

D.T2.1.3: STRATEGY FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Slovenia, Slovakia

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1. Introduction

The thematic work package 2 - Creation of a sustainable model for buffer zone management around World Heritage Beech forests targets pilot areas in Slovenia and Slovakia, where high potential for conflicts between different interest groups exists. The work package will produce a number of outputs targeting better active involvement of stakeholders, conflict management, visitor management, as well as sustainable forestry practices. Several activities on this work package are being implemented with participatory approaches.

Managing conflicts with and between stakeholders is one of the main challenges that numerous protected area face, especially the strictly protected ones. The present Deliverable addresses this challenge by providing a strategy for conflict management for the project pilot areas Snežnik and Krokár in Slovenia, as well as National Park Poloniny in Slovakia. The presented Strategy is designed in a way to be readily incorporated into the management plans of World Heritage “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” component parts. The deliverable was based on a number of workshops held mainly in Slovenia and Slovakia (project deliverable D.T2.1.1), as well as other project activities within thematic work packages 1 and 3. The Strategy was reviewed by the project consortium and the project advisory board. All comments were considered and integrated to ensure the greatest possible applicability of the Strategy.

Deliverable D.T2.1.3 was based on the results of two MARISCO workshops (Adaptive Management of vulnerability and RiSk at Conservation sites), carried out in Ljubljana, Slovenia (18th-19th November 2019) and Kaluža, Slovakia (2nd-3rd December 2019), as well as two conflict resolution workshops organised in Slovenia (Kočevje - 21st November 2019 and Loška dolina - 11th December 2019). Additionally, relevant results of situational analyses, prepared within the project, were also taken into account (Krokár, Slovenia - 16th November 2019, Snežnik, Slovenia - 30th November 2019). Relevant information was also sourced from regional studies for Slovenia and Slovakia, prepared within work package 3 (D.T3.2.1). The practical experience was supplemented by literature review and consultations with a mediation expert in Slovenia. This deliverable is thematically linked with other deliverables (D.T2.1.1, D.T2.1.2, D.T1.1.2, D.T1.2.1, D.T3.2.1) and outputs (O.T2.1, O.T2.2, O.T1.2).

Table 1: BEECH POWER project deliverables and outputs, related to the present deliverable

Type of project result	Code	Title
Deliverable	D.T1.1.2	Participatory situation analyses (Germany, Slovenia, Croatia)
Deliverable	D.T1.2.1	Participatory strategy development (Germany, Slovenia, Croatia)
Deliverable	D.T2.1.1	2 workshops (in Poloniny NP, Slovakia and either Snežnik or Krokár, Slovenia) - Participatory vulnerability and risk assessments in buffer zones around protected areas
Deliverable	D.T2.1.2	Guideline for stakeholder involvement and a related communication strategy
Deliverable	D.T3.2.1	4 regional studies on needs, potential, and requirements for good management by relevant stakeholders

Output	O.T1.2	Strategy for the creation of additional participatory processes in the surroundings of PAs
Output	O.T2.1	Strategy for the active involvement of stakeholders in WH beech forests
Output	O.T2.2	Strategy for conflict management in buffer zones of WH beech forests

The aim of this document is to inform and present options for World Heritage site managers about ways to deescalate conflicts and resolve them in a constructive way, with an emphasis on the preventive actions. The deliverable will be subsequently also developed into a project output O.T2.2, which will reiterate concepts for stakeholder participation, strategies to manage, minimise, solve and avoid conflicts between different interest groups.

2. Challenges of WH beech forests

2.1. General overview

The nomination Primeval and Ancient beech forests of the Carpathians and other regions of Europe is the largest transnational site on the World Heritage list, spanning 12 countries, with 78 components in 45 protected areas. Therefore, from the start, this nomination represents an unprecedented level of international cooperation and is the most challenging and complex site to manage in the UNESCO portfolio.

On a more local level, since only small remnants of undisturbed forests remain, those are to be very strictly protected, on par with IUCN Category I. The State Parties have proposed these forests to be included on the UNESCO list to “*preserve the last remnants of ancient and primeval European Beech forests, as examples of complete and comprehensive ecological patterns and processes of pure and mixed stands across a variety of environmental conditions in the still ongoing postglacial continental wide expansion process*”. Accordingly, all component parts currently enjoy a legally defined strict protection regime, which was a pre-requisite for site selection, thus being subjected to strict protection on a permanent legal basis preventing negative human influences such as timber extraction, construction or infrastructure, grazing etc. In order to avoid negative human impacts, public access is often restricted to certain parts and certain conditions (e.g. with guided tours). Some of the component parts are partly privately owned, but the majority are publicly owned (Kirchmeir and Kovarovics, eds., 2016). However, such strict protection regimes also mean that human activities and uses of the areas are curtailed to a large extent, which is not always widely accepted in the local communities.

The conflicts with local communities are especially common in buffer zones, as these areas have more varied legal protections and conservation regimes. Therefore, direct and often uninformed comparisons, on both national and international levels, can fuel stakeholder resentment of their activities being restricted. Even IUCN, in their evaluation of the nomination, recognised that while the protection regimes in the component parts themselves are adequate, was concerned about the ability of such a diverse collection of buffer zones to effectively protect the entirety of the designation. Because of these discrepancies the State Parties and site managers are now often in the processes of extending the buffer zones and implementing stricter protection regimes within them, further conflicting with the wishes of the local communities. While UNESCO designation provides additional incentive for better protection, it is a double-edged sword, as it also draws the attention of visitors and increase visitor pressures in areas. Given the remote locations of numerous component parts, the local communities are often counting on increased revenue from touristic exploitation of the sites, which goes against the protection requirements already in place (IUCN, 2017).

Long-term and sustainable protection of these exceptional forest is largely dependent on positive relationship between the property and the surrounding communities, which can justifiably expect to gain benefits of the World Heritage site in their vicinity. Reconciling the, often opposing, perspectives will therefore play a crucial role in the future conservation of European beech forests.

2.2. Challenges - Slovenia

2.2.1. Current protection regimes and management situation

Both Slovenian component parts, Snežnik and Krokar, are protected with the Decree on protective forests and forests with special purpose as forest reserves. The protection regime is more stringent in Krokar, where no human activities are allowed, including visiting the component part. Snežnik has a milder regime, which still restricts anthropogenic activities, but allows visitors on marked trails that lead to the summit of Snežnik. The buffer zone of Krokar is formed of forest reserve Borovec, which is protected with the same Decree and has the milder regime, like Snežnik. The buffer zone of Snežnik component part, on the other hand, partly lies within the forest reserve and partly within protective forests, which extend beyond the reserve.

The Decree does not explicitly name the manager of forest reserves, yet it is implied that Slovenia Forest Service (SFS) is responsible under the oversight of the Ministry, responsible for forestry (currently, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food) and in some cases the need to collaborate with Institute of Republic of Slovenia for nature conservation is explicitly mentioned. Currently, there are no special funds allocated for the management of any forest reserve in Slovenia and the management of both UNESCO component parts is done through EU projects and on the side of day-to-day activities of SFS foresters.

Since the time of inscription in 2017, the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, as the responsible body of UNESCO natural heritage in Slovenia and the Slovenian State Party to the World Heritage Convention, is preparing the documentation needed for protection of both component parts under the Act on Nature Conservation, as nature reserves. This new decree would afford additional layer of protection to both component parts, as well as designate a clear manager, accord some finances for management, and provide the legal basis for the preparation of management and visitor management plans. These processes are ongoing.

2.2.2. Buffer zone modifications

IUCN, in their Evaluation Report (2016), commented on small buffer zones, and specifically emphasised the narrow buffer zone of Snežnik reserve. Therefore, alongside the Coordination Office preparing zonation and management Guidelines for the approval of the Joint Management Committee and relevant WH Committee Decisions (41COM 8B.7, 42COM 7B.71, 43COM 7B.13), which specify that the protective buffer zone function requires at least a 100 meter wide buffer zone, unless justified exceptions can be made, the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning is preparing a proposal for extension of buffer zones in Slovenia.

SFS prepared the expert opinions on the extensions of buffer zones for both component parts. These opinions were taken into account by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation when preparing the Expert Suggestion for Protection of the component parts under the Act on Nature Conservation.

However, this is still an ongoing process. The extended buffer zones were informally and through BEECH POWER workshops communicated to a wide range of local stakeholders and other relevant and competent national institutions, such as the Slovenian State Forests Ltd. and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. The official process is planned to start during the year 2020.

2.2.3. Existing stakeholder involvement

There is some history of public engagement for both component parts, with more activities taking place in Krokar. For the area of Krokar, a group of expert institutions that have important stakes in the management of the area has been established for consultations. This group involves representatives of Slovenia Forest Service (Regional Unit), Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, State Forests Ltd, Municipality of Kočevje, and Public Institution Zavod Kočevsko (regional tourist organisation). This cooperation is positive and allows for relatively smooth communication among the major stakeholders. However, sometimes some of the local stakeholders feel they are not involved in the decision-making. Wide-ranging public participation events are usually held through different projects that Slovenia Forest Service participates in (Interreg, LIFE, Cohesion projects). The lack of clearly designated manager of the component parts is currently one of the main impediments to more regular and structured engagement, as the responsibilities of different institutions are not clear yet. Snežnik component part has seen less public engagement activities. This is partly due to its larger size and division into more management units.

BEECH POWER project allowed the commencement of structured and sustained stakeholder involvement through the activities in all three thematic work packages. The project will continue to allow for these activities to take place throughout its duration. It is planned that by the time the project is completed a management structure will be established, which will be able to take on the activities that were started within the project.

2.2.4. Visitor and tourism pressure

There is currently a pronounced lack of control and proper signage around both component parts, which allows visitors to use illegal trails and move outside of marked paths. Moreover, some tourist providers are offering experience and adventures in protected areas, where such activities are not permissible. These situations are expected to be resolved after the component parts get the status of nature reserves, solid management plans, and an official manager, which will be able to exercise control over the areas. Yet, given that this is quite widespread currently, it might bring the manager into conflict with other stakeholders.

The UNESCO brand is attracting new visitors to both areas, which will require more active and comprehensive direction and redirection of visits, as well as potentially some new constructions in the vicinity of both areas, where conflicts between different stakeholder groups could be expected. New ways for experiencing nature (hiking, biking) to lessen the environmental impact will have to be established.

2.2.5. Ownership

The vast majority of forests in those extensions are state-owned. However, the extension will still result in the loss of economic income for the state-owned manager of the state forests (Slovenian Forests Ltd.). The loss of revenue and ways to find alternatives are at the core of their concerns about the extension (unofficial at this point). However, there is also a concern that some parts of the extended buffer zones, where spruce plantations are still present, could be places where bark beetle outbreaks could spread to the surrounding forests and thus cause additional economic damage on forests outside the reserves.

2.2.6. Other challenges

There are still some illegal, small-scale logging occurring in some state forests. Currently, this is considered negligible and happens outside of reserves. However, with the extension of buffer zones and the establishment of nature reserve, these activities will become more topical and could cause conflicts with local populations.

The increased presence of migrants and refugees, crossing the border illegally and trespassing through Snežnik reserve is likely going to cause some conflicts between law enforcement agencies, migrants, users of the space (i.e. hikers, bikers), and nature conservationists.

Hunting is still a contentious topic, particularly in Snežnik, but with the extension of buffer zone, could become also in Krokar. The effect of overgrazing by game species on natural regeneration has not been conclusively established yet in both areas and the complete exclusion of hunting could have unintended consequences, while on the other hand, the disturbance of natural processes due to hunting, can be significant.

2.3. Challenges - Slovakia

2.3.1. Current protection regimes and management situation

The Slovak part of the World Heritage Site currently consists of four components in two component clusters, three of which - Havešová, Rožok and Stužica-Bukovské vrchy, are part of the National Park (NP) Poloniny (cluster Poloniny), the fourth component Vihorlat is part of the Protected Landscape Area (PLA) Vihorlat (cluster Vihorlat).

The management regime of the protected areas in Slovakia is regulated by the Act No. 543/2002 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection. This act specifies that the strictest, fifth level of protection is applied in these natural reserves. This prohibits any forest management activities (including salvage logging), game management activities, fishing, constructions, etc. Putting up tents or bivouacking is not allowed either. For other activities, such as scientific research, building and marking tourist trails and nature trails, etc., it is necessary to obtain a permission. Visitors may move along the marked tourist trails only. In relation to the above mentioned facts, it is possible to say that natural processes in this component cluster take place without significant human influence.

2.3.2. Boundary modifications and rezonation

As it turned out, there were discrepancies in the original nomination between the text and map sections. These differences led to unclear identification component part boundaries and the related obstacles to ensuring legal protection and site management.

On 14 October 2019, the Government of the Slovak Republic by Resolution no. 508/2019 approved the proposal to modify the boundaries of the Slovak components of the UNESCO site and their buffer zones, prepared by Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic and State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic.

According to this proposal, in Poloniny cluster there are 4 components - Havešová, Rožok, Stužica-Bukovské vrchy and newly proposed component Udava (part of the original component Stužica). In Vihorlat cluster there are two components - Vihorlat and newly proposed component Kyjovský prales.

2.3.3. Existing stakeholder involvement

Currently, the main conflicts are identified between the forestry sector including private forest owners and nature conservation sector, representing mostly by State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic (the Poloniny National Park, Vihorlat Landscape Protected Area, Východné Karpaty Landscape Protected Area). The disagreements will likely be resolved with governmental decrees and legislation, however the communication is still insufficient. The disagreements with private forest owners have partly been addressed through the rezonation and boundary modifications of the Slovak component parts, however, the forest owners and forest enterprises could remain a contentious stakeholder. Another current conflict is between the state and some environmental and nature conservationist NGOs and activist groups, which oppose the UNESCO designation and boundary modification processes, while also sending complaints to World Heritage Centre in Paris.

At the national level, it is necessary to present sufficiently the interest of the state to have such a territory of extraordinary value registered in the UNESCO World Heritage list and to ensure its conservation as a priority. However, it is not sufficient to merely register a site on the UNESCO World Heritage list and restrict activities that could be harmful. At the same time, there is a real interest in work with stakeholders at all



levels to define objectives and priorities in the territory, the instruments to achieve them and to determine responsibility for their implementation. The nature conservation, forestry and tourism approaches that can be used or applied in the region should be clearly defined. In parallel, financial mechanisms need to be established to compensate for increased costs or losses in the transition from normal land use and resources to the required finer, near-natural, or non-intervention regime. This can also contribute to involving other stakeholders in the process (e.g. non-state forest owners). Legislative and economic prerequisites for the development of infrastructure in the region are expected, which will bring greater interest to tourists and the local population and will help to start the sustainable development of the region. This will create the preconditions for reducing regional unemployment, improving the socio-economic situation, reducing tensions and lead to a more positive perception of the UNESCO brand.

2.3.4. Visitor and tourism pressure

The area is located on the north-eastern edge of Slovakia, in a region with high natural potential and poor socio-economic situation. In the second half of the last century, the state took care of building industry and raising the standard of living of the local population. After the political and social changes in the 1990s, many manufacturing sectors and large employers have been reduced and gradually disappeared. Most jobs remained linked to agriculture, forestry, and tourism. A large part of the locals went to work in other regions of Slovakia or abroad.

Of the current industries, forestry is the region's economically strongest and largest sector, but its further expansion is strongly limited by nature protection requirements. It has no potential to employ more people than it currently employs, nor will it attract new people to the region.

On the other hand, the tourism sector still has the greatest potential for development in the territory. The location of the site and the proximity of two neighbouring states, Poland and Ukraine, with many similarly attractive offers, have not been used in the last years. Here, visitors/clients can be attracted by the UNESCO brand (existing and upcoming components of "beech forests", and other monuments registered in the UNESCO cultural heritage, such as wooden churches and so on).

At the local level, active cooperation and the creation of regional associations around the UNESCO site and the use of this brand for sustainable development are required. Completion and modernization of the necessary infrastructure, improvement of conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises in various sectors (tourism, woodworking, traditional crafts ...) is expected and in cooperation with state authorities to look for opportunities for employing forestry workers in other sectors. There is also a need for greater promotion of the UNESCO site, support for setting up interest associations and civic initiatives around the site, and creating a more favourable environment for visitors to the region. The benefits will increase local government revenue from local taxes and increased interest of residents in the region.

2.3.5. Ownership

With the rezonation and boundary modifications most of the private forest owners have been excluded from the UNESCO property. Their prior inclusion, without first acquiring their consent was one of the main issues with the original nomination and inscription of Slovak forests on UNESCO List. World Heritage property in



Slovakia is now state-owned, however there are still some areas in the buffer zones which are owned by private owners. Some of these will be bought by the state, others have agreed for their forests to be included in these areas. Sustained stakeholder engagement will have to be maintained.

2.4. Conclusion

Slovenian and Slovak components of this UNESCO designation contain some of the most valuable beech forests in Europe, while the management situation in these components is not yet fully resolved. Both Slovenian components currently lack proper funding and clear management structure. This is further exacerbated with buffer zone extension procedures, which could result in escalation of current disagreements and emergence of new conflicts, which will need to be managed to ensure the preservation of the sites' integrity and Outstanding Universal Value. Stakeholder involvement until now has been lacking in the case of Snežnik, while good foundation is already present for Krokar. Through BEECH POWER project the stakeholder involvement will be further supplemented and will provide the basis for continuation by the manager, after the project finishes. Visitor and tourism pressure are currently seen as one of the most threatening activities to the sites' integrity and their OUV. Therefore, they will have to be carefully managed and the interactions with the tourism representatives led in a non-conflict way.

Slovak components have better established management structures, however these components also came through boundary modification procedures in 2019, which resolved some of the main conflicts with original sites. Nevertheless, some conflicts persist and in comparison to Slovenia they are in a more escalated state, which urgently requires action to deescalate situations. The relevant, competent authorities are disagreeing about some fundamental management issues, while constructive communication with private owners and numerous local stakeholders is almost non-existent. This will require concerted efforts in the future in order to be positively resolved.

3. Strategy for conflict resolution

3.1. Preventive approaches

It is important to recognise that individual perspectives are always framed and incomplete, as they are formed by the individual perceptions of the world. This can be studied through frame theory, which can result in a greater and deeper insights into the socio-spatial conflicts. Frame theory can be applied using frame analysis, which studies the internal dynamics of conflicts and how different actors dispute each other in order to gain hegemony over the dominant narrative (Lewicki *et al.*, 2003). Each frame is founded on a central organising idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue (Gamson, 1992). Thus, it functions as an interpretative lens that leads the attention to certain aspects of an issue. Frames, typically, also suggest the desired solutions, as well as what is regarded as facts, and which arguments, events and experience are considered relevant for understanding of the issue (Buijs *et al.*, 2011). To simplify, the socio-psychological frames are the lenses through which each human looks at the works around them. Therefore, the perceptions of the same situation can be entirely different, which can lead to conflicts.

3.1.1. Trainings for managers

It is important to be proactive at recognising potential conflicts and preventing their escalation. Therefore, the manager of protected areas should invest into trainings and education of their staff to be able to detect and recognise the signs of disagreements on their own. These trainings should be coupled with communication trainings to teach the staff how to calm down the situations.

The trainings will also give the manager and their staff the necessary skills and tools for effective preparation of a strategy for managing conflicts. These strategies need to be tailored to local situations and stakeholders, as the perceptions of their surroundings will vary from region to region.

This step will provide the necessary skills, as well as demonstrate a clear intention that the manager will work with people in a constructive way. The trainings should, therefore, cover both the skills necessary for engagement of stakeholders at targeted events, public consultations, workshops, and similar, as well as interactions in the field and guiding tours. Interpretation of nature and UNESCO World Heritage will also be key elements in the skillsets of managers and field staff.

The trainings should include rhetorics, transferring from prescriptive and consultation type communication (top-down) to inclusive and open participation processes and preparation of engaging communication materials. Ways for increasing the effectiveness of invitation procedures should also be explored.



Particular skill to train and acquire is active and empathetic listening, which is an effective and, in theory, simple method to employ. This method requires both parties to let the other express their views, while the other does not try to come up with counter arguments, but primarily tries to understand the view of the other. This method allows each side to try and understand how the other perceive the situation, not just on the surface, but also examining the underlying motivations. For this to be successful, the establishment of so called “safe space” is essential, to come up with common values, and use more subtle and step-by-step approaches. The aim is for each of the parties to summarise the point of the other in a way that is completely consistent with the view of the talked. This allows people to calm down, as is the case when people are heard and understood in their entirety. Thus opening the space for an actual discussion is crucial. It is important to understand as many details as possible about the positions of the other parties, since conflicts usually stem from disagreements in very small details. Especially, when the views strongly clash, this method requires a certain amount of discipline on the part of the listener, as keeping the conversation “polite” is important and does not take anything away from anyone. Heated discussion have physiological effects on human bodies, as they induce stress and fighter-flight instincts (“survival mode”), which redirect the blood flow away from the brain to the muscles, making it even more difficult to concentrate on the issues at hand. Therefore, without neutralisation of the situation, the conversations often stop.

Conflicts have to be addressed with a strategy in mind and need to be humanised, to avoid dehumanisation of opponents. Agreement can come only after understanding each other, which first requires listening. The negotiations can happen only after the understanding has already been achieved, where the potentials for each party to loosen some of its positions.

The active listening strategy follows three easy steps:

1. Ask for the opinion
2. Attentively listen
3. Summarise the point of the other’s response (main thoughts and feelings)
 - a. “Do I understand you correctly?” “Did I understand you correctly from what you said?”
 - b. If the other agrees that the understanding has been achieved (“Yes, exactly” response is ideal), the roles (listener, talker) can now reverse
 - c. If the understanding is not complete yet, the three steps are to be repeated, until the other is satisfied with the summary

3.1.2. Participation processes

After the staff has been properly trained, the gained knowledge should be put into proactive practice and used to carry on engaging participation activities. Active participation processes, such as regular consultations, workshops, meetings, and other events, where all relevant stakeholders can be involved in the happenings in the protected areas and around them are incredibly important to minimise potential conflicts. Some additional trainings for managers might be needed in areas, where the reliance on top-down style management has been prevalent.

The participative processes should follow the below-specified general steps:



1. Identification of stakeholders

- The stakeholder lists should be a living thing and should be updated regularly, with addition of stakeholders after their expressed wish possible at any time.

2. Invitation of stakeholders to meetings

- Various technique to increase the turnout should be explored and applied.

3. Meetings

- Introductory meeting
 - i. Where does every stakeholder see him/herself in relation to the protected area?
 - ii. Open Space for everyone to air their opinions
 - iii. The manager team should also clearly present their plan, which should outline their intentions for the future and then discuss this with the assembled stakeholders.
- At least annual meetings (if needed they can be organised more often)
 - i. The meetings should not only be linked to different project activities, but part of the normal management of the component parts.

The participative processes build relationships, and it is the relationships in the background that play an important role in shaping peoples' perceptions and their responses to any situation. These processes also show that the manager takes the stakeholders' opinions in account and that they care about the varied needs. While the participative activities can be time demanding, they build a base of support in the local communities and thus increase the legitimacy of the manager, in the long run paving the way for more inclusive and smooth managing of the areas. Therefore, the participation processes are key for conflict management and should be incorporated into management plans of both Slovenian component parts. While the participation activities can be used also for resolution of some conflicts, they are the main tool that any manager has to avoid conflicts altogether and ahead of time.

3.2. Deescalation strategies

Once the conflict has already flared up, there are a number of techniques to deescalate the situation. Usually, people have their favourite or default method, to which they instinctively stick. However, this method is not always the right one to employ. These reactions are often automatized and are founded in individual personalities, and changing them requires levels of maturity and discipline. Particularly, argumentation, even though still very popular, is very often completely ineffective, as people are not interested in just accepting the facts that are perceived as the other's views. Removal from the scene, often with a thought "The smarter will stop first", protects the person using it, but it does not lead to the successful resolution of the conflict. Generally, there are four formalised procedures for resolving existing conflicts, if they the need to involve an external party is unavoidable, which are court procedures, arbitration, entry into the political arena, and mediation.

Court procedures are well-established processes for resolution of conflicts and usually the last attempt to resolve differences in a peaceful manner. The procedures are usually lengthy, expensive, and result with one side triumphing over the other. Therefore, the conflict itself is usually not actually resolved, only the



winner is declared and the decision is binding for all involved parties. Due to these reasons, we recommend the choice of one of the other options (Vrbica et al., 2007).

Arbitration goes back to Roman law. This type of procedure allows the designation of an arbiter for every specific dispute. Those arbiters could be private citizens held in high regard, but not necessarily lawyers. All involved parties are bound to respect the decision of the arbiter. Thus there are two agreements necessary to start the procedure, one between the parties to respect the decision, and the second between the parties and the arbiter. Arbitration is an out-of-court procedure, where the participants leave the decisions to a specific person or persons and bind themselves to abide by the arbitration tribunal's decision. The number of arbiters is usually odd. It is a very formalised option, which produces a legally binding outcome, which is on the same level as Court Order (Dolamič Gričar, 2012). Similarly to court procedures, our suggestion would be to avoid this option, if at all possible, although it could be preferable to the court process.

Another option is to enter the political arena, either by joining an existing party or forming a new one and try to win a seat in a parliament or city council or similar. The conflicts can then be resolved on those newly attained levels. However, admittedly this option is fraught with uncertainty and does not have a prescribed procedure or outcome.

Mediation is a voluntary, out-of-court procedure, in which the parties in dispute agree, with the help of a neutral third party, to find a solution in an equitable way, which would be agreeable to all involved parties. Due to its nature, mediation leads to solutions, which are usually more straightforward, cheaper and adapted to the wishes of the clients, especially compared to court procedures. The main point of a mediation procedure is that the decision about the dispute taken is not by a third party, but the clients in the process come to it on their own. Mediation is therefore more than just negotiation, as it includes meticulously planned and structured phases of the procedure (Vrbica et al., 2007).

3.2.1. Pre-mediation procedures

In cases, where despite or in absence of the preventive measures outlined above conflicts still escalate to the point where they are threatening the normal functioning and productive relationships in the area, mediation procedures should be the preferred option. While for Slovenian component parts, no currently recognised conflicts are at the stage where such procedures would be necessary, these provisions should still be included in management plans, as future situations might require them. In order for mediation procedure to have the highest chance of success, a pre-mediation process should be done first. Both pre-mediation and mediation procedures provide a way for reestablishment of relationships and communication, which were lost due to the conflict.

This process involves a large amount of work, starting with identification of stakeholders and then followed by research of each stakeholder's background opinions, views, perceptions, needs, and so on. Since mediation is a voluntary procedure, the pre-mediation process is also focussing on obtaining the consensus of all stakeholders to participate in the process.

3.2.2. Mediation procedure

If all the consensuses are obtained, the mediation procedure can start in earnest. It should be led by a team of professional mediators and both the managers and the stakeholders should give their full cooperation in order to maximise the chances of resolving the situation in the best way for everyone involved.

All mediations are:

- Voluntary,
- Private and confidential,
- Clients in the procedure alone reach a decision on how to resolve the dispute,
- Mediator is neutral, cannot judge or express his/her own opinions,
- Mediator is impartial and independent.

Mediation procedure can differ in the involvement of the mediator, from passive listening of dialogue and intervening only when the discussions become too heated, to more active role with mediators posing questions themselves. Mediation is generally quicker, cheaper, and better for the protected area managers, and any other clients, than court procedures, as it is only successful if the “win-win” situation can be achieved, rather than “winner-loser” outcomes in the courtrooms. Participation processes are still at core of the mediation processes. However, it is important to keep in mind the setting of different places, as mediation is much more commonly practiced in countries like Germany and the UK, while in the south-eastern, eastern and parts of central Europe, it is much less common.

Mediation always delves into the background and the foundation of the issues, where only consultations with only an attorney are insufficient. Therefore, even the pre-mediation procedures are already directed towards calming and deescalating situations.

Environmental mediations are specific, due to complexity of situations and involve delegated representatives, as they affect large numbers of people, which cannot be all present at discussions. These procedures usually involve negotiating with authorities, private and public interests and include high interest of the media. Nevertheless, the confidentiality of the process is not compromised. One of the main concerns and motivators of environmental mediations is the possibility that a permanent damage to the environment can occur if the situation is not resolved. As all mediation process, this is also a voluntary process, which usually also includes a pre-mediation process. The complexity of the situations requires extensive preparation and usually, at least two to three mediators leading the procedure. The solution has to be acceptable to all and is binding.

The procedures take from weeks to months, which can result in the issue of financing them, and the distribution of costs between parties, which are more often than not at very different positions of power and vastly different financial backings (e.g. NGOs vs multinational corporations).



3.3. Suggestions for pilot areas in Slovenia and Slovakia

3.3.1. Slovenia

The two Slovenian component parts currently do not face insurmountable conflicts on the ground. The conflicts or potential conflicts mainly revolve around land-use issues, possible restrictions in the use of the space, and potential conflicts with marketing of the area. Therefore, the key to prevention of these issues and possible disagreements is well targeted, inclusive, and effective communication. Particularly, since the extensions of buffer zones and additional protection regimes are currently discussed proper communication and public participation in these processes are crucial. Additional complication is that the protection regimes within both Slovenian component parts are slightly different, with visiting of Snežnik possible on marked trails, while Virgin Forest Krokar is off limits to all. The differences in the regimes can often cause misconceptions about unfairness to local stakeholders, as certain activities are allowed or prohibited in the other area. Clear and justified communication is therefore key again.

3.3.1.1. Preventive approaches

The trainings for managers and associated capacity building is recognised as incredibly important in Slovenia, as there are very few institutions and individuals currently with needed skillsets to manage UNESCO World Heritage and deal with the challenges that brings alongside it. The trainings for Slovenian managers, besides covering the basic topics, mentioned in the chapter above, should also focus on some specifics for each of the two component parts.

Specifically, the managers and staff for Krokar component part will need to focus most on the interactions and communications with tourist providers and control over the existing illegal trails within the component part. Particular group to engage are the photographers. Collaborations on the expert and decision making levels are already in place, but on the ground communications can at times be lacking.

The situation at Snežnik reserve is more complex with two relevant municipalities, less well developed touristic development plans and wishes and a higher number of visitors (mostly hikers) within the component part. There is currently a lower amount of public interest and lower level of interactions and engagement going on at Snežnik, than in Krokar.

Generally, for both Slovenian component parts, it is crucial to provide the staff with communication training, including rhetorics, transferring from prescriptive and consultation type communication (top-down) to inclusive and open participation processes and preparation of engaging communication materials. Perhaps, even more importantly there should be a training in conflict resolution techniques organised.

Particularly for Snežnik component, resources should also be invested in increasing the effectiveness of invitation procedures, as recently very low engagement was observed.

The foundation for effective participation activities are already established in Slovenia. For both Slovenian component parts stakeholders have already been identified and invited to participate, during the UNESCO nomination process and updated within BEECH POWER project.

For Krokar component part, stakeholder engagement on the level of expert and public institutions is already established, more focus should be directed at involving wider general audiences and smaller civil society organisations. Snežnik reserve currently suffers from less inclusive, widespread, and generally lacking public participation. First steps towards improving stakeholder participation and addressing the here identified gaps were already taken within BEECH POWER project.

Currently, meetings and invitations are done mostly through project activities, whereas regular engagement has not been established yet. Partly due to this, the turnout to the meetings and responses of stakeholders can be very mixed, with effectiveness performance of invitations being significantly lower in Snežnik component part. Therefore, efforts should be spared to increase the invitations effectiveness and build trust.

3.3.1.2. Deescalation strategies

Currently, no conflicts or disagreements are considered to have escalated to the point that they cannot be resolved using the preventive actions outlined above. Should any conflicts reach that level in the future, we suggest the use of mediation procedures, as per guidance outlined above.

3.3.2. Slovakia

A long-term and significant problem of the Slovak part of the WH site is management in relation to forests and their owners and managers. Currently, the process of extending and adjusting the boundaries of component parts is ongoing. This is due to the existing inconsistencies in the original nomination proposal and the application of practical protection of the area, as well as the extension to another valuable area. The conflicts between the administrator of the protected areas and the landowners deepened, the ambiguous attitude of the national authorities together with the unfulfilled expectations of forest owners led to the withdrawal of some private owners from the nomination. Another problem is a different view of conservationists and foresters on the management of the buffer zones. This is further enhanced with the current extension of the component parts and their buffer zones. There is also a conflict between the state and some environmental and nature conservationist NGOs and activist groups, which oppose the UNESCO designation and boundary modification processes. Conflicts may also result from efforts to boost tourism activities and increase visitor numbers.

3.3.2.1. Preventive approaches

Given the current status clear communication and better setup of existing processes are needed. Currently, the lack of communication skills is significantly hampering the possibilities for success, which is why the managers and staff of both clusters will have to focus most on the interaction and communication with forest owners and managers and the harmonization of real forest management and the required state of the site. Similarly, better communication with NGOs and the general public is needed, as the lack of awareness of the various interest groups often leads to unprofessional discussion and argumentation in problem solving.

For both Slovak clusters, it is important to provide the staff with communication training, including rhetorics, transferring from prescriptive and consultation type communication (top-down) to inclusive and open participation processes and preparation of engaging communication materials. Perhaps, even more importantly there should be a training in conflict resolution techniques organised. More attention should also be paid to the effectiveness of the invitation procedures, as there may be a decrease in interest in further cooperation after a long negotiation period without expected benefits for local stakeholders.

Nevertheless, some good practices do already exist. For both Slovak clusters, stakeholders have already been identified during the UNESCO nomination process and updated within BEECH POWER project. Through the BEECH POWER project a two-day workshop was organised which allowed different stakeholders to discuss their issues in a structured manner, which is a step into the right direction.

Currently, meetings and invitations are mostly held to negotiate with landowners or to determine site boundaries as well as through project activities, while regular engagement has not yet been established. Partly for this reason, attending meetings and stakeholders' reactions can be very mixed, while the effectiveness of invitations can be reduced. Different technique to increase the turnout should be explored and applied. As per guidance above, it is suggested to widen the scope of stakeholder events and make sure all views are represented in addresses as soon as possible, to minimise the possibilities for conflicts to develop in the first place.

3.3.2.2. Deescalation strategies

While some conflicts can be considered getting out of hand already, there are still opportunities to address the using the preventive approaches outlines above. If it will not be possible to mitigate the conflicts in these ways, out-of-court procedures shall be applied, with preference given to mediation procedures.

3.4. BEECH POWER Activities - best practice example

3.4.1. Conflict resolution workshops (Krokar and Snežnik)

In order to jointly identify risks and develop solutions for existing and expectable conflicts between stakeholders, two conflict resolution workshops were organised in Slovenia, within the BEECH POWER project. SFS organised two workshops with local stakeholders on the topic of conflict resolution for each of the two Slovenian WH component sites (Krokar and Snežnik). Both workshops were targeted to the local participants, space users, and landowners, or managers and followed the same format. The workshop results are necessary for the preparation of Deliverable D.T2.1.3 (Strategy for conflict management) and Output O.T2.2 (Strategy for conflict management in buffer zones of WH beech forests). The workshops were entitled “How to reach a solution, when we have different views?” and took place in Kočevje on 21st November 2019 for component part Krokar and in Loška dolina on 11th December 2019 for component part Snežnik.

Both workshops commenced with an introductory round and a discussion on why certain disagreements escalate into conflicts, as well as how to best recognise different disagreements in early stages and mitigate them. Three communication techniques for neutralising the emotional charge of conflict situations were presented and a practical exercise was conducted in their use. Additionally, different and various approaches for resolution of environmental conflicts were presented, with a focus on environmental mediation.

The workshop in Kočevje was attended by 14 participants from a wide range of different institutions and variety of stakeholders. The workshop in Loška dolina was attended by 12 participants, which were mainly local and regional foresters, employed or associated with SFS.

3.4.2. Other workshops

3.4.2.1. Situational analysis workshops (Krokar, Snežnik - Slovenia)

As part of thematic work package 1, situational analysis workshops, using Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation, were organised in Kočevje (Krokar) and Ilirska Bistrica (Snežnik). The workshop resulted in regional situation analyses, which will be the basis for strategy development in later stages of the project. The workshops allowed the local stakeholders to discuss what was done well so far and what could be improved, as well as identify elements for local wellbeing, ecosystem services, objects that need to be conserved. Threats and their contributing factors to the beech forests were addressed in detail too.

3.4.2.2. MARISCO workshops (Krokar, Snežnik, Vihorlat, Poloniny - Slovenia and Slovakia)

Participatory vulnerability and risk assessment workshops for forest reserves Snežnik, Krokar, Vihorlat, and Poloniny were organised as two full two day events, in Ljubljana (Slovenia) on 18th-19th November 2019 and



in Kaluža (Slovakia) on 2nd-3rd December 2019. In preparation for the workshop a field trip to the buffer zone of the Virgin Forest Krokav WH component part was organised on 15th November 2019 for interested parties, as well as a lecture about Snežnik forest reserve on 17th November 2019 (due to unfavourable weather conditions, field trip was impossible). Field trips to Vihorlat were organised on 1st December and 4th December 2019.

The field trip to Krokav component part was attended by representatives of SFS and project lead partner (Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development - HNEE), altogether six people. The participants were able to visit the component's buffer zone, get acquainted with pressures *in situ* and learn about the wider surroundings of the component and the present infrastructure. The lecture about Snežnik component part was attended by nine participants, from SFS, NFC, HNEE, EWS, as well as the consultant engaged for facilitation of the workshop.

The field trip to Vihorlat component part was attended by representatives of NFC, project lead partner (HNEE), representatives of Vihorlat PLA (Protected Landscape Area), belonging to the associated project partner SNC SR (State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic), as well as the consultant engaged for facilitation of the workshop, altogether eight people. The second field trip was attended by representatives NFC and SFS. Participants visited the core and buffer zones of the component part, where they learned about the state of beech forests and their conservation status, current management and impacts, and learn about the wider surroundings of the component part.

The participatory vulnerability and risk assessment workshop utilised the MARISCO methodology, upon suggestions of the project lead partner. An external expert was involved to lead and facilitate the workshops, as detailed knowledge of the method is required for its implementation. The workshops were geared towards experts on both domestic and international levels and state-level institutions.

The first workshop day focussed on identification of conservation objects, their key ecological attributes, stresses, as well as their associated threats and further contributing factors. The second day revolved around assessments of criticality of stresses and threats, with particular emphasis on the ability to buffer these impacts and conserve the outstanding universal value (OUV) of both component parts.

1. Conclusions

Managing different stakeholders and potential conflicts is one of the main challenges any manager of a protected area faces, even more so if the protected areas are strictly protected and globally recognised as outstanding, which brings that much more attention to them. This can often create an interesting and challenging conundrum for primeval and ancient beech forests across Europe, as they have the recognised outstanding universal value mostly because they have never been used or been left mostly aside throughout the history. Yet, now they have the mandate from UNESCO to increase general awareness and educate the public. This task often brings with it increased appetites and possibilities for using the component parts for wider regional development, mostly through the development of tourism.

The managers of individual component parts, therefore, face a wide variety of issues and an even wider variety of different stakeholders, needs, requirements, and wishes for the use of these areas. Especially because the World Heritage designations is of global importance to the entire humanity, managing these interests and keeping them from escalating into conflicts is one of the greatest challenges the managers will face. In this document, we have analysed the situations in Slovenia and Slovakia, in some of the component parts that have been inscribed originally, to some that were added to the list in the latest extension, a decade after the original inscription.

All efforts should be focussed on preventing the conflicts from happening in the first place. Such prevention can most easily be achieved by engaging in coordinated, planned, meaningful, and sustained stakeholder involvement. Through BEECH POWER project we aim to show this approach in practice as well and thus this deliverable is closely linked to a Guideline for stakeholder involvement and related communication strategy (D.T2.1.2) for the same component parts in Slovenia and Slovakia and the more general Strategy for the active involvement of stakeholders (O.T2.1). Based on these project outputs, we will continue to work on this topics, and by the end of 2020 also prove a general Strategy for conflict management in buffer zones of WH beech forests (O.T2.2), which will be able to be applied across the entire designation.

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D.T2.1.3: Strategy for Conflict Management

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