in Europe thanks to project dissemination in a number of seminars, workshops, conferences, etc. The project activities cover a number of issues – nature conservation, tourism, rural development, local initiatives, job creation, etc., therefore there are wide possibilities for replication and experience transfer.

Layman's report in Latvian and English will be used as a summary document of the project experience and will be disseminated electronically to the target audience: local stakeholders in SNP, participants of all project events according to project mailing lists (e.g., public discussion events, seminars, the Baltic Nature Tourism conference, etc.). Layman's report will be downloadable from www.polprop.celotajs.lv along with other project results.



The project story is briefly presented in the PP document “Project dissemination presentation”, accessible from www.polprop.celotajs.lv and will be disseminated in the following events:

Event	Place	Time	Targets
FLCG	Milan	30th March – 1st April 2012	Promote Natura2000 nature based tourism and recreation products
Eurogites (European Rural tourism organization) conference	Kielce, Poland	19 – 20.04.2012	Disseminate project strategy and implementation methodology
INTERPRETE EUROPE'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE	Pisa	19th – 22nd May 2012	Promote development methodology of nature based tourism products in N2K
Europarks Federation annual conference	Genk, Belgium	September 2012	To disseminate “A starter guide to developing sustainable tourism in protected areas”
OPEN DAYS	Brussels	8th – 11th October 2012	Promote Natura2000 nature based tourism and recreation products
CONGRESS of GUIDES	Vienna	13th – 16th November 2012	Promote development methodology of nature based tourism products in N2K
Eurogites (European Rural tourism organization) RT congress	Romania	November 2012	Disseminate visitor monitoring methodology
FITUR	Madrid	16th – 20th January 2013	Promote Natura2000 nature based tourism and recreation products
	Vienna	10th – 13th January 2013	Promote Natura2000 nature based tourism and recreation products
	Stuttgart	12th – 20th January 2013	Promote Natura2000 nature based tourism and recreation products
BIT	Italy	February 2013	Promote Natura2000 nature based tourism and recreation products
Reiselive, tourism trade fair	Norway	March 2013	Promote Natura2000 nature based tourism and recreation products
ITB	Berlin	March 2013	Promote Natura2000 nature based tourism and recreation products
FLCG	Milan	March – April 2013	Promote Natura2000 nature based tourism and recreation products
Eurogites GA and workshop (European Rural tourism organization)	To be confirmed	May / June 2013	Transfer project experience to CE and EE members of Eurogites



ANNEX – ESTIMATED BUDGET OF DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES 3-5 years

Activity	Main Objective	Budget
Website update	Dissemination of project results	3000 EUR
Newsletters	Dissemination of project results and experience transfer activities	2000EUR
Travel fairs (8 events)	Promote Natura2000 nature based tourism and recreation products	25 000 EUR
Eurogites (European rural tourism organisation) events	Disseminate project strategy and implementation methodology	5 000EUR
International Conferences, congresses	Promote development methodology of nature based tourism products in N2K (2 times a year)	10 000 EUR



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