



Layman's Report

EC LIFE + programme

LIFE07 ENV/LV/000981 POLPROP - NATURA

"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"



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FACTS ABOUT PROJECT:

Project demonstration site: Slītere National Park, Latvia

Project implementation time: 01/02/2009-31/01/2012

Project beneficiary: Latvian Country Tourism Association „Lauku Ceļotājs”

Project associated beneficiary: European Centre for Eco and Agro Tourism - Nederland (ECEAT)

Project funding: EC LIFE+

Project co-funding: the Latvian Ministry of Environment (presently, the Latvian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development) and the Latvian Environment Protection Fund.

PROJECT GOALS:

Develop environment and tourism policy proposal document on sustainable tourism for biodiversity in Latvia

Develop sustainable tourism management model for Natura2000 sites

Increase positive awareness of Natura2000.



PROJECT BACKGROUND AND DEMONSTRATION SITE – THE SLĪTERE NATIONAL PARK



The Slītere National Park (SNP) is one of the four national parks in Latvia. It is located in Dundaga administrative district in the North West of Kurzeme region. The national park was founded in 2000, changing its status from the nature reserve since 1957.

In 1945 – 1993 the territory was a closed military area and a frontier zone. The national park covers 16,360 ha on land and 10,130 ha in the sea. The most popular tourist destination in the park is the Cape Kolka. Status of the area: protected nature site, Natura2000, Important Bird Area. Along with the status of the national park, the visitor flow increased. At the same time, tourism products and infrastructure were poor, tourism demand was not analysed. The protracted local conflicts between environmental institutions, local self-government, residents and businesses did not facilitate development of the territory.

Selecting the Slītere National park as a project demonstration site, our goal was to increase input from tourism in the local economy while conserving the park's nature values and to demonstrate practical proposals and solutions.



Stakeholder meeting in Slītere



Political supervision group meeting

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

1. COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION

During the three project years, we organised interviews, meetings and seminars in the Slītere National Park (SNP) with participation of local residents, self-governments, the national park's administration, local businesses, NGOs and other stakeholders. During the first meeting, the basic questions were discussed – do we want to develop tourism in SNP, what is the present offer to visitors, what improvements are necessary. In common effort, proposals for tourism development in SNP were drafted.

The next step was to build new tourism products and touring routes in the park for hikers, cyclists, boaters, drivers, bird and animal watchers. The routes were marked in nature, new outdoor information stands were installed, visitor event – the Travel Day to Slītere – was organised. The local conflicts were discussed and reduced, uniting the involved parties for common goals.

2. PROJECT POLITICAL SUPERVISION GROUP

Project political supervision group was set up to enable drafting of quality and justified proposals for improvement of environmental legislation concerning the project scope. The meetings helped to link the problems found with the legislation documents to be improved. The following institutions were represented in the political supervision group: the Ministry of Agriculture, the ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, the State Inspection for Heritage protection, the Latvian Tourism Development Agency, and the Latvian Country Tourism Association. Other experts were involved as necessary.

3. PROPOSALS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SNP

The initiative to develop such proposals came from the local community because the Nature Protection Plan of SNP focussed mainly on nature values without sufficiently addressing the tourism issues. The proposals for sustainable tourism development are based on a number of local visits, discussions with local residents, tourism businesses, SNP administration, self-governments, tourist information offices, NGOs, and consultations with the project associated beneficiary ECEAT. The document looks at SNP as a single destination, provides a review of the tourism resources and infrastructure, proposes the required actions. In common effort, a reference to the sustainable tourism proposal document is included in the present version of the Nature Protection Plan of SNP.

The process of development of the proposals is documented in the Sustainable Tourism Model. The recommendations regarding tourism development planning in protected nature areas are included in one of the project results, the document “Environmental Policy and Governance Proposals for Tourism Development in Protected Nature Sites” (Policy Proposals).



The Proposals can be downloaded from:
http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SNP_turisms_EN.pdf

4. NEW TOURISM PRODUCTS

To prolong visitor stay in the park and surroundings, to facilitate the use and further development of local services, to manage visitor flow, to prevent anthropogenic load on sensitive nature areas and to increase Natura2000 positive awareness, 5 new tourism products were developed in SNP as touring routes for hiking, cycling, driving, boating and nature watching.



The routes can be downloaded from:
http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/tour/tours/Sliteres_NP_marsruti_en.html

The process of development, the principles and basic steps are documented and can be downloaded from:
http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/proj/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SNP_product_development_EN.pdf

Route description includes practical and useful information for visitors. The route descriptions are accessible from the web sites of the local businesses and organisations, and are available in print form. Visitors appreciate and use these description sheets, and tourism providers found them helpful. The route descriptions were developed together with the local residents who provided local information, comments and recommendations. The routes were also approved with the SNP administration.

5. ROUTE MARKING

In Latvia there is no uniform route marking system. Each route manager produces marking signs that happen to



Practical seminar on route marking

be destroyed, are costly and time-consuming. Our solution is low cost, simple and efficient: marking signs are painted on trees, stones and other nature objects. The method does not require specific knowledge and skills, much time, expensive materials or tools.

The experience was documented in the “Guidelines for marking/signposting tourist trails”, learning also from route marking experiences in other regions in Latvia and other countries.

The guidelines (in Latvian) can be downloaded from:
http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/proj/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/Vadlinijas_krasas_markejums_LV.pdf

The process involved large stakeholder consultation with participation of the relevant national and local institutions. The document represents recommendations for the official “Uniform Style of Nature Protected Areas in Latvia”.

6. OUTDOOR INFORMATION STANDS

Five outdoor information stands were installed in SNP as part of project activities. The stands inform about touring routes and tourist services, the natural, cultural and social values in SNP. The stands demonstrate new approach to outdoor interpretation in terms of information layout, contents and design. The nature values are explained in reader friendly language, attractively, providing rich information while avoiding scientific and complicated terms.

In the process, we reviewed a number of examples in Latvia and other countries. Our experience and consultations with ECEAT was summarised in the guidelines “The Content of an Outdoor Information Stand”. The guidelines form a part of the project proposals for improvement of the “Uniform Style of Nature Protected Areas in Latvia”

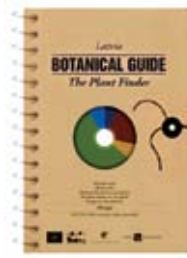
The Guidelines can be downloaded from:
http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/proj/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/Outdoor_panels_EN_2010.pdf



Outdoor information stand in SNP

7. BOTANICAL GUIDE. THE PLANT FINDER

To explain and promote biological diversity in Natura2000 sites, we produced the botanical guide – plant finder. The aim of it is to help everybody to find and recognise plants and mushrooms around us. The guide provides attractive facts about the use of the plants in the past and nowadays, legends and stories about them.



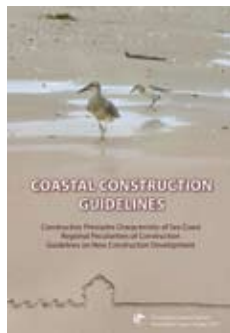
The botanical guide is conveniently pocket-sized for outdoor walks

Electronic version of the guide:

<http://www.celotajs.lv/p/ebook/botanicalguide>

8. COASTAL CONSTRUCTION GUIDELINES

Cultural and historical elements are not only an important tourism resource but also a part of the surrounding landscape and environment. It is necessary to maintain and improve the authentic principles of construction to form a harmonious environment, and to conserve the protected nature and cultural values. Wishing to renew and further develop a uniform visually emotional image of the coast, in line with the regional and local peculiarities, we developed these guidelines in association with the leading Latvian architects, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. The guideline document is a part of the project Policy Proposals.



Coastal Construction Guidelines provide advice to builders

Guidelines can be downloaded from:

http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/proj/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/Apbusves_vadlinijas_eng_web.pdf

9. TRADITIONAL COASTAL ARCHITECTURE IN SLĪTERE NATIONAL PARK

As in-depth case study we summarised information on the historical coastal housing in SNP in order to provide advice to those involved in building processes. The document “Traditional coastal architecture in the Slītere National Park. Description, analysis, recommendations.”



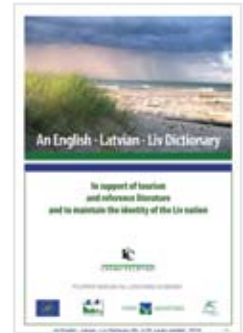
Traditional housing creates quality environment and landscape without reducing biological diversity

Document (in Latvian) can be downloaded from:

http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/proj/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SNP_apbuve_vadlinijas.pdf

10. THE ENGLISH - LATVIAN – LIV DICTIONARY

SNP is a home to Līvš – one of the smallest world's nations. The small Latvian-Liv dictionary contributes to cultural sustainability as it provides translation for everyday vocabulary – names of places, home-steads, foods, festivities, etc.



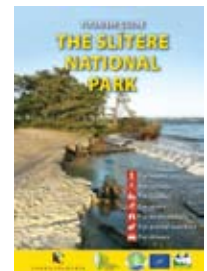
The English - Latvian - Liv dictionary maintains the authentic cultural environment in SNP and helps to attract visitors

The Liv language, with translations and explanations, can be used in marketing and promotion of SNP. The dictionary contributes to maintenance of the local identity, it was developed according to local initiative. The Liv language is used in local signposts, information stands, in tourism product descriptions, in the SNP tourism guide.

The dictionary can be downloaded from:

http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/proj/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/libiesu_vardnica_EN.pdf

11. THE SNP TOURISM GUIDE



The SNP tourism guide is available in Latvian and English languages

The tourism guide is based on local stories involving in the compilation process more than 30 local residents, the SNP administration, the Dundaga self-government and others. The guide promotes the Slītere national park as a Natura2000 site and provides a comprehensive information on the nature values, cultural and historical heritage, as well as tourist services, accommodation, touring routes, and practical advice for visitors.

The guide helps visitors to enjoy the nature, observe nature processes, plants and animals, it explains the unique values in this Natura2000 site.

Electronic version of the guide:

<http://www.celotajs.lv/p/view/SliteresCeledis2010en?lang=en>

Principles and basic steps in production of a tourism guide can be downloaded:

http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/proj/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SNP_celveza_gatavosanas_principi_EN.pdf



Reading electronic visitor counting data in the SNP

12. VISITOR MONITORING

To assess tourism environmental, social and economic impact in SNP as a tourism destination and to stimulate tourism development, we set up tourism monitoring methodology and implemented it during the three project years. Visitor environmental impact was assessed by means of on-site observations, photo monitoring, arranging sample plots.

Two electronic visitor counters were installed. Changing their locations, 4 objects were monitored during the project bringing data that are important for conservation of biological diversity and understanding of visitor flow. The situation before and after the project has been compared, based on monitoring data.

The monitoring results (in Latvian) can be downloaded from:
http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/PolProp_monitorings_lv.html

Tourism monitoring methodology guidelines can be downloaded from:
http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/Monitoring_methodology_en.pdf

A uniform monitoring should be implemented in nature protected areas in the whole country, therefore the "Tourism Monitoring Guidelines" makes part of the Policy Proposals.

13. BALTIC NATIONAL PARKS. TOURISM GUIDE

The Tourism guide "Baltic National Parks" is a unique publication, the first one to contain information on all the 14 national parks (Natura2000 sites) in the Baltic States. The contents were developed in on-site visits, by testing tourism products and services in the national parks, in meetings with the parks' administrations.



Baltic National Parks, Tourism guide is available in Latvian and English languages

Electronic version of the guide:
<http://www.celotajs.lv/p/ebook/BalticNpGuide2012en>

14. WORK WITH TOUR OPERATORS

Tourism offer in the Natura2000 sites in the Baltic States is compiled in the manuals "Wildlife Tours" and "Active Tours" addressed to tour operators in Europe. The manuals promoting the Baltic Natura2000 sites was disseminated to 200 tour operators in 14 countries. 27 tour operators expressed their interest.



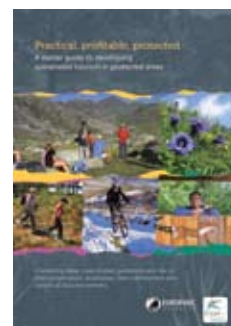
Natura2000 tourism products in the Baltic States

Wildlife tours can be downloaded here:
http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/Tours_wildlife_EN.pdf

Active tours can be downloaded here:
http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/Tours_active_EN.pdf

15. GOOD PRACTICE MANUAL FOR MANAGERS OF NATURA2000 SITES

Good management practices of Natura2000 sites in Europe and case studies of tourism development in protected nature areas is compiled in the manual „Practical, profitable, protected. A starter guide to developing sustainable tourism in protected areas”. The manual can be downloaded from the project web site and a specialised rural tourism training portal



<http://macies.celotajs.lv> or
<http://www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual/>

The manual contains 32 case studies with practical examples on strategies, cooperation, product development, communication, income generation. It is addressed to managers of nature protected areas, tourism organisations and others using Natura2000 as a tourism resource. The manual is particularly useful for new tourism destinations in protected nature sites where it is important to direct the tourism development in sustainable way from the start and to avoid mistakes.

The manual was produced by project partners "Lauku ceļotājs" and ECEAT in cooperation with EUROPARC federation, EUROPARC Consulting GmbH.

16. COMMUNICATION AND NATURA2000 AWARENESS RAISING

Trade fairs and other public events

The project progress and tourism in Natura2000 sites were promoted at the “Balttour” trade fair taking place annually in February, in Riga. The exhibition stand elements like roll-ups can be detached and were used apart from the stand construction in other events to promote project achievements. During the trade fair we carried out public survey about nature travelling to find out the market needs, interests and opinions.

Media work

For promotion of Natura2000, we organised three media trips demonstrating the project achievements and drawing public attention to issues of tourism development in nature protected areas. Regular press releases, press conferences before project events were part of our media work resulting in at least 236 media coverage and radio programs.

Seminars for rural tourism providers

Taking part in regional rural tourism seminars in Latvia we promoted our project experience and encouraged development of nature based sustainable tourism products in Natura2000 sites.

Public discussions

We paid much attention to public discussion of nature conservation and tourism issues. Three public discussion events took place:

1) The Travel Day to Slītere launched the new touring routes, presented the SNP tourism guide and outdoor information stands, evolved public discussions about sustainable tourism development in national parks and other Natura2000 sites in Latvia. The event was initiated by the local community and attracted ~ 1000 visitors in 2010 and ~ 2000 visitors in 2011. The Travel Day to Slītere was supported by the Dundaga regional self-government and SNP administration. The organisational experience is summarised in the document **“Guidelines for organisation of public events in nature territories”**.

The document (in Latvian) can be downloaded from:
http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/proj/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/SCD_vadlinijas.pdf



Trade fair stand demonstrates project achievements in SNP



Journalists on media trip



Rural tourism provider seminar



Public discussion participants are addressed by Asnāte Ziemeļe, the president of the Latvian Country Tourism Association, Raimonds Vējonis, the Minister of Environment, A. Zumbergs, the Head of the Dundaga regional municipality and Dace Sāmīte, the Director of SNP administration (June 12, 2010).

2) Public discussion of the policy proposals regarding **“Coastal Architecture Guidelines”** developed by “Lauku ceļotājs” together with the leading Latvian architects took place on September 9, 2011, in Papes Ķoņu village, Rucava region. The aim of the event was to draw public attention to building processes in Natura2000 sites and their impact on tourism development. Architects, municipalities, local residents took part in the discussion event.

3) Public discussion **“Environmental policy proposals demonstrating environmental, social and economic benefits from tourism development in the Slītere National Park”** took place on December 8, 2011, in the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. Attending were 130 participants. The aim of the event was to present the project results and raise discussions of the policy proposals developed under the project.

Conferences

The project issues were promoted in three conferences we organised:

1) **Latvian Rural Tourism Conference, 11.03.2009.** The main conference topic was increasing of tourism through development of products and services in nature protected areas. The conference gathered 251 participants;

2) **International Rural Tourism Conference, 09.06.2010.** Representatives of rural tourism organisations from 10 countries shared innovation experience in rural tourism product development in reaction to market change. One of the conference sessions was devoted to the best experiences in development of regional and specialised tourism products with involvement of local communities – rural businesses, municipalities, administrations of nature protected areas, etc.;

3) **The Baltic Nature Tourism Conference, 22.03.2011.** The conference gathered 258 participants from 18 countries. The first conference session addressed nature conservation policy issues. To achieve project recognition and interest in its results outside Latvia, we presented the project in 13 conferences, seminars and other events networking with Natura2000 site managers and projects in Germany, Brussels, Estonia, Serbia, UK, Finland, Italy.



Public discussion participants in the Papes Ķoņu village



Public discussion – the project closing event on 08.12.2011.



Latvian Rural Tourism Conference, 11.03.2009.



Project presentation at the Baltic Nature Tourism Conference, 22.03.2011.

PROJECT RESULTS

1. ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE AND POLICY PROPOSALS

The proposals are based on SNP experience and consultations with managers of nature protected areas in Latvia and other countries. The proposals concern required changes in tourism and nature conservation policy documents and suggest practical solutions for particular tourism development problems in nature protected areas.



The document can be downloaded from:

http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/politikas_priekslikumi_eng_web.pdf

The policy proposals are grouped by the following topics:

1. Recommendations for improvement of local cooperation and communication in nature protected areas.
2. Recommendations for the manual “Uniform Style of Nature Protected Areas in Latvia”.
3. Recommendations for conservation of the cultural and historical environment, traditional architecture.
4. Recommendations for visitor monitoring in protected nature sites.

The Policy proposal document has been presented to 130 participants of the public discussion in the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development on 8.12.2011. Results of discussions have been incorporated in the final version of the policy proposal document.

The document with its annexes has been sent to the following institutions and officials:

1. Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
2. Nature Conservation Agency
3. Tourism Development State Agency
4. Ministry of Culture
5. Ministry of Economy
6. Ministry of Agriculture
7. State Inspection for Heritage Protection
8. Latvian Association of Architects
9. Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments
10. 16 coastal self-governments

Integration of the policy proposal documents in the national legislation:

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and The Nature Conservation Agency is in the process of evaluation of the policy proposals in the context of the relevant rules and regulations and available resources (the ministry's letter of 06.02.2012.). Before detailed evaluation, the following statements are provided:

The ministry admits that part of the proposals, like, touring route marking, is currently the only available proposal concerning a national route marking system and can be included in the manual “Uniform Style of Nature Protected Areas in Latvia”.

The ministry agrees that tourism professionals should be involved in municipal planning of land use in nature protected areas.

Visitor monitoring is recognised as one of the most topical issues concerning nature protected areas. The Nature Conservation Agency plans to install electronic visitor counters in more than 20 nature objects.

The Ministry and the Nature Conservation Agency approve the “Coastal Construction Guidelines”. The electronic version is accessible from the Ministry's web site www.varam.gov.lv, the section on Spatial Planning/National Territorial Planning/Coastline Spatial Development Planning.

The Ministry recognises the „Sustainable Tourism Model” as a practical document for further development of sustainable tourism destination in SNP meeting the nature conservation requirements and facilitating local entrepreneurship. The proposals are relevant for tourism development in other nature protected areas in Latvia.

The Ministry of Economics expresses appreciation of the project achievements (the letter signed by the Minister of Economics, dated 23.01.2012.). The Ministry regards the policy proposals on tourism development and nature conservation, as well as conservation of the coastal cultural and historical environment as an important contribution in the development of nature friendly and sustainable tourism products and services. The proposals are in line with the national tourism development vision as set in the national tourism marketing strategy for 2010-2015 and with the objectives of the Ministry of Economics.



The Latvian Union of Coastal Municipalities has approved the „Coastal Construction Guidelines” as a recommendation document (the letter of 21.11.2011.) and it is accessible from the web site of the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments <http://www.lps.lv/Dokumenti/>.

The policy proposals are published in the web site of the Latvian Tourism Development Agency under the strategic documents’ section <http://www.tava.gov.lv/lv/strategiskie-dokumenti>.

2. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MODEL

The sustainable tourism model consists of several documents – guidelines – that have been drafted as documentation of experience in the process of building a sustainable tourism destination in the Slītere National Park: tourism product development, event organization, marketing, visitor monitoring and other tasks. The guidelines describe how the sustainable tourism model can be implemented in practice. The aim of the sustainable tourism model is to ensure continuous balance between economic development of the territory and nature conservation through involvement of the local community. The sustainable tourism model has been accepted in European countries as it was included in the manual „Practical, profitable, protected. A starter guide to developing sustainable tourism in protected areas”. The manual was produced by ECEAT, the project associated beneficiary, in association with the EUROPARC federation uniting more than 400 nature protected sites in Europe.

The Sustainable Tourism Model can be downloaded from: http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/proj/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/ilgtspējiga_attistiba_eng.pdf

3. NATURA 2000 AWARENESS INCREASE



Natura2000 sites in Latvia have been designated based on the already existing nature protected territories. In most cases, visitors are welcome in Natura2000 sites.

All the project activities carried a reference to Natura2000. All surveys included questions about Natura2000, the trade fair exposition promoted nature based tourism products in national parks - Natura2000 sites, media trips were organised to Natura2000.

All publicity materials and project documentation carried the logo of Natura2000. The SNP tourism guide, the Baltic National Parks Guide and the Botanical Guide all include annotation of the Natura2000 network and “Green Advice” on environment friendly behaviour while visiting nature protected areas.

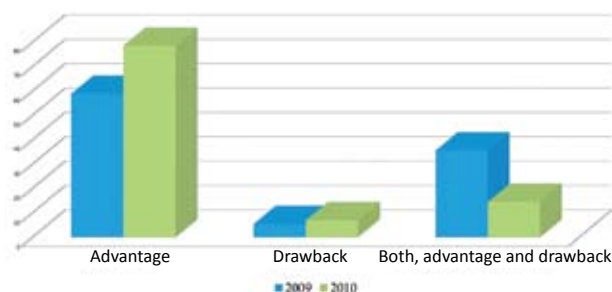
The manual „Practical, profitable, protected. A starter guide to developing sustainable tourism in protected

areas” includes case studies of Natura2000 site management has been distributed to relevant organisations and networks in Europe: “ECEAT – International”, “Ecotrans”, “Europarcs Federation”, “WWF”, “Pan-Parks”, European Ecotourism Network.

Awareness raising activities and results can be found here: http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/proj/proj/PolProp/Dokumenti/Natura_2000awareness_EN.pdf

According to visitor surveys, Natura2000 awareness has increased by 33% during the project. Surveys of rural tourism providers/tourist information centres/municipalities show that in two project years increasing numbers of respondents (by 17%) regard Natura2000 as an advantage rather than drawback.

Do you regard the location of a business in a Natura2000 site an advantage or a drawback?



The project demonstrated that proper positive communication has the greatest importance in building of positive Natura2000 awareness. The most essential elements are communication between all stakeholder sectors, explanation of nature values and justifying importance of nature conservation to residents of Natura2000, demonstrating best practice examples of environment friendly and profitable management.



Visitor survey, Travel Day to Slītere, July 12, 2010

PROJECT BENEFITS AND IMPACT

NATURE. *Conservation of nature values.* The project monitoring leads to the conclusion that maintenance of biological diversity and development of tourism in SNP are not in conflict. Tourism development has not caused degradation of the quality of nature values like species, biotopes and landscape;

Through developing and facilitating well-considered tourism products, higher awareness levels are achieved among tourists and business operators. Visitors use environment friendly tourism products and services of local guides – rangers. These trends contribute to the purposes of protected nature areas (nature conservation, education of public at large, recreation, etc.);

Change of attitudes in local community. Through coordinating tourism related activities and involving all parties and all players, a positive change of attitudes was achieved and relations improved between businesses, local residents and their NGOs formerly campaigning against nature conservation system and its representing body in SNP;

Visitor counting. The data about dynamics of visitor numbers in the territory and individual objects are useful in planning improvements of the existing infrastructure building new facilities. Infrastructure is an important tool to direct visitor flows with conservation of nature values in mind;

New tourism products. The project created new active and nature touring routes. The monitoring results show that project activities have not caused negative impact on important nature values in the national park. The touring routes are a tool to direct visitor flow to where tourism activities do not contradict with the nature conservation interests. Animal, insect and plant watching tours are provided by the local nature guides that is a guarantee of sustainable use of the resources;

Monitoring. In the process of application of a number of monitoring methods, they are improved and adapted for a particular territory and conditions, this way improving the monitoring methodology as a whole.

ECONOMICS. *Increase in visitor numbers and length of stay.* Analysis of the monitoring data show that, disregarding the global economic crisis (which coincided with the project implementation), not only the visitor numbers but also their length of stay increased in tourist accommodation facilities which is a very important factor for improvement of the local economy;

Tourism economic impact. The monitoring data interpretation leads to the conclusion that visitors brought ~ 700 000 – 800 000 LVL to the local economy in 2011. It is a very significant amount, taken the specific features of the territory (the density of residents and businesses, the former status of a nature reserve and restricted military area, etc.). So far, there have been no other initiatives to calculate tourism economic impact in the area, therefore the data cannot be compared with the situation in other years;

Visitor counting. Direct and indirect (electronic) counting methods and the visitor dynamic's data serve as a basis for further assessment of tourism impact on local economy. Data interpretation can serve as a catalyst for new initiatives, projects and support mechanisms for tourism. Local business operators can use the visitor counting data in planning their business and developing further operation models;

New tourism products and their economic impact. According to local business surveys, the touring routes developed under the project are well-demanded. Their availability is one of the reasons for increased length of visitor stay;

Formation of new businesses and extension of the existing ones. Three new accommodation facilities are opened in SNP (two self-catering cottages and one tourist facility on a farmstead) and two properties (a guest house and a camping site) have extended their guest room capacity. There are plans to open a new hostel and tenting sites on a farmstead in 2012. At the end of the project, there are 48 tourism related businesses in the SNP: accommodation, guides, cafes, food tasting and catering, traditional fish smoking, tourism gear rentals, artisans. At the start of the project, there were 23 tourism related businesses in the park.

SOCIAL ASPECT. *New jobs.* The project has improved the local rates of employment along with opening of new tourism facilities and extension of the existing ones;

Cooperation. Interviews, surveys, regular on-site visits and participation in local initiative groups demonstrate that cooperation between the local players has improved in all levels, namely, the vertical level: businesses ↔ municipal-ity ↔ SNP administration, and the horizontal level, e.g., business to business;

Public involvement. The project also monitored the local community opinions and change of attitudes against a number of internal and external factors. A positive change is proved by reducing of local tourism stakeholder conflicts and by the fact that all stakeholders were capable of constructive cooperation to organise the Travel Day to Slītere (the initiative came from the local businesses). Constructive approach was also found to other local problems;

Education. The stakeholder cooperation during the project has established good communication practices. Business operators have gained new experience, knowledge and motivation for further business development in the protected nature area.

The SNP experience demonstrated that the solutions offered are adequate for efficient management and promotion of Natura2000 sites. The principle to develop environmental policy proposals based on experience in a particular territory includes the potential of transferability and replication on other Natura2000 sites in Latvia and in Europe.

