Following nature's design



Promoting cross-border cooperation
in nature conservation

EUROPARC
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EUROPARC Federation (eds.)

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Editorial

by Erika Stanciu



Europe is a complex continent with thousands of years of human interaction overlaying the natural world. The most obvious manifestations of that history are the many political borders that abound, and indeed change over time.

Nature however never recognizes these artefacts of human civilisation and our protected areas represent what is most special across our small, marvellous and populated continent and constitute a "shared European inheritance" of nature protection, yet in places borders create artificial barriers to the management of these valuable natural resources. The places where protected areas share a common political boundary bring these issues into sharp focus and need special consideration.

The EUROPARC Trans-boundary "Following natures design" Award was developed to respond to these particular needs. Its seeks to support a process of mutual understanding, often between countries where history created mutual distrust, and develop management tools to enable greater cooperative management..

Through the certification process, these trans-boundary protected areas can more effectively manage Europe's natural resources and aspire to be models of sustainable development based on principles that seek to harmonise the needs of people to use natural areas, yet fundamentally protect the intrinsic value of nature itself.

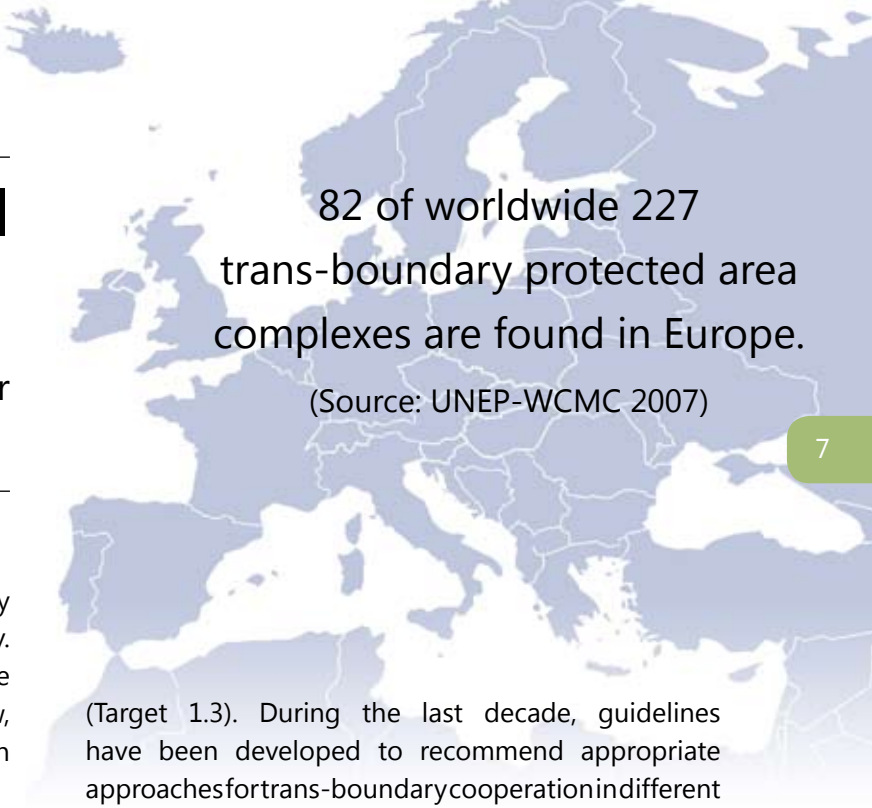
The TransParcNet, that has emerged from this trans-boundary work, is a living library of professional experience, which has evolved a vision of a "common future" for protected areas where people look beyond the boundaries and transfer knowledge and experience to become important players in nature protection and the social and economic development of their countries. I encourage you to read their inspiring stories.

"Borders are not natural, they were created by people. Therefore people should also be able to break them down for our cultural and natural heritage." (Brunner 2006)



Efforts of international organisations

Steps towards effective cross-border cooperation in nature protection



82 of worldwide 227 trans-boundary protected area complexes are found in Europe.

(Source: UNEP-WCMC 2007)

Ever since people began to create settlements, they made borders to protect their territory and property. Animals, rivers or mountain ranges do not recognise man-made borders; they follow nature's design. Now, if nature is to be effectively protected, cooperation across these man-made borders is necessary.

Over the past decades, an increasing number of protected areas have been created across or adjacent to political borders. The importance of trans-boundary cooperation in these areas is widely acknowledged. Through such cooperation, effective conservation of large-scale landscapes is achieved as well as routes for migratory species. A clear trans-boundary agreement also leads to a better control of cross-border problems such as pest or fire control, and contributes to the economic development of disadvantaged borderlands. Fundamentally, trans-boundary cooperation promotes international peace and understanding.

The Programme of Work on Protected Areas of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) calls for "strengthening collaboration between countries for trans-boundary protected areas conservation" (Target 1.3). During the last decade, guidelines have been developed to recommend appropriate approaches for trans-boundary cooperation in different protected area categories, for example, UNESCO's MAB Programme and the Ramsar Convention. Both have their own guidelines. Good practice guidelines on trans-boundary cooperation were issued by IUCN in 2001 to provide guidance for use in times of peace between the countries involved.

Guidelines of UNESCO and the Ramsar Convention

> UNESCO´s MAB Programme designated the first two trans-boundary biosphere reserves (TBR) in 1992. Since 1995 the "Seville Strategy" officially recommends the establishment of TBRs (Objective IV.2, 16). During the Seville + 5 Meeting in 2000 UNESCO's "Recommendations for the Establishment and Functioning of Trans-boundary Biosphere Reserves" were released.

> In 2005, the Ramsar Convention published guidelines for the designation and management of trans-boundary Ramsar sites. The Ramsar Handbook 17 covers the international cooperation amongst trans-boundary wetlands and river basins as well as the management of wetlands with importance for migratory species.

Literature

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EUROPARC's basic standards

A unique tool for improving cooperation efforts and awarding best practice

International organisations recommend cross-border cooperation in nature conservation. But collaborating with neighbouring countries brings its own particular challenges, adding another layer of complexity to the already difficult task of managing a protected area.

By creating the certification system, "Trans-boundary Parks – Following Nature's Design" the EUROPARC Federation has developed an innovative and unique system of basic standards for trans-boundary cooperation between adjoining protected areas in Europe. A set of 14 criteria, the basic standards were officially launched at the 5th World's Parks Congress, held in 2003 in Durban, South Africa. Trans-boundary protected area complexes, meeting ten of the basic standards can be awarded the EUROPARC award.

These criteria provide an ideal tool for analysing the current level of cooperation, and for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of cross-border partnerships at all levels of administration. They enable park managers to identify fields of work where practical action and improvement still is required, regardless of the type of protected area or shared landscape.

Transboundary Parks...following nature's design

The EUROPARC Federation is a pan-European, politically independent, nonprofit organisation whose purpose is to support and promote protected areas in Europe. Its membership, currently 450 in 36 European countries, represents protected areas and other organisations involved in their management.



Certification process

Steps for implementation

If neighbouring parks consider working towards achieving a trans-boundary award, they are asked to:

> Formally register their application with EUROPARC;

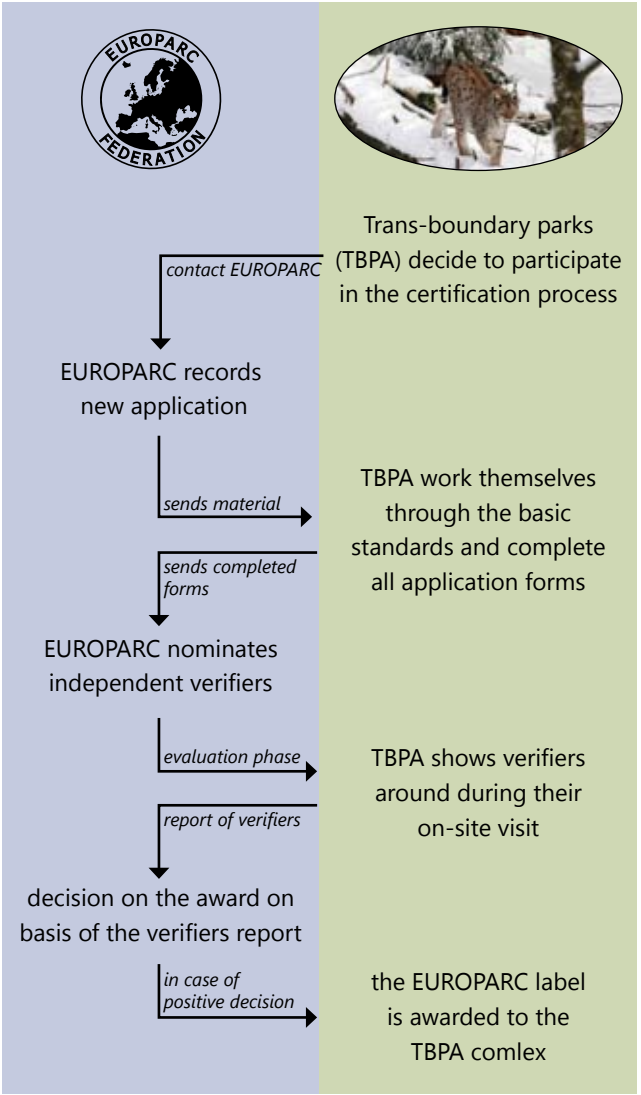
> Work through the basic standards, assessing what has already been achieved and where action is still required;

> Complete and submit the full application documents, illustrating how the neighbouring parks are fulfilling each of the basic standards criteria;

> Cover the costs for the administration and the verification process.

EUROPARC Federation provides a manual to accompany the certification process. Independent verifiers evaluate each application, including an on-site visit in the protected areas. Trans-boundary protected area complexes fulfilling a minimum of ten out of 14 criteria can be awarded with the EUROPARC label. The final decision is taken by EUROPARC upon recommendation by its evaluation committee.

Five years after the certificate award a re-evaluation takes place.



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TransParcNet

Europe's platform for unifying ecosystems and people across borders



Neusiedler See National Park (AT) and Fertö-Hansag National Park (HU) were the first two parks to be awarded by EUROPARC Federation in 2003. Meanwhile eight further trans-boundary protected area have been characterised as best practice. They are the founding members of the TransParcNet. Its members meet annually in different trans-boundary areas to exchange best practice and look to the future development of trans-boundary cooperation.



1. Neusiedler See National Park (AT) and Fertö-Hansag National Park (HU)
2. Krkonoše National Park (CZ) and Karkonosze National Park (PL)
3. Oulanka National Park (FI) and Paanajärvi National Park (RU)
4. Maas-Schwalm-Nette Nature Park (DE/NL)
5. Thayatal National Park (AT) and Podyjí National Park (CZ)
6. Inari-Vätsäri Wilderness Area (FI), Øvre-Pasvik National Park (NO) and Pasvik Zapovednik (RU)
7. Prealpi Giulie Natural Park (IT) and Triglav National Park / Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve (SL)
8. Bavarian Forest National Park (DE) and Sumava National Park (CZ)







TransParcNet's

..vision

Trans-boundary protected area (TBPA) cooperation in Europe is an effective and widely recognized means to tackle common conservation and other trans-boundary challenges. The quality of the cooperation is based on EUROPARC's criteria and indicators.

The network of certified TBPAs, TransParcNet, forms an innovative platform for further development of European trans-boundary management cooperation, for safeguarding cross border biodiversity ecosystem services and cultural landscape as well as inspiring and encouraging people for better understanding of the importance of trans-boundary cooperation.

..and mission

The TransParcNet has been established to strengthen the relationship between certified TBPAs with the wider EUROPARC network as well as to function as a forum for active interactions, including joint projects and expertise exchange among the members of the network.

TransParcNet supports the development of European TBPA cooperation by promoting the concept of the EUROPARC "Trans-boundary Parks – Following Nature's Design" certificate as an effective tool in improved trans-boundary management and by encouraging potential TBPAs to apply EUROPARC's certificate and subsequently to join the TransParcNet.

TransParcNet aims at better understanding of the importance of trans-boundary cooperation among politicians and other policy makers but also by the general public. Successful trans-boundary cooperation should become an instrument for implementing cross border peace, understanding and cooperation as a whole.

Learning from best practice

Examples from certified trans-boundary parks in Europe

Best practice examples have been chosen from all TransParcNet members to demonstrate how EUROPARC's basic standards can be successfully implemented in the daily routine of working across borders.

In the following pages readers will find the respective EUROPARC criteria (in the box at the top of the page) and corresponding examples from the eight certified trans-boundary protected area complexes in Europe





Common vision

In addition to the vision for their respective areas, the managing bodies of the trans-boundary protected area should have a common vision, a future orientation which can only be implemented together with the respective partner(s). The common vision should reveal that the wider benefits of trans-frontier cooperation for the entire protected area have been recognised by all partners, independent of financial considerations.

Sharing a common vision across borders

In 1991, with the establishment of the first protected areas in the border region of Pasvik-Inari, the trilateral cooperation between Finland, Norway and Russia began. Since then, the nature protection authorities have met once a year. Meanwhile, during these annual meetings of Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park, nature protection and managing authorities exchange with municipalities, research institutes, landowners, nature tourism entrepreneurs, border authorities and local stakeholders from all three countries. A SWOT analysis, carried out in 2007, revealed that the partners have similar points of views on the main fields of actions for future development. A joint 10-years-vision was included in the Action Plan for Nature Protection and Sustainable Nature Tourism in Pasvik-Inari Area. A series of strategies and concrete actions in the field of cooperation, nature monitoring, dissemination of information and sustainable nature tourism were defined on short, mid and long term basis.

In addition to the vision for their respective areas, the managing bodies of the trans-boundary protected area sought a common vision, a future orientation which can only be implemented together with the respective partner(s). The common vision reveals that the wider benefits of trans-frontier cooperation for the entire protected area and will be recognised by all partners, independent of financial considerations.



Meeting of the trilateral working group on nature tourism in Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park (© Photo: Tanja Kyykkä).

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Official agreement

An official agreement is signed at the appropriate management and political decision-making levels for facilitating the creation and progress of the trans-frontier protected area within a given time frame. Where appropriate, multilateral and bilateral agreements and conventions should be used to support and provide a framework for trans-frontier cooperation.

Guiding rules for cooperation

The partners establish and put into practice compatible rules which guide cooperation and ensure permanent exchanges of information, the running and documentation of joint meetings, joint decision-making and dispute settlement. The rules are based upon the mutual consideration of each partner's working methods, time management, native language, administrative structure and decision-making procedures

Formalising the cooperation

The cooperation between the two National Parks Thayatal and Podyjí is based on a joint declaration, executed in 1999 by Austria and the Czech Republic. A bilateral National Park Commission was then established to determine which trans-border measures were to be taken. The commission drew up and signed a first contract for the exchange of data between the two protected areas and a second one outlining the objectives and agreements of the national park management. In the contract on the harmonisation of management measures, two major aspects of future development were determined, namely to allow nature to develop freely without any human interference and to develop both national parks in close cooperation with local populations and visitors. Technical key targets are formulated jointly, their implementation however has to take place within the framework of the respective national legislations. Conflicting measures can therefore not be excluded.

The rules for the procedures in the bilateral National Park Commission were drawn up rather late in 2009. They outline the composition of the Commission, the preparation and conduct of meetings and the drafting and approval of minutes. An attempt to formulate rules for solving disputes between the two parties failed. Whenever diverging opinions occur, the park administrations therefore have to continue searching for mutually agreed solutions. The Commission is entitled to comment on them or make suggestions, which will not be binding.

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Sustainable financing

The financing of joint trans-frontier projects should be secured. Project proposals for international funding are to be jointly prepared and submitted. The use of funding from international programmes e.g. EU, GEF is to be mutually agreed.

Ensuring sustainable financing

"Somebody has to be paid just for trans-boundary cooperation issues. Only then contacts can be made, projects developed and European funds harnessed" (notion from the Nature Park region).

The cross border Nature Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette is a regional, special purpose organisation of seven Dutch communities and the German Nature Park Schwalm-Nette. The cooperation has shared responsibilities and funding, based on a treaty between the governments of the Netherlands and North-Rhine-Westphalia (signed in 1976).

Two bilingual full-time employees are working in the organisations' office in Roermond (NL). Between 2006 and 2010 the costs for the office amounted to some 200.000 Euro / year, including staff costs, office rent and general operating costs. Funding is allocated by the Federal State of North-Rhine-Westphalia, the Province of Limburg, the government of the Netherlands and the eight members of the cross-border organisation, each with a quarter. The annual budget is confirmed for another period (2011 until 2015).

The main task of the staff is to acquire, coordinate and implement cross-border projects in the fields of nature/landscape conservation, tourism, recreation and environmental education. Project financing is mainly provided by EU funds, national and regional administrations. Between 2005 and 2010 the staff managed to additionally acquire project funds amounting to 300.000 Euro per year which could be expanded by project partners.



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Joint fields of work for cooperation

All fields of work of the cooperation should be determined jointly. They should be set with the frame of a mid-term work plan and include work in the primary and secondary fields indicated below, administrative capacity-building and the training of staff from the partner protected areas. The fields of work should also correspond to national objectives and work schemes.



Binational teams jointly determine common fields of work

By jointly determining the scope and fields of trans-boundary cooperation in Karkonosze (PL) and Krkonoše National Parks (CZ), new tasks can be performed successfully and problems can be solved very quickly. For that purpose binational teams are formed by staff members from Polish and Czech national parks who are involved in the same fields of work. Within those teams the cooperation is very intensive (everyday communication via Email). Thanks to this way of collaboration, all decisions and activities for cooperation can be taken very quickly, and each new field of work is developed rapidly.

GLORIA, the 'Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments' is an example for such a teamwork in the field of research and monitoring. Scientific conferences and workshops are organised jointly.



Fairy primrose (Primula minima), a plant species monitored in the GLORIA project carried out jointly in the Karkonosze/ Krkonoše Mts (© Photo: Roksana Knapik).

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Exchange of data

The mutual exchange of data between all partners on the natural, historical and cultural aspects of the area should be in progress.

Exchanging data and experiences in conferences

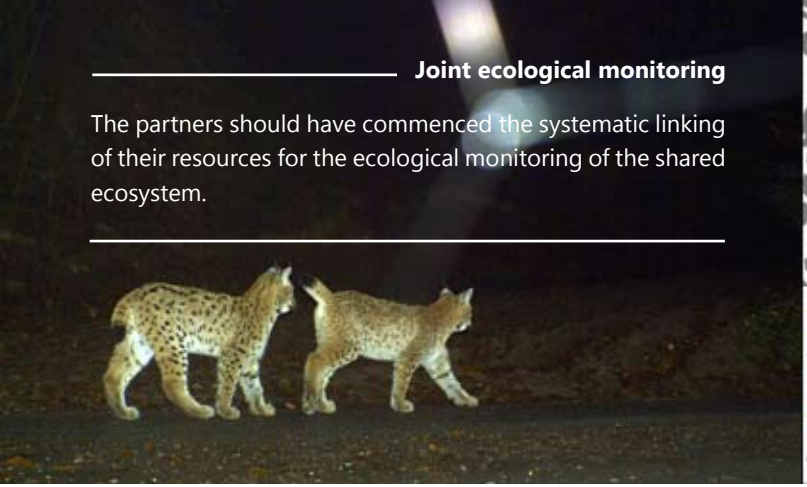
On both sides of the Karkonosze (PL) / Krkonoše (CZ) Mts. scientists and national parks staff collect a lot of data derived from research projects and monitoring. In order to facilitate the exchange of important data, the conference "Geoecological Problems of the Karkonosze/Krkonoše Mts" is organised. It is a periodic scientific conference organized by both – Polish and Czech – national parks in the Karkonosze/ Krkonoše Mts. The conference takes place every three years. It aims at presenting the latest results of research related to the Karkonosze/Krkonoše Mts and neighbouring ridges of the Sudeten Mts. The conference is also a unique form of information exchange between scientists from Poland and Czech Republic doing their research in the Karkonosze/Krkonoše Mts and for staff of both national parks as well.

The establishment of the bilateral Biosphere Reserve Karkonosze/Krkonoše Mts was the stimulus to start the first conference in 1991. Since 1997, the conference is organised alternately on the Polish and Czech side of the mountains. The last one was organized in 2009 in Szklarska Poręba. More than 150 participants attended the conference. Most of them came from Poland and the Czech Republic but there were also citizens of the United States, Switzerland and Spain among the participants. During the conference 54 speeches and 46 posters were presented. They all showed a high professional level and helped to exchange scientific data about Karkonosze/Krkonoše Mts.

contact

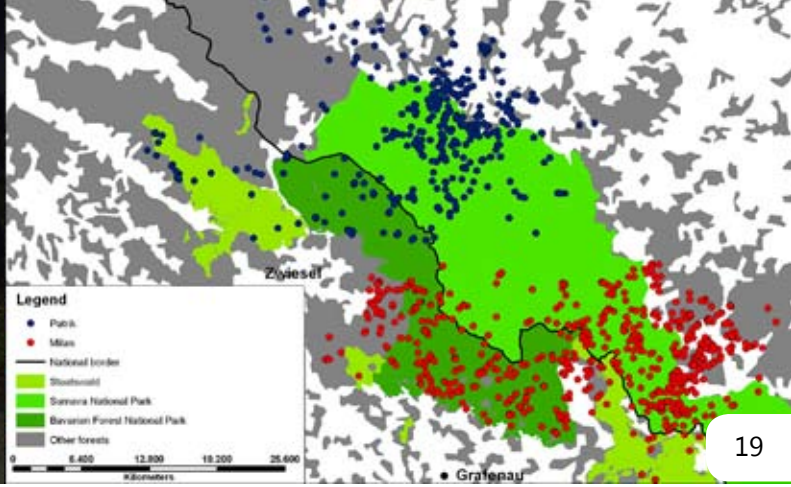
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2



Joint ecological monitoring

The partners should have commenced the systematic linking of their resources for the ecological monitoring of the shared ecosystem.



Joint monitoring of the European lynx

The National Parks Bavarian Forest (250 km^2) and Šumava (690 km^2) are the core area of the Greater Bohemian Forest Ecosystem, the largest, strictly protected, contiguous expanse of forest in Central Europe. Located between the Carpathian Mountains and the Alps, it forms a major stepping stone for lynx within its European habitat. The lynx population originates from a reintroduction of the species between 1982 and 1989 on the Czech side. Although the species has gained widespread public acceptance, outside the parks, hunters compete with the predator lynx for their main prey, the roe deer. The purpose of the joint monitoring is to analyse the relationship between the lynx and its prey in order to develop a science-based management programme for wild animals.

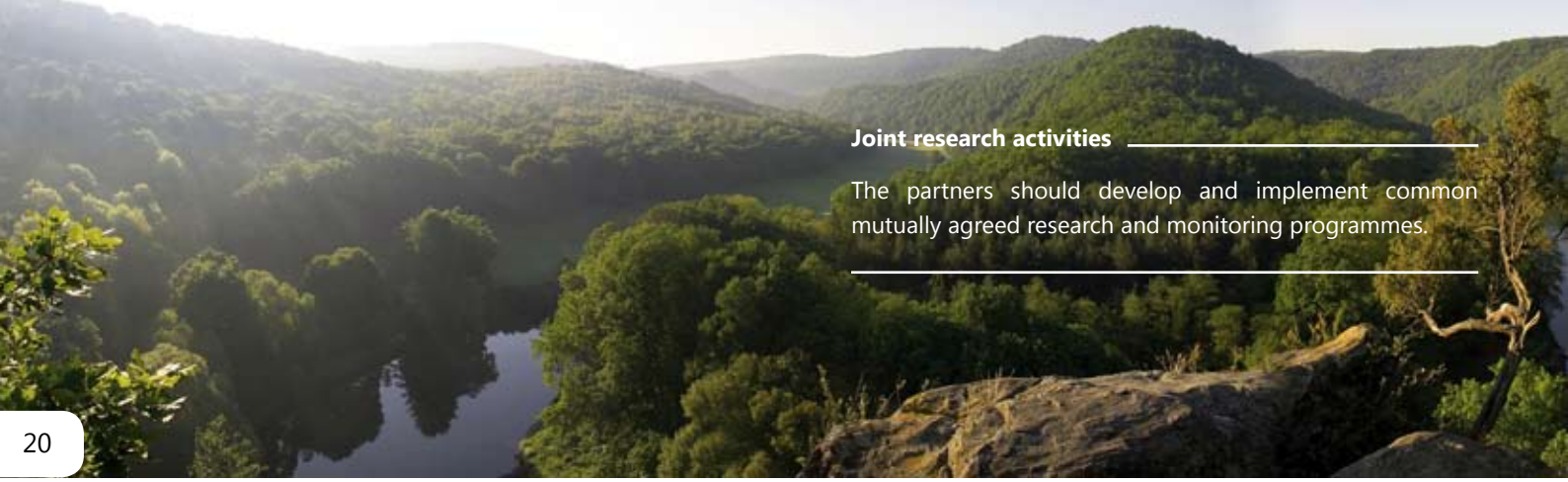
Satellite telemetry is used to trace the lynx's extensive movement patterns and to keep records of the number of killed animals. In addition, the animals are monitored with camera traps (120 cameras have been placed at 60 different locations). It was for the first time, that a wildlife monitoring programme has successfully been realised on the area of both national parks. The cross-border collaboration is not always easy, because both authorities are run differently and their work is based on different legal systems. Yet, given the consistent monitoring of the animals, the authorities feel more and more obliged to remove any administrative obstacle, an important step towards trans-boundary cooperation.

The results demonstrate how important it is to consider the Bavarian and the Šumava Forest as one ecological system. By working out standards, the authorities aim at achieving a common management of wild animals in both parks.

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Joint research activities

The partners should develop and implement common mutually agreed research and monitoring programmes.

Coordination of research activities

The uniformity of the habitat on both sides of the Thaya and the ecological network require common, trans-border research by the two national parks for the design of protection measures. The exchange of scientific data and the joint design of protection measures are the basic conditions for a successful habitat management. The Thaya does not separate two distinct habitats as it might be in other protected areas, it connects them. The aim is to harmonise habitat research in the area of the international park. Ecological systems react only to limits set by nature, not to those imposed by people.

The elaboration of a trans-border research concept is a complex procedure. Therefore a working group with members of the Czech and Austrian national park administrations was created, which meets regularly to coordinate various research issues. Key research areas and common objectives have been determined there. Consistent standards and investigation methods are being developed in the framework of studies. Thanks to this, scientists are working across borders whenever possible. In the coming years, differences in research topics and data quality between Austria and the Czech Republic should be settled. Existing data will be linked and compiled in a database.

A more intensive cooperation began with the INTERREG III A project „Trans-border research for nature protection in the Inter-National Park Thayatal-Podyjí 2005-2007". It is successfully continuing with the ETZ project „Nature without borders - Příroda bez hranic" 2009-2012.

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Joint conservation activities

The joint activities shall be compatible with the guidelines and recommendations for the application of the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories in Europe. Cooperation in the field of nature and landscape conservation should be developed through concrete activities and projects, e.g. the establishment and management of cross-border systems of inter-connected habitats and biotopes, the practical implementation of agreed management aims and plans, joint projects on biodiversity /species conservation, etc.



Forest wilderness without frontiers

Remnants of primeval mountain forests, glacial lakes, and mountain and valley raised bogs make the wilderness of the Bavarian Forest and Šumava National Parks a unique 'gem'. Besides various communities of vegetation, the area is home to many wilderness-dependent animal species including the European lynx and otter, as well as a great number of important bird species such as the capercaillie, Ural owl, Tengmalm's Owl, Pygmy owl, black stork, three-toed woodpecker, Peregrin falcon and kingfisher.

In the scope of the Europe's Wild Heart project, the parks are cooperating in managing their common core zone with the same management regime. First and foremost, intervention and utilization of resources is not allowed, no game management is applied and the reproduction areas of endangered species are strictly protected. Public access is controlled. Guided tours are preferred, vehicle traffic is strictly limited, and tracks for new trails have to avoid sensitive biotopes. In order to officially become the first and largest trans-boundary wilderness area in Europe, the management teams of the two parks have agreed on a common time-line, defined in their 'Vision 2020' plan. Objectives include the establishment of a common wilderness area of about 15,000 hectares with harmonised management principles and joint information services and monitoring networks.

EUROPAS WILDES HERZ
Nationalpark Bayerischer Wald • Národní park Šumava
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Cooperation in education and communication

Trans-frontier cooperation in the field of education and communication should cover a range of joint activities providing information, raising awareness and communicating the message of the trans-frontier protected area as a whole. This work will include, for example, the development of a common identity, the publication of joint bi- or multilingual publications, maps, and video or web presentations, the organisation of guided visits for different target groups on both sides of the border, events for pupils and schools etc.

Trilateral events for school children

Since 2003, Triglav National Park and Julian Prealps Nature Park regularly organise joint education activities, mainly focused on nine to ten years old children living in the parks' areas. The kids are acquainted with the characteristics of the protected area they visit in order to increase their consciousness for nature protection and sustainable development. By exposing them to young people from the neighbouring country, prejudices and language barriers shall be removed. A common steering committee decides on the topics and timing of each educational event. Generally, Slovenian school children visit the Julian Prealps (and vice versa) to meet their trans-boundary fellows and do some educational activities together. They are guided by bilingual rangers and nature guides to learn about the characteristics of the park. During the excursion they mix, try to communicate, share experiences, impressions and ideas and learn the foreign names for some natural features.



Meeting of school children from Slovenia, Italy and Austria in Triglav National Park (© Photo: J. Mihelič).

Since the beginning, more than 1,000 students participated in these events. No doubt, this project created a stronger relation between the two parks involving not only park's staff, teachers and children but even their families. This joint activity is part of a larger trans-boundary project that also involves the Austrian National Park Nockberge.

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Joint information offers for visitors

In 2006–2007, a new kind of media was developed for the trans-boundary park Oulanka-Paanajärvi, to share information about the top destinations within and around the parks. One of the objectives was to increase awareness of the many alternative hiking trails and thus avoid crowding along the most popular ones. Since this development incurred expenses above the basic management, an INTERREG/Tacis project for Oulanka-Paanajärvi was necessary. During the project a total of nine electronic information boards were installed: seven in Finland and two in Russia. The locations are hubs of visitor flow either inside or in the surroundings of the parks.

Instead of printing traditional leaflets the parks decided to go electronic, which would allow for easier updating of the contents. Technically, the boards are large screens with PC's hidden under a table. The boards can be navigated with a mouse. The content includes facts about the nature and landscapes of each destination, trails and other services, and recommended activities. By clicking their way through the menus visitors will be suggested an array of sites to go depending on the season and individual preferences. The contents are identical in all locations. International travellers have been taken very well into account: there are six languages available: Finnish, Russian, Swedish, English, German and French.

The production of the material for the boards was a laborious but rewarding job, in which several staff members of Oulanka and Paanajärvi parks participated. Also, the reaction by the large audience was positive right from the beginning.

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Staff exchange

Permanent communication all level of staff in a process of familiarisation should have been established and (a) facilitator/s for collaboration identified. Staff with responsibility for cooperative activities should meet regularly to discuss project management, evaluate progress and exchange of knowledge and experience. In addition, staff should periodically carry out joint field trips and on-site activities in all partner areas. A joint steering committee is recommended.

From cooperation towards friendship

In the course of a joint INTERREG project, the cooperation between National Parks Triglav (SL) and Nockberge (AT) and Julian Prealps Nature Park (IT) started to grow and finally developed from business to friendship. Besides project reunions, the staff members began spending some free time together. The idea was born to combine the annual official workshop meetings with sport competitions typical for the respective country. After the official encounter in Italy, the colleagues played soccer. In Austria, an ice stock competition took place, whereas in Slovenia the staff competed in horse shoes shooting. Combing official work with social activities made the trilateral staff more than working partners; they became friends.



Horse shoes shooting competition in Triglav National Park (© Photo: Archivio PNPG).

"The non-official contacts are much more important than the official ones."

(Janez Bizjak, former director of Triglav National Park)

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Mutual understanding

The partners should stimulate and support joint activities, which promote cultural understanding and the sharing of cultural experiences, and which facilitate the building of communication and trust between neighbouring communities and peoples.



Towards peace and mutual understanding

During a long and fruitful cooperation, the partners of the Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park have met each other for several activities that promote mutual understanding and peace, e.g. the joint annual waterbird registration along the Norwegian-Russian border or the common restoration of an old border patrol tower into a peace promoting bird watching tower. Environmental education activities are carried out for example under the umbrella of the Phenology of the North Calotte (PNC) school network, and at the Environmental school in Rajakoski (Russia). Russian, Norwegian and Finnish school children have the possibility to meet for environmental camps and activities.

Once a year, the borders between all three countries are open for one day during the popular "Barents Frienship Skiing Event". The 12 kilometres long skiing-track, starting and ending in Russia, crosses Finnish and Norwegian borders. The high-light is in Muotkavaara/Krokfjellet border point where the borders of the three countries and three time zones meet – it is a very unique place worldwide. The heavily guarded Russian-Norwegian border also shortly opens during special occasions, e.g. when the twin reserves, Pasvik Nature Reserve and Pasvik Zapovednik, celebrated their 15-year-anniversary in 2008. In 2009, Piilola Hiking Trail was opened. The 35 kilometres long trail connects Övre-Pasvik National Park in Norway and Vätsäri Wilderness Area in Finland.

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Foreign language communication

Foreign language communication, translation arrangements and facilitation should be ensured in the main areas of trans-frontier cooperation.

Removing language barriers

The Krkonoše/Karkonosze Mountains are protected as national park area since 1959 (Polish side) and 1963 (Czech side). Before 1989, during communist era, the state border was strictly guarded by soldiers with machine guns watching any movement, although both countries belonged to the Soviet bloc. After 1989 the situation changed completely. Borders started to be guarded by smiling civil servants dressed in police uniforms. Finally in 2008, both countries became part of the Schengen Area within the European Union.

Nevertheless, after many decades, people still have their own "border in mind". They perceive Krkonoše (CZ) or Karkonosze (PL) just from their national perspective, not as one cross-border mountain range. The language barrier has a share in that. Although Czech and Polish language derive from the same Slavonic language family they differ. This barrier hampers also the communication between employees of the two parks. Spoken slowly, the languages can be understood by the neighbours, but when more serious issues have to be solved, the staffs usually switch to English. This handicap will be overcome by the new training "Two languages, one discourse" which will start in September 2010. Czech park employees will learn Polish and Poles will learn Czech. The lessons will be focused not only on basic language skills but also on specific topics, such as legislation, nature conservation and management. All trainees will additionally have to pass a one-week internship at their partners' park. The training is co-financed by both national park administrations and European funds within the Operational Programme Cross-border Cooperation.

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Cooperation in recreation and tourism

Trans-frontier opportunities for people to experience nature and enjoy the landscape should be developed. This includes, for example, coordinated visitor management systems, visitor facilities and trails, and trans-frontier public transport systems. This field of work also includes the development of sustainable trans-frontier tourism initiatives covering, for example, the contribution of tourism to regional development, or the support of protected areas for marketing of local ecological products.



One card, valid in two countries

Until 1988, the cooperation between Austria and Hungary with respect to the preservation of Neusiedler Lake was limited to the technical-scientific level. With the political turnaround, the planning of an interstate national park began. In 1994, the cross-border park Neusiedler-Lake-Hansag-Fertö was inaugurated. Since then, despite of different legal and financial preconditions, research, as well as landscape and visitor management is coherently planned by the two park administrations. Currently, remaining differences are most visible in regional development and tourism. The lack of a regional marketing organisation on the Hungarian side makes the development of cross-border tourism offers a challenge. Nevertheless, a joint visitor programme has been elaborated and the infrastructure improved for cross-border bike tours and public transport. In 2000, the so called "Neusiedler Lake Card" was introduced in the Austrian part in order to privilege overnight guests, who – in comparison to one-day tourists – yield more added value and cause less environmental impact. All visitors staying in one of the partner accommodations can use public transport, museums or public pools for free. Buses in Hungary along the south bank of the lake are included in this service just as are city tours in Sopron and Kapuvár. Assumed that the organisational preconditions are given, in future, the Neusiedler Lake Card shall also include guest houses in the Hungarian part of the national park. It could be shown that especially in spring and autumn tourism is a growing economic factor along the south and east bank of the lake. With Hungary joining the Schengen Agreement and as a result of the cross-border visitor programme this trend will further increase.

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"The seeds of trans-boundary conservation can be planted, watered and nurtured, but growth must come from within, from the ground up" (Zbicz 2003).

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http://www.europarc.org/what-we-do/transboundary-parks