



# INTERNAL EVALUATION OF PILOT ACTIONS

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of structured questionnaires and interviews was to gather information on pilot actions results, provided in T2 thematic work package, which provided 8 Sustainable Tourism Action Plans in 8 different protected areas participating in CEETO project.

The purpose of the survey is to use received answers in preparation of a tool to support policy makers at international/national/regional level in the process of shaping the tourism planning and management within and around PAs and structure them into the CEETO Guidelines.

Data for structure of Questionnaires and Interviews was sourced from the Action Plan Strategies and also External Evaluation Report. The external expert (from PP8 RDC Koper) worked on input to assess through questionnaires and interviews, how local stakeholders have experienced, shared and supported pilot actions.

## 1.1. METHODOLOGY

Following methodology was applied:

### 1.1.1. Questionnaires for PA internal evaluation

We prepared a questionnaire with 2 sets of questions: 1 common to all pilots with base principles; 1 focused on each specific pilot. Each PP involved in pilots submitted 4 questionnaires to relevant targets (Associates, PA managers, local actors).

Division of the Questionnaires was following:

#### General data about the intervieweed

1. Name & Surname
2. Organisation
3. Sector (public, private, NGO)
4. Age & Sex
5. Education
6. Your role/position in Protected Area

#### **General Part - Part 1**

7. Management & planning
8. Decision making process
9. Research & monitoring

#### **Specific Part - Part 2**

10. Evaluation of the pressures and threats
11. Focus on CEETO Pilot Actions
12. Some future activities foreseen - data for Guidelines preparation



### 1.1.2. Structured interviews for PA internal evaluation

On the same basis were prepared also questions for interviews. There were 2 sets of questions: 1 common and one focused on each specific pilot. Each PP involved in pilots carried out three interviews (PA managers, local actors). Division of the Interviews was following:

#### GENERAL: data on intervieweed

##### **Management & planning**

1. Main PA's characteristics that influence on management of PA?
2. What was the reason to start the pilot action? Were pilot actions planned properly regarding the time frame, funds and human resources?
3. How did the interviewers describe the role of government/national ministries in preparing strategies and action plans for protected areas 1?

##### **Decision making process**

4. Were stakeholders properly engaged in the activities? What they think about their role and effect of on protected area management? Have been properly informed, involved and consulted?

##### **Research / monitoring**

5. What was the opinion of the interweavers about the monitoring tools?
6. By their opinion what were the main obstacles & problems whilst implementing an action plan or strategy?
7. Do they gave any recommendations/ opinion/remarks? What do they expect to find in CEETO guidelines for policy makers?

#### SPECIFIC in relation to the particular protected area and CEETO PA

### 1.1.3. Report on internal evaluation of Pilot Actions

The Report include the description of the survey, results of the 32 questionnaires and 24 interviews, and an analysis of results (both statistical data and qualitative evaluations) for single Pilot Action and for the whole project area.



## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

There were 35 stakeholders from public, private and NGO sector who participated in the survey. In majority cases the results showed good gender and age range with the interviewees, good sectorial coverage (public, private & NGO), and involvement of different organisations (Mountain Rescue Services, Regional Associations, private companies and tourism actors, PA representatives, guides, Municipalities representatives, environmental NGO's, farmers associations, Tourism organisers, local community representatives, business support institutions, etc.). Except in the case of Medvednica Nature Park, there was relatively good knowledge of each area. In the Italian pilot area arose some problems connected with the understanding of the foreign language (questionnaires in English language).

### 2.1. Management and planning have shown

There was a positive response of the dissemination of information regarding CEETO pilot actions. Improvement of the motivation of the residents within the pilot area to participate more actively in projects such as CEETO project.

Surveyed stakeholders agree to a certain extent, that the government at all levels supports protected areas. All respondents positively assess the results achieved by the protected area in the last two-years. The stakeholders accepted and actively participated in the CEETO project initiatives. However, not all respondents would be willing to participate in the further project implementation process.

The prevailing view was that protected areas should continue with the initiatives already implemented, and the majority of respondents wanted to play an active role in the activities included in the action plan. Resistance of local populations and landowners is still noticeable. In some cases were the lack of budget and time seen as a threat to more efficient implementation of the various tasks in the pilot areas.

### 2.2. Risk and pressures factors

We have found that tourism, recreation and transport, in comparison with traditional land use, make pressure on the environment. Tourism and recreational activities are gaining in popularity, so some of the negative aspects are already present, particularly one of over-tourism in certain parts of the season. Conflicts between hunters and farmers on the one hand and tourism (locals and guests) on the other are present. Traffic is considered the most dangerous element especially in both Lagdei and Pietra di Bismantova, and not just here but also in other PA's. Climate change and the abandonment of traditional land use are threats to forests and agriculture.

External factors that could potentially threaten the feasibility, sustainability and tangible results of the CEETO pilot actions are changes in political attitude towards sustainability, liquidity problems and problems with permissions, lack of funds and lack of time because of just a few employees, administrative problems and also over ambitious objectives.

Most threats/pressures have remained constant or have increased slightly over the past five years. Regarding the issues of air traffic, stakeholders have opposing views; one believes that pressure has increase sharply whereas another believes that the issue of paragliding and drones seems to have decreased in the past five years. General tourism and recreation activities as well as waste disposal seem to have sharply increased over the past five years.



## 2.3. Communication & training/education

The respondents rated the participation of the media in education and information on the protection of natural and cultural heritage as encouraging and very positive. Overall, stakeholders are convinced that the implemented measures are very effective in enhancing and further promoting of sustainable and responsible tourism. Such activities should be planned also in the future as a permanent and continuous process. Therefore, participative approach is one of the most important elements for the success of sustainable and responsible development of PA's in the future. Participatory planning, however, requires more local content, ideas and support.

In addition to nature protection, protected areas also have different priorities and that is why an interdisciplinary and management approach is required. The five-year action plan, launched with the CEETO project, has some new approaches. Even when planning is appropriate, delays can cause unforeseen problems and negative impacts on project implementation.

At the CEETO workshops, involved stakeholders got some relevant information about the pilot area, proposed activities and future development plans. Involving stakeholders allowed good consultation, new ideas and initiatives. Stakeholders need to be involved in every step of the process. The managing body of the protected area should be responsible for monitoring of the implemented activities and evaluation of the performance. Respondents emphasized that regular involvement of local stakeholders is crucial to reach consensus. Another important point are the common goals between stakeholders and managing body.

A special importance should be given to the capacity building through the stakeholders' training, for local actors/stakeholders and the schools for sustainable tourism.

## 2.4. Involvement of stakeholders and monitoring

Respondents were satisfied with chosen tools and measures. Some have expressed their willingness to repeat the measures in the same pilot areas in the future. Through long-running dynamic workflows, new and unforeseen problems can arise that cannot be eliminated due to a rigid system plan and project-based rigid goals that make implementation difficult. Therefore, the results are often also not in line with expectations. In addition, the various stakeholders, priorities and political circumstances and changes, as well as the limited period, lack of human resources and lack of financial resources are critical points in planning and implementing. Supervision should be planned and directed with a clear vision of what the data is intended to be achieved.

Monitoring of tourists to the peaks (via summit books), creation of an information brochures to communicate alternative winter ski itineraries are seen as an example of the most important activities in the monitoring process. These all suggests that regular, well managed as well as transparent monitoring system should be applied as a tool in the PA's. Selected criteria should measure what and in which way was achieved or not. We would suggest concrete steps on this matter in the guidelines.

## 2.5. Resources

The following suggestions were given to improve the management process & resources as a social capita in PA's:

- more resources are needed including time, financial and expert staff;
- more financial support by project stakeholders is necessary;



- internal communication/knowledge transfer could be improved;
- better information for guests and more modern forms of communication are necessary.

## 2.6. Lessons learned

### POSITIVE :-)

- CEETO pilot actions received a positive response from all stakeholders involved and interviewed, particularly on the dissemination of information regarding CEETO pilot actions and its purpose;
- All respondents positively assess the results achieved by the protected area in the last two-years, despite active participation in the CEETO project initiatives by majority of them, not all would be willing to participate in the further project implementation process;
- Surveyed stakeholders agree to a certain extent, that the government at all levels supports their protected areas;
- Protected areas should continue with the initiatives already implemented, and the majority of respondents wanted to play an active role in the activities included in the action plan;
- Participation of the media in education and information on the protection of natural and cultural heritage was very encouraging and positive.

### NEGATIVE :-)

- Resistance of local population and landowners is still noticeable in some PA's;
- In some cases, lack of budget and time were the seen as a threat to more efficient implementation of the various tasks in the pilot areas;
- We have found that tourism, recreation and transport, in comparison with traditional land use, make pressure on the environment;
- Conflicts between hunters and farmers on the one hand and tourism (locals and guests) on the other are present;
- Traffic is considered one of the most dangerous elements to endanger nature quality in some PA's;
- Climate change and the abandonment of traditional land use are threats to forests and agriculture;
- Understaffing (people with relevant expertise) is one of the threats for poor performance on activities needed in some PA.

## 2.7. Suggestions and proposals for the Guidelines

Stakeholders in their responds on Questionnaires and Interviews as well as at the discussion on the Regional conference in Izola suggested that in the process of guidelines preparation, there is a need to insert both, some theoretical and more practical examples, which are also realistic and tested tools that can be transferred to other protected areas. Guidelines should ensure sustainable and responsible approach by all stakeholders in respective PA's. In PA's we should avoid just entertainment of visitors in the natural environment, without giving them lessons of the importance of this nature and messages how to jointly



protect it for the future generations. This means in a way that nature does not turn into a museum, but that represents kind of a “living class-room” for learning for both present and future generations. The principles of eco-friendly and sustainable tourism are welcome, and we must respect compliance with ECTS principles and guidelines. CEETO Guidelines must be coherent and practical with less than 60 pages.

## 3. RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES’ AND INTERVIEWS - individual responds by PA’s

### 3.1. Results from structured questionnaires

#### 3.1.1. GENERAL PART

Questionnaires were assessing against following charts:

5 = YES	3 = MOSTLY YES	1 = MOSTLY NO	0 = NO

- Good gender and age range with the interviewees in majority cases;
- Relatively good knowledge about the particular PA (not the case in Medvednica park);
- Some of them had some problems with a foreign language; and considered questionnaires as too long (one of the Italian parks).

#### 3.1.1.1. MANAGEMENT

- Improvement of inhabitants motivation within the protected areas towards more actively participation in projects like CEETO;
- Positive estimation of the spread of information in relation to the CEETO pilot actions;
- Majority of partners agree that the government, at all levels, supports satisfactory and to certain degree the protected area;
- All of the surveyed people assess positively, with “yes” and “mostly yes”, the results achieved by the protected area in the last two years;
- The majority of them defines as positive, with “yes” and “mostly yes” the quality of management planning activities, even if someone is not satisfied about the same management;
- Stakeholders assessed the results they achieved in the last two years in our PA with “yes” or “mostly yes” but all of them think, that the PA management do not have the necessary resources to meet the management objectives accordingly due to the lack of manpower and monetary resources;
- One respondent mentioned that the management process could be improved through better cross-sectoral cooperation that would improve the possibility of withdrawing funds for different projects from different sources of funding. Another ways to improve co-operation with the local levels, in particular City of Zagreb;





- Cooperation with the local community, municipalities and the tourism association is improving year by year. Co-financing of activities has also been improved;
- The general information about the protected area had to be given to the participants as they had no knowledge in relation to the IUCN category, or the budget allocated. Some information e.g. registration type, surface, founder and year of designation was known by some stakeholders;
- All stakeholders said that they were fully informed about the CEETO pilot action implementation process;
- The following suggestions were given to improve the management process:
  - more resources are needed including time, financial and staff;
  - more financial support by project holders is necessary;
  - internal communication/knowledge transfer could be improved;
  - better information for guests and more modern forms of communication are necessary.

### 3.1.1.2. RESEARCH AND MONITORING

- Familiarisation of CEETO project objectives is positive;
- Involvement in the project was semi-positive by responds of interviewees, but with the opportunity to fully express their opinion;
- Regarding the research and monitoring process all surveyed are familiar with the CEETO project and its objectives. They are all satisfied with the involvement in the participatory process and with the opportunity to fully express their opinion. They are also all very satisfied with the participatory process conclusion;
- Representatives of organizations involved in the survey are familiar with the CEETO project and its objectives, because they were all involved in the workshop on the spot (D.T2.1.3.). Later on, they were included differently, depending on the implemented activity;
- With the Municipality of Izola, we were working together on regulation of the Belvedere terraces, because it is a landowner of the area.

### 3.1.1.3. DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- All stakeholders welcome the initiatives starting with CEETO project and active involvement in it is relatively good, but not all interviewed would be prepared to participate in further process of implementation
- The protected area continues with initiatives already implemented and they want to play an active role in the activities included in the action plan.
- Resistance of local people, land owners is noticed within the particular PA's
- In some cases lack of budget and time available is also as one of the threats to more efficient performance and implementation of different tasks in PA
- All assessed the external factors that could potentially threaten the feasibility, sustainability and tangible results with “mostly yes”, the reasons for different results achieved as compared to and what was originally planned they mentioned: administrative problems (long decision



processes), lack of time and money, environmental issues, changes on regional level (political, tourism) and delays in the project itself.

- Some of the reasons for the difference between expected and achieved results are shortage of expert staff (of the certain field especially biologists), constructional work on the cable car and the fact that the cameras only capture the current situation and do not have the ability to store data which makes it difficult to analyse it.
- The external factors that could potentially threaten the feasibility, sustainability & tangible results of the CEETO pilot actions are the lack of interest in collaborating in a network, seeing in CEETO project an opportunity for improvement of the PA, the interference with other projects and the CEETO project has developed in too short a period of time.
- The common strategy to foster the development of sustainable tourism in the protected area has been developed during a participatory process held on 10 July 2018 at the Municipality of Izola. The basis of the strategy are three main objectives on which park management is also based - 1) nature conservation, 2) visitation and 3) sustainable development. Those objectives are defined also in an existing 10-year management plan of the park, which we are obligate to follow.
- External factors that could potentially threaten the feasibility, sustainability and tangible results of the CEETO pilot actions are changes in political attitude towards sustainability, liquidity problems and problems with permissions, lack of funds and lack of time because of just a few employees, administrative problems and also over ambitious objectives.
- The stakeholders strongly support (yes=5) that the PA should continue with the initiatives already implemented. Three of them, further noted that they will be fully (yes=5) involved in the Action Plan activities and one will be mostly involved in the process. Regarding their involvement in the managing body activities, one stakeholder would like to be involved, two would mostly like to be involved and one would mostly not be involved.
- The following factors that could threaten the results of the CEETO pilot actions were given by four stakeholders:
  - Vandalism;
  - Theft;
  - Stupidity/ignorance of people (tourists/locals);
  - Mass tourism that exceeds the pressure point;
  - Wrong use of landscape/development into the wrong direction e.g. forestry.
- Most threats/pressures have remained constant or have increased slightly over the past five years. Regarding the issues of air traffic, stakeholders have opposing views; one believes that pressure has increase sharply whereas another believes that the issue of paragliding and drones seems to have decreased in the past five years. General tourism and recreation activities as well as waste disposal seem to have sharply increased over the past five years. The extent of the pressures varies; only tourism and recreation as well as air traffic are seen as throughout or widespread in the Pilot Action Area. The impact for all threats is marked as moderate or mild whereas most pressure are seen as permanent (>100 years).



### 3.1.2. SPECIFIC PART

- Tourism and recreation together with abandonment of traditional land use and traffic are cited as pressures;
- Tourism and recreational activities become more and more popular, some negative aspects are already there (e.g. conflicts of use between hunters, farmers, etc. and tourism - locals and guests) and some will maybe arise in future;
- Traffic is considered the most dangerous element for both for the Lagdei plain and the Pietra di Bismantova: it increased a lot in the past and has a widespread extent and a high impact. This is considered also a threat for the next five years, with a long-term permanence;
- Climate change and abandonment of traditional use are also quoted as pressures and threats, especially referring to forests, carbon storage and agriculture;
- A special importance is given to the capacity building through the stakeholders' training, for local actors/stakeholders and the school for sustainable tourism;
- As for the importance of communication with the stakeholders, the respondents rated the encouraging the media participation in education and information on the protection of natural and cultural heritage;
- Overall, the stakeholders are convinced that the CEETO actions taken are highly or very highly effective in strengthening and further promoting sustainable and responsible tourism activities;
- Monitoring of tourists to the peaks (via summit books), creation of an information brochures to communicate alternative winter ski itineraries are seen as the most important activities;
- The importance to develop active tourism products varies from "very high" to "medium";
- The priority and effectiveness of the broader pilot action implementation for sustainable and responsible tourism development has, again, a range from "very high" to "medium";
- All the activities considered in the action plan are assessed as "very high", "high" and "medium";
- An interesting success is obtained by the use of the park logo as instrument for the promotion of the territory and enhance the local identity;
- A third point that was mentioned is the abandonment of traditional use/change of land use/grazing and mowing in our area, for e.g. the loss of traditional regional fences, overgrowing of mountain pastures, decrease of flower strips that causes a reduction of cultural and natural biodiversity and landscape (e.g. decrease of habitat for grassland birds, food for insects, etc.);
- The most important actions are a) the enhancement of media communication, b) the interactive map and c) the guided tours on different topics;
- Activities for 5 year plan ahead: Partner network, guided tours (need for more educated ranger, education), communication/promotion and information, events, sustainable and near natural tourism offers, creation of map with vulnerable areas to set up visitor steering plans and finally research on tourism capability of the region;
- Most respondents mentioned Tourism and recreation and traffic as threats in the Medvednica Nature Park;
- In the Nature Park Medvednica should be established a permanent partnership, support to stakeholders in developing visitor's contents, educating the members of the Stakeholder's Forum



and the wider public on sustainable tourism and other relevant topics and by continuing to cooperate with the stakeholders;

- The importance of continuous improvement for sustainable & responsible tourism development is given by the definition of an environmental certification system and the dissemination and promotion of the Emilia Central Parks Quality brand to agro-food companies;
- The main pressures and threats they have exposed in questionnaires are traffic and tourism with recreation. In the past 5 years both activities increased sharply, their extent is throughout the park with high impact on environment, ecosystem, diversity and health;

Furthermore, all believe that it is very (“very high” and “high”) important to implement broader actions e.g. cooperating with local people and other stakeholders. In relation to effectiveness and quality improvements, (human capacity building and visitor management) stakeholder’s opinion varies between “very high” and “high”; “improvement of visitor information” and “visitor monitoring” seem to be the most effective measures. In conclusion, stakeholders believe that in the next three years similar activities e.g. audio guided tours, improvement/new hiking trails, creation of new educational offers could be implemented in other parts of the PA.

## 3.2. Structured interview for Pilot Actions internal evaluation

### 3.2.1. MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

- Different priorities, not just nature protection should be embraced in the activities of PA;
- Plan next 5 year’s plans, started with CEETO PA, which was kind of trigger for new development;
- More local content, ideas, motivation and support needed - participatory planning;
- Delays have negative impact on the further implementation of the project;
- Even if planning is appropriate, delays can cause unforeseen difficulties that lead to problems in the timely implementation;
- The elongated shape, the large size, the needs to create a network between the management bodies of both public and private sectors. At the same time the Apennine mountain is considered a cultural barrier that must be considered by the management body;
- On average stakeholders said that the government are only partially involved in the strategies and action plans;
- Closer relationship between protected areas and government/national ministries when possible;
- Network of managing bodies is required;
- The PA is relatively small but has a massive flow of visitors during the summer season; hence, a focused management of visitor’s flow is required;
- For the most part, the improvement of visitor information was one of the main objectives and to give alternative possibilities to inappropriate behavior, like littering or hiking outside the hiking trails. The pilot action was planned properly. As the communication between the authority of the Biosphere Reserve and the different stakeholders is very important, a close cooperation and a good information exchanges was a top priority;



- For the most part, the improvement of visitor information was one of the main objective and to give alternative possibilities to inappropriate behaviour like littering or hiking outside the hiking trails. This was hoped to be achieved through e.g.:
  - implementation of an audio guide which provides a lot of information about the specifics of the area and the correct code of conduct
  - the signage in the area Zicker Berge was revised and renewed
  - by being present on site as a contact person is helping the visitors to remember the correct code of conduct
- Whether these measures were successful in the end is to be seen. A bigger period would be preferable to evaluate changes. This is also relevant in relation to lessons learned from research and monitoring. Furthermore, in relation, it would be favourable to plan more time for refining and readjusting because malfunctions in technical electronic equipment is most likely. From a touristic viewpoint, it became clear that de-furnishing the Zicker Berge is necessary, as benches and other resting places foster rubbish disposal.

### 3.2.2. DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- Proper information was distributed, stakeholders engaged and consulted, chances for ideas and initiatives offered at workshops;
- It is very important to involve the stakeholders in every step of the process, especially when specific interests of the stakeholders are at stake. But in charge of the impact assessment/ monitoring over implementation of the activities and evaluation of the performance, should be the management body of the PA;
- The surveyed people underlined that regular involvement of local stakeholders is fundamental to reach consensus inside the protected area. Another important point is to have common and shared objectives, obtained thanks to the match of the ideas/suggestion of the management bodies;
- On their conviction stakeholders have been properly involved in the decision-making process but is also true that depend on activity in progress. Some of the activity concerns one part of stakeholders, other another part. The involvement of stakeholders presents an essential condition for the successful implementation of the pilot activities;
- Through existing structures, e.g. European Charter for sustainable tourism (EUROPARC Certificate) the participatory process worked flawlessly. Next to regular meetings of the advisory council, multiple workshops took place during the CEETO Project Activities giving a wide range of stakeholder the possibility to get involved in the planning process.

### 3.2.3. RESEARCH & MONITORING

- Stakeholders engaged are satisfied of the tools and actions applied: some of them express the willingness to reply the actions in the future in the same pilot areas.
- In the course of dynamic work processes over a long time, new and unforeseen difficulties can arise, which cannot be addressed or reacted due to rigidly prescribed system/action plan and legal or project-based rigid targets that make implementation difficult. Therefore, outputs are often not as expected. Furthermore, different interest groups, priorities and political



circumstances and changes as well as time resources of involved persons, lack of human resources and lack of financial resources.

- Monitoring should be planned targeted with the clear vision what you want to obtain with achieved data.
- Poor interest of locals, general pressure of big tourism organisations in the area of Sölktäler with more touristic use without local use. There is an evidence of the lack of interest of locals.
- One of the main obstacles were the cultural habits, such as using car for short distances and with only one person on. These cultural differences are due to a fragmented territory where also the transfers are difficult.
- It is also important that CEETO guidelines are coherent with the ones of similar projects, i.e. the ECST: the idea is to preserve the positive aspects and to change the negative ones thanks to the suggestions of local stakeholders.
- Different opinions from different institutions about the same thing, which are, involved in creating solutions, inertia of the system, insufficient human resources capacity, slow administration and lack of clear implementation instructions.
- Both pilot actions have provided actions related to the principles of ecotourism and environmental sustainability, in line with the strategies and principles that emerged within the ECTS path launched this year. All helped for better management of protected areas for the development of sustainable tourism providing for collaboration between all stakeholders to develop a common strategy and an action plan for tourism development, based on a thorough analysis of the local situation.
- Some of the problems mentioned by the interviewees included:
  - Too big expectations;
  - lack of individual support programs;
  - personnel changes among decision-makers;
  - change in political framework conditions (for example, after new elections);
  - Lacking resources including staff;
  - lack of communication.
- In relation to the CEETO guidelines, interviewees mentioned the following expectations:
  - few theoretical examples, more practical examples, which are also realistic
  - some positively tested tools and some practical examples that are transferable to other Pas
  - The guidelines should ensure that nature is not turned into a museum. Avoid entertainment for visitors in natural environments. The “entertainment” should be limit to information.
- The implementation of an audio guide which provides a lot of information about the specifics of the area and the correct code of conduct is a wonderful tool to guide tourists in the PA, especially when personnel resources are few (digital way to interact with tourists) however the implementation of such technical tools can be frustrating and take time to debug. Issues occurred with different providers as well as cell phone operating systems. The brand “Partner of the Biosphere Reserve” is on a good path; the main result should be an increased awareness towards the Biosphere Reserve Southeast Rügen by local people, guests, stakeholders and politicians.