

FUToURISM: Integrated and Sustainable Development of Tourism Regions

PARKoMOTION - Promotion of Natural Parks

Final Synthesis Report

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PARKoMOTION





**FUToURISM:
Integrated and Sustainable
Development of Tourism Regions**

The FUToUrism Project:

*“Integrated and Sustainable Development of Tourism Regions”
has been implemented to provide the required assistance to environmental protected
areas and national parks as they develop and implement their future development
strategies and management plans.*

*The present document is one of the last actions included in the project (Action 3.5)
designed to provide significant guidance to the management authorities of the
regions under consideration for their future policies of development and planning*

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1. Introduction

During the last decades, both economic and technological development has put increasing pressure on the sensitive natural environment and the limited ecological resources. Nowadays, a lot of species of the flora and fauna still are in danger of extinction. Therefore there is a constant need of developing new methods and mechanisms that would be able protect these threatened species.

Some of these mechanisms of protection are the protected areas and the national Parks, where the human commodity is forced to behave with environmental standards and specific rules and where the overall preservation of the natural environment constitutes the main objective.

However the various protected areas and national Parks established in Europe, have not been well coordinated between the various federal, and local agencies facing significant problems in terms of management and administration.

The present report provides a comprehensive support to the rest of the activities of the project **FUToURISM**: “Integrated and Sustainable Development of Tourism Regions”, by providing a synthesis of existing information relevant to the current situation of the protected areas and national Parks of the project partners, as well as proposals for the emerging opportunities and the current needs, and suggestions for all the stakeholders (managerial authorities, local agencies, NGO, education/scientific specialists, etc.) involved with respect to regions’ efficient evolution.

The report is intended to provide a managerial “tool” for the effective implementation of the strategies for protected area’s development.

1.1 Goals of the Report

The main purpose of the present Report is *to provide assistance to the protected areas’ managers and other stakeholders for the operation and the management of protected areas*, so that both the areas and the generated tourism can be developed in a sustainable way.

This final synthesis report attempts to illustrate the **PARKoMOTION** mini project results and is organized around these results, which correspond to each section of the present report.

- 1) To briefly illustrate the present situation of the protected areas and national Parks of the project-partners

- 2) To propose and present suggestions for the effective reinforcement of the Protected Areas and National Parks under consideration

1.2 Methodology

Various methods were used to collect all the necessary information for the needs of the present study. However, a large proportion of this information was gathered with the assistance of the Partners through the completion of a relative questionnaire conducted for the purpose of the project. Therefore, the beginning towards mini-project requirements was the preparation of a questionnaire concerning the identity of each protected area, exploring issues such as: current situation, visitation data, operational problems, management and marketing plan, future strategies, etc. Together with the questionnaire which was prepared in a printed form (see appendix 1), has been send an information letter as well with a request for its completion. The distributed questionnaire was completed by 7 administrations of protected areas, specifically:

Name of the Natural Park/ Protected Area Region, Country

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. IPAMAC (association of 10 Natural Parks) | Massif central / France |
| 2. Connemara national Park | Ireland |
| 3. Ghajn Tuffieha | Malta |
| 4. Ghadira Nature Reserve | Malta |
| 5. Wied Ghollieqa | Malta |
| 6. Triglav National Park | Slovenia |
| 7. National Marine Park of Alonissos-
N.Sporades | Region of Thessaly, Greece |

In addition, the information from the Fact Collection Missions as well as that from the conference proceedings, were used for the preparation of the related topics. Both websites and environmental journals related generally to environmental protected areas and national Parks were also included for the synthesis report. The necessary data are of different characteristic - statistical data, qualitative estimations and expert knowledge. The project partners in the pilot regions have provided them.

1.3 General Description

The present part of the project includes the application of separate SWOT analysis and the development of management plans as well, in order to explore and activate the potential of the protected areas and the national parks.

The analysis adopted in this current study is of high significance since it can provide to the partners a framework for analysing and evaluating the current situation of their regions and for benchmarking and networking with other international partners on the other.

The methodological framework used is shown in figure 1. This specific strategic analysis has been developed in order to derive the strengths and the weaknesses as well as the opportunities and the threats that are revealing in these particular regions. In addition Best Practices and are identified from other well developed and organised National Parks and Protected Areas are proposed in an objective and comprehensible way.

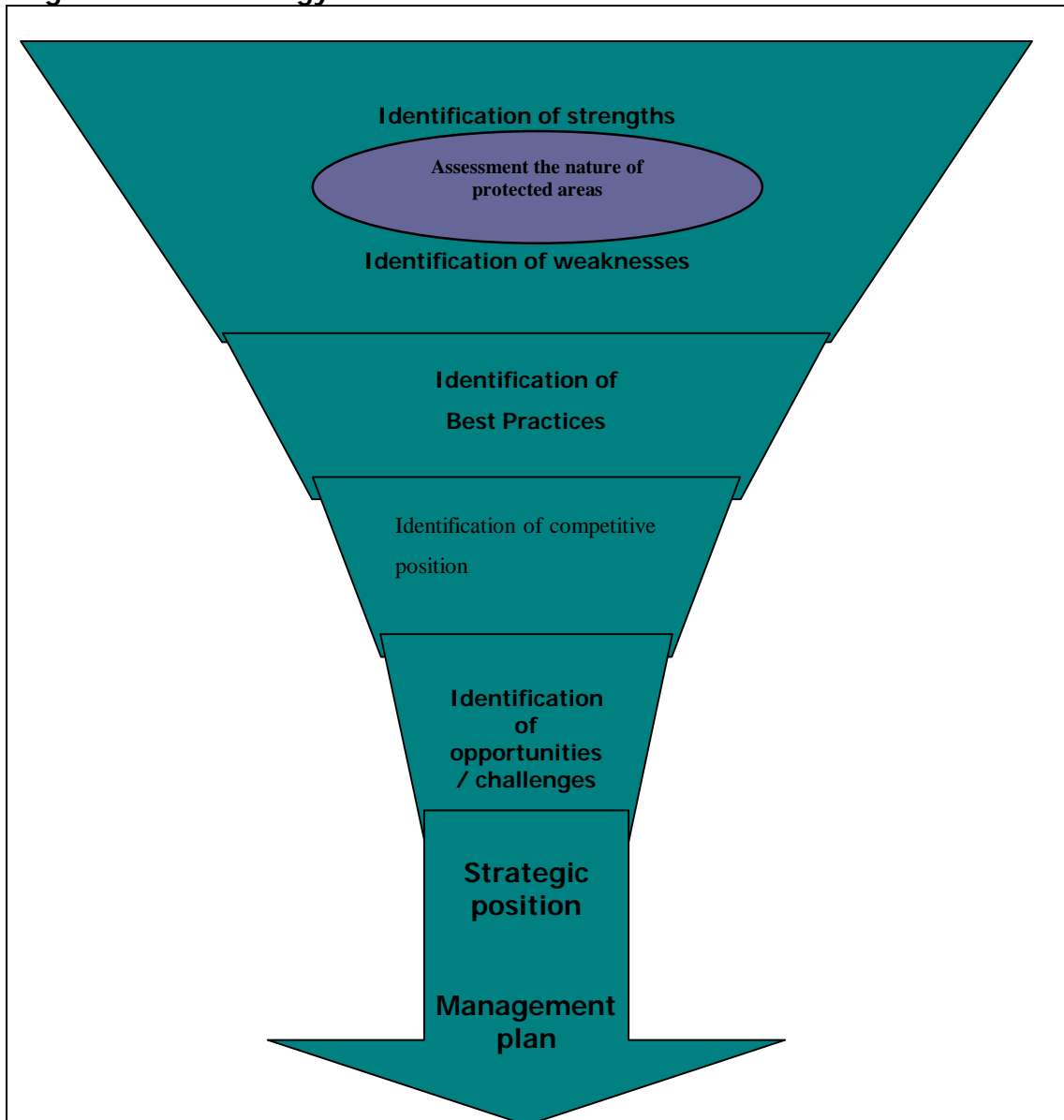
The basic steps, which should be followed during the implementation of the strategic analysis process, are shown in the diagram below and are analysed in the following paragraphs:

As a first step we attempt to take an initial view of the current situation of the environmental protected areas and the national parks of the partners, merely in terms of how developed is each region. This analysis should include the identification of the basic strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and the threats of every protected area.

The second step of our analysis might be the determination of the key-best practices. Here the aim is to identify the Best Practices of the partner's regions and "build" a guide for proposed Best Practices identified from other well developed protected areas and national parks.

The next step moves the focus on the developing of an integrated understanding of the opportunities/challenges that can benefit and the threats that Parks and Protected Areas should effectively overcome. This understanding needs to be considered in terms of the resource base and the competences of each institution and which will contribute to their strategic development and management plan.

Figure 1. Methodology framework



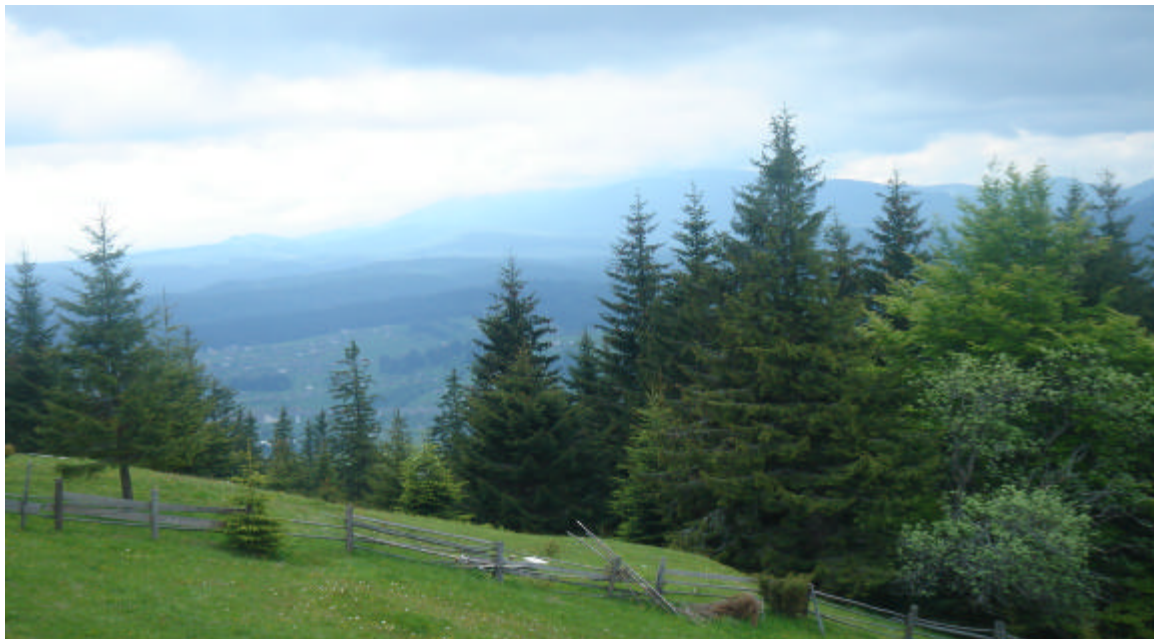
1.2 Protected Area and National Parks in General

Although the fact that almost all the traditional societies have presented the need for the development of special designed territories known as “protected areas” and “national parks”, this need became an urgent “phenomenon” in our days.

Historically these regions adopted various names, but typically they involve the creation by government authorities of special designations for historic or ecological protection, and of special management institutions governing site use by people¹.

During the last years the increase mentioned in the visitation of these particular regions revealed the need for protected areas’ administration and management. However as this increase continues to exist many management challenges emerged for the responsible authorities.

Based on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (1994) a **Protected Area** *“is an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means”*



Although the “phenomenon” of the protected areas during the 19th century emerged in the countries of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA, during

¹ Eagles, Bowman, Tao, (2001) “Guidelines for Tourism in Parks and Protected Areas of East Asia”, The World Conservation Union

the twentieth century the establishment of the protected areas spread all over the world. Therefore, the number of protected areas faced a tremendous increase. Almost every country established relative legislation and designated sites for protection. Until 2002 44,000 sites met the IUCN definition of a protected area where all these together covered nearly 10% of the land surface of the planet (data from UNEP-WCMC)².

According relative law, national parks are established to protect and preserve species that are important for the national ecological balance.

More specifically a **National Park**³, *"is a reserve of land, usually, but not always, declared and owned by a national government, protected from most human development and pollution"*.

Triglav National Park



Source: http://www.tnp.si/national_park/

In most cases, National Parks are established as large-scale nature reserves, where due to their vital role in terms of sustainable protection, they assure their significance for the future. In addition, all these national Parks in Europe differ from country to country, in terms of legal structures, tasks, financing as well as in their proportion related to the countries surface⁴.

² Eagles P., Mc. Cool S., Haynes C. (2002), "Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas - Guidelines for Planning and Management", IUCN – The World Conservation Union

³ Wikipedia, definition of National Park

⁴ European Nature Parks: www.european-parks.org/

2. Description of the current situation

In this chapter we attempt to provide a clear description of the current situation for the Protected Areas and the National Parks of the project partners.

In order to do so, we use the **SWOT analysis** framework, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats that the regions' involved in the Project face nowadays.

By focusing on the key factors affecting the operation of both the protected areas and the national parks, now and in the future, the SWOT analysis adopted, provides a clear basis for examining the operation, the performance and the future prospects of these particular regions.

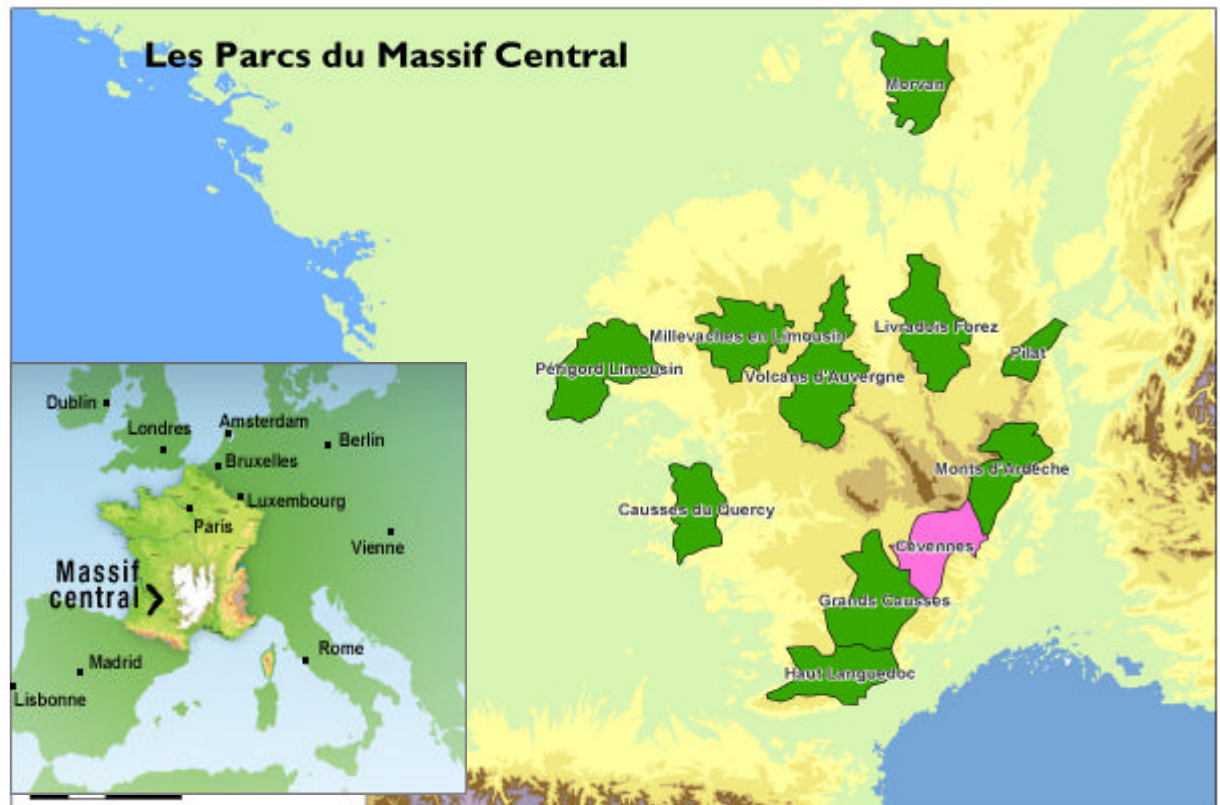
The SWOT analysis framework is adopted in order to provide a summary evaluation of the national Parks and environmental Area's strengths and weaknesses. It helps us to identify the opportunities that can be built on, and the threats, which need to be addressed, in order to improve their current operation and to assure their further viable development.

2.1 IPAMAC /FRANCE

2.1.1 Briefly description

IPAMAC is a specific network composed of 10 Natural Parks in Massif central Area, which is involved, in a common marketing plan and in the application of the European charter for sustainable tourism in protected areas (with EUROPARC).

Figure 2. Massif Central Nature Parks



Massif Central is an inhabited mountain in the heart of Europe and easily accessible, unlike some rural Mediterranean spaces or Scandinavian.

The Massif Central regional nature Parks are situated in a medium mountain and inhabited area [Figure 2.]. It is a large area composing of a variety of landscapes (rivers, gorges, medium mountains, volcanic areas, limestone plateaus...).

IPAMAC constitutes an association composed of 10 Natural Parks, where especially in Massif central Area are included:

- ✍ **1 National Park** : Cevennes
- ✍ **9 Regional Nature Parks** : Pilat, Livradois-Forez, Causses du Quercy, Grands Causses, Haut-Languedoc, Monts d'Ardeche, Millevaches en Limousin, Volcans d'Auvergne, Morvan.

Covennes National Park in the Massif Central Mountains



With its outdoors and its historic cultural patrimony, Massif Central is attractive for both the current and the future tourism, providing attractive destinations especially for residents coming from north Europe. Being engaged in various projects, the Massif Central is willing to promote the territories diversity and the pertinence of the proximity to qualify human funds, to develop departments, to preserve the environment and the operational management.

2.1.2 SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- The Massif Central natural parks are environmentally well conserved.
- Offer beautiful landscapes with very few inhabitants.
- The natural and cultural heritage is very attractive and well preserved
- A sustainable development concern.
- The Massif central state authority supports our activity as a framework

Weaknesses

- The Massif Central natural parks are not well recognized as tourism destination.
- The financial provision of Massif central natural Parks faces difficulties since the state funds are decreasing
- Each regional Park of the network contains a lot of diversity (in terms of fauna and flora preservation, sustainable development etc) which is difficult to be managed and requires increased funds
- Although each regional Natural Park has its own operational budget, its operation is co-financed by local authorities, the concerned Ministries (mostly Ministry for the Environment) and by the implementation of various European programs

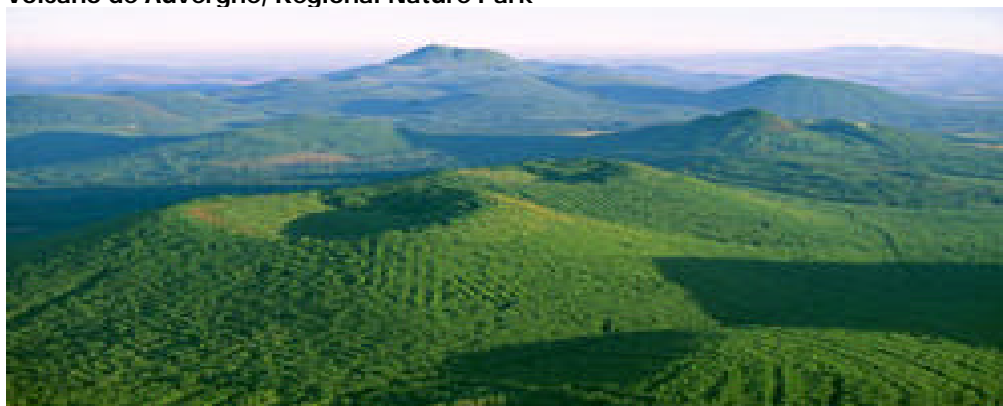
Opportunities

- A inter-regional framework of protected areas represented by IPAMAC
- A mutual organization to reinforce parks policies and recognition by authorities.
- A large touristic offer (thanks to the mutualization), IPAMAC promote the whole touristic range of products.
- A common involvement in the European charted of sustainable tourism (EUROPARC) (and very good exchanges between Parks)
- A common marketing plan (and the creation of a web site)
- A positive participation to the Massif central state Policy

Threats

- There is a constant need to mobilize the authorities to finance the projects.
- Parks are not able to guarantee a good balance between economic development and biodiversity and sustainable development awareness

Volcano de Auvergne, Regional Nature Park



2.2 CONNEMARA NATIONAL PARK / IRELAND

2.2.1 Briefly description

Connemara National Park, is one of the six National Parks that currently exist in Ireland [Figure 3.] and all of which are state owned and managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The six National Parks are:

- Connemara National Park
- Killarney National Park, Co. Kerry
- Glenveagh National Park, Co. Donegal
- Wicklow Mountains National Park, Co. Wicklow
- The Burren National Park, Co. Clare
- Ballycroy National Park, Co. Mayo

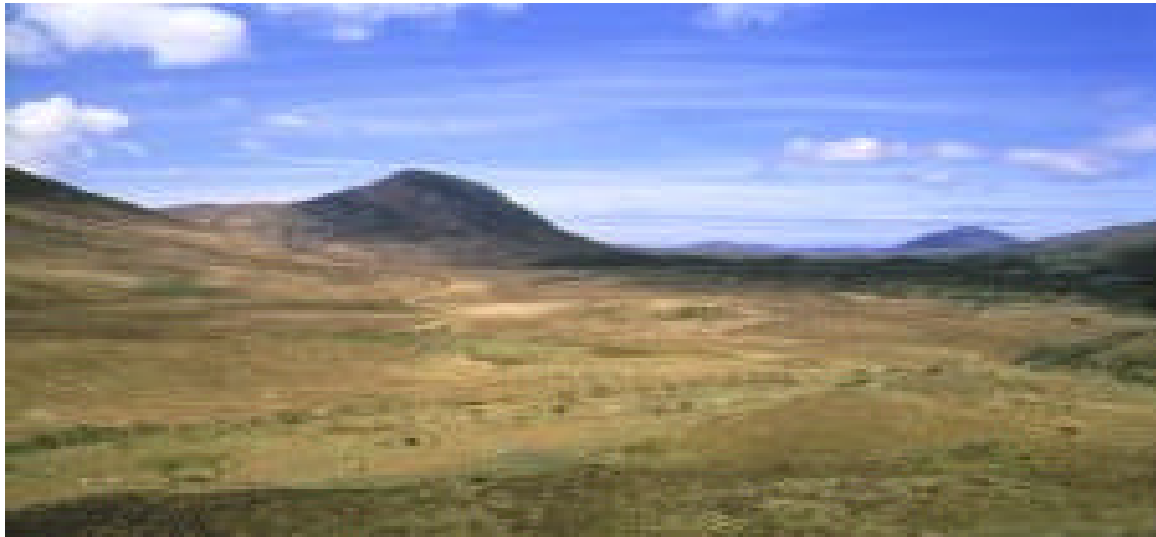
National Parks in Ireland exist to "conserve natural plant and animal communities and scenic landscapes which are both extensive and of national importance, and, under conditions compatible with that purpose, to enable the public to visit and appreciate them". An estimated 2.5 million people visit Ireland's six National Parks annually which, along with our 66 State owned nature reserves, make up 1.5% of the total landmass of the State.

Figure 3. National Parks in Ireland



Connemara National Park covers 2,000 hectares (4942 acres) of scenic countryside, rich in wildlife on the slopes of the Twelve Bens, while except the traditional attractions (exhibitions, nature trails, and audio-visual show,etc), the Park provides a field laboratory, used by research students working on various aspects of wildlife in Connemara.

Connemara National Park



2.2.2 SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Connemara National Park promotes natural conservation by obtaining particular flora and fauna that is unique to that area.
- Promotes an awareness to the public on importance of nature conservation
- As an important tourist destination is contributing to the increase of the employment in the region
- Educational facility for young and old people
- Interpretive center gives heritage and cultural identity of Connemara
- Located in very scenic area with low development allowing for a tranquil and unique experience
- The introduction of no entrance fee to the park
- Availability of brochures in many different languages
- Availability of guided tours and audio visual screens
- Use of kitchen and picnic facilities
- Employment of an education officer to create more public awareness

Weaknesses

- Vulnerability of the park to deterioration e.g. ground surface erosion, invasive species of flora
- Dependent on state funding to maintain the park – each of the parks are now state owned and are reliant on the government to provide funding for the upkeep of the National Park every year.
- Need to market the Park more on a national and international scale.

Opportunities

- It obtains capacity to attract and accommodate more tourists
- Ability to develop more walking trails
- To provide more educational facilities
- To conduct further scientific research on the park
- To conduct qualitative and quantitative research to aid in further development of the park

Threats

- Outbreak of diseases e.g. Foot and Mouth, Bird Flu
- Outbreak of invasive species of flora e.g.
- Deterioration of park due to over activity e.g. erosion of walking trails

Like every other national park in Ireland, Connemara has its own development strategy and in it there are general strategies for marketing its National Park. The state is responsible for the national and international marketing of the park.

There is a continuous need to market parks in Ireland, and yes it is felt that exhibition stands in events that provide high levels of exposure with themes sympathetic to the Parks Campaign would greatly help create awareness around the area of parks.

2.3 GHAJN TUFFIEHA / MALTA ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING AUTHORITY

2.3.1 Briefly description

Ghajn Tuffieha is located in the less congested NorthWest coast of Malta and is characterised by a soft rock coast with sandy beaches. Of particular interest in the area under review are the blue clay slopes, a pronounced promontory with a wave-cut terrace and local flora such as maquis, garigue and an afforested area. Ghajn Tuffieha has been locally declared by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in 2003 through a legal and Government Notice – LN311 of 2006.

Ghajn Tuffieha Natural Park



Although MEPA is the government body responsible for the area, different activities fall under the responsibility of other government organisations such as beach cleaning (Ministry for Tourism and Culture) and enforcement (Police). However the actual management is co-ordinated by MEPA and carried out by the GAIA Foundation and the Ministry for Rural Affairs and Environment. Representatives of the local council are also involved in the management board.

2.3.2 SWOT Analysis (Ghajn Tuffieha)

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An area with enhanced ecological value - Significant tourism destination for the region that is used as one of the prime tourism sites - images for country's national marketing activities - The park retains rich diversity providing a mix of culture and leisure resources - The infrastructure provides a limitation to the access of the visitors controlling their subsequent impact 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The insufficient accessibility reduces significant the attractiveness of the tourism product - As in many other Parks and protected areas the financial and human resources are not adequate enough to cover the operation requirements of the Park - The public awareness of the Park is not satisfied merely due to the limited promotional activities - It is observed lack of visitor information and guided walks
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A large number of tourists visit the area provides possibilities for the creation of a new tourist market - Increased benefits would emerge from the collaboration with other Natural Parks in the area. (Il-Majjistral Nature Park – a new and large nature park is in the process of being set up in the vicinity – together they will offer a stronger environmental attraction and service) 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Inability to achieve all planned actions - Potential developments such as the planned Golf course - Lack of political will

A management plan drawn up by the Gaia Foundation and approved by MEPA governs the management of the conservation area. The original contract for management was signed in 1996 and the most recent management agreement was confirmed in 2004. The main focus of the plan is the conservation of the natural habitat and species as well as the restorations of ecologically devastated areas. The plan is also based on the attainment of the relevant policy objectives as set out

LN311 of 2006. Achievement of goals is an ongoing process, often hampered as a result of limited human resources, funds and expertise. Local stakeholders such as the local council are included in the management process by means of the management board.

2.4 GHADIRA NATURE RESERVE / BIRDLIFE MALTA

2.4.1 Briefly description

Ghadira Nature Reserve is located in the North of Malta in the narrowest stretch of land, just under 2Km wide and is concerned with the protection and promotion of migratory and breeding birds endemic to the area. It is a wetland area and represents the largest free-standing sources of water in Malta. The reserve is also a key breeding site for several species that breed nowhere else in Malta. Ghadira, with its rare habitat, migrant and breeding birds, varied biodiversity and peaceful surroundings, is a gem in the Maltese archipelago.

Ghadira Nature Reserve



In addition the site is also an area of historical importance as it used to act as a large saltpan during the times of the knights in the 16th century as well as one of the areas where St Paul may have potentially been ship wrecked.

Ghadira was declared as a Nature Reserve in the 70's and has since also been designated as a Ramsar site in 1988, which is an international designation that recognises its international importance as a wetland area. The site is government owned but its management plan is executed by BirdLife Malta. It has been declared

a Natura 2000 site and is locally designated by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority as a Special Protected Area (SPA), whilst being a candidate for a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

2.4.2 SWOT Analysis (Ghadira Nature Reserve)

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The uniqueness of the area to Malta (Wetland) - Protection of local natural habitats - Ghadira's importance for the variety of species in flora and fauna - The contribution of the Nature Reserve to the tourism and education development - Its location within a relatively undeveloped area of a major 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The reserve's small size and limited carrying capacity - Its vulnerability to vandalism - Its proximity to the road - The visitor centre is not properly equipped - The Ghadira nature reserve has weak marketing as it has only been looked at as a site for ecological conservation and education rather than a potential tourism attraction
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased revenue through increased tourism activity - The possibility of increasing the overall area of the Ghadira Nature Reserve by joining it with the buffer zone (at the moment there is a physical boundary around the site) - The development of extended trails to join other sites - The proper management of this site should lead to designation of other sites (national benchmarking) 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vandalism - Possible encroachment from neighbouring tourist facility - Pollution – from the nearby road and street lights - Illegal hunting

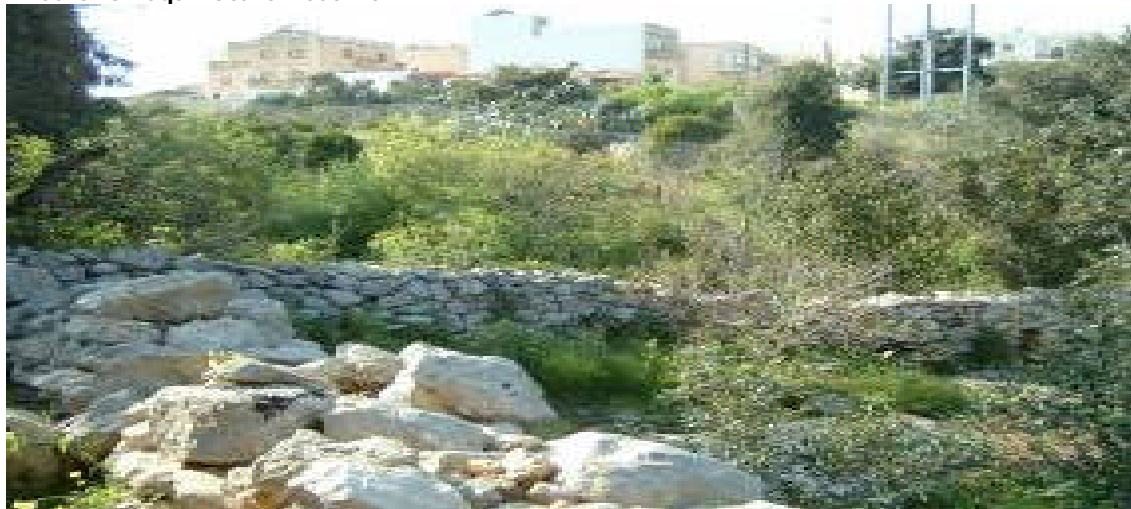
The conservation of the Ghadira Nature reserve by BirdLife is carefully guided by a management plan, approved by the government and reviewed every four years. The plan deals with the management of the site and its natural resources mostly in terms of habitat preservation as well as monitoring and ringing of migratory birds, breeding species and all other species within the confines of the reserve. The creation of a regional network for the exchange of knowledge, experiences and limited resources is seen as a possibility for the near future.

2.5 WIED GHOLLIEQA / MATURE TRUST MALTA

2.5.1 Briefly description

Wied Ghollieqa is a nature reserve located in a valley in the North Harbour region. The reserve falls under the jurisdiction of the town of San Gwann bordering with another two neighbouring towns, namely Gzira and Ta'Xbiex. The latter two are both coastal towns. The main feature of this park is that it hosts a woodland macquis landscape within a valley setting and stretches over approximately an area of 1 km².

Wied Ghollieqa Nature Reserve



The area is a showcase of indigenous trees and other Mediterranean flora and fauna, typical of Maltese valleys, including reptiles, chameleons, hedgehogs and birds. Nature trust is planning to market cottage industry products made for the reserve itself and is looking to produce items such as carob syrup, prickly pear jam and capers. Other potential attractions in the vicinity of the reserve include archaeological sites, the national pools and sports centre, the University of Malta and the yacht marina.

2.5.2 SWOT Analysis (Wied Ghollieqa)

Strengths

- Conservation and restoration of reserve ecology
- Adequate management of the site in order to reduce human impacts
- Enhanced environmental education targeted at public awareness

Weaknesses

- Site is open to all with no entrance restriction, therefore in silent hours there is no control of access and vandalism
- Inadequate human and financial resources
- The reserve is rather small and located in the middle of a developed area with one of Malta's busiest main roads passing overhead through a bridge and a new hospital in the vicinity

Opportunities

- Being in a highly populated area, residents appreciate the site and the NGO has a target group which can learn about and enjoy the positive environmental benefits
- The site is relatively small and therefore easy to manage
- It is on the University grounds and can increase its membership and voluntary base through an increased presence

Threats

- Illegal dumping
- Fire hazard
- Encroachment and increased development impacts and pressures
- Spill-over effects from San Gwann industrial estate, new hospital and busy main road
- Lack of funds

Nature Trust has drawn up a 5 year development plan, revised every 5 years which deals with all the critical issues relevant to the reserve. Common management issues include the restoration of traditional rubble walls in order to prevent soil erosion, restoration of the valley bed system, planting of indigenous trees and shrubs and control of alien species and rodents.

Actually, there is a strategy of development aligned with the two-component framework that is based on scientific research and sound conservation practices. This strategy includes scientific research methodologies in terms of monitoring tree count and the development of an inventory of the reserve.

2.6 TRIGLAV NATIONAL PARK / RRA MURA

2.6.1 Briefly description

Triglav National Park (TNP) is the only Slovenian national park. Triglav owes its name to its characteristic shape as seen from the south-east side or to the highest Slavic deity who was supposed to have its throne on the top of the mountain. It extends along the Italian border and close to the Austrian border in the north-west of Slovenia, that is, in the south-eastern section of the Alps. Its territory is nearly identical with that occupied by the Eastern Julian Alps. The park covers 880 square kilometres, or 3% of the territory of Slovenia. The Triglav National Park is among the earliest European parks. The principal task of the Triglav National Park Public Institution is the protection of the park, but it also carries out specialist and research tasks.

Triglav National Park



The Triglav National Park (TNP) strives to ensure coordinated, sustainable development of the area and the industries practiced in the park, in particular agriculture, forestry and tourism, and to provide suitable material and other conditions for the life and work of the local population.

2.6.2 SWOT Analysis

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Geographic position (central geographical position, good accessibility and inclusion into EU transit ways,- The park lies near the triple borders of Austria, Italy and Slovenia and is the largest national park in Slovenia.- The park is located close to major population centers and transportation routes.- Rich cultural heritage- Restoration of ecosystems and attracting visitors nationally and internationally- Experienced and competent staff	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lack/limited coordinating mechanisms- Absence of policy or effective mechanisms to raise funds for resource, protected area and heritage sites management
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Motivated individuals and organizations in the area are interested in tourism development- Joining of the EU, a bridge to the Balkan- Cultural tourism a growing market- Cultural festivals and events in Europe are increasing- International Environmental organisations and NGOs are supportive of Protected Areas.	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Although individuals and groups involved in the park's operation are motivated they are often disorganized and have little capacity to coordinate amongst themselves

The Triglav National Park Public Institution takes an active part in the activities aimed at ensuring proper understanding and management of the Triglav National Park area as well as care and support to the development activities that will bring the places and organisations in the area the European recognition they deserve and establish the TNP Public Institution as the leading organisation in the search for expert solutions in nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and as a coordinator of development efforts in the area of the Julian Alps.

2.7 NATIONAL MARINE PARK OF ALONISSOS / UNIVERSITY OF THESSALY

2.7.1 Briefly description

National Marine Park of Alonissos-N.Sporades (NMPANS) was established to protect the monachus seals and other rare and threatened species of the Flora and Fauna of the island. The largest population of seals in the Mediterranean is found in Greece, spread out over the whole of the Aegean and Ionian Seas, while it is significant that the species has essentially disappeared from the industrialised Western Mediterranean. The above makes it easy to appreciate the importance of the Park in protecting the seals. Because its morphology and position, the Park is an ideal habitat, rich in food. The active participation of the region's fishermen and the fishing Cooperative of Alonissos in the protection effort is significant, and has largely contributed to the elimination of the deliberate killing of seals in the area of the Park.

National Marine Park of Alonissos-N.Sporades



The Park is not a shut area and its development depends on the right use of the natural resources. It is an extensive, protectable area of a size of 2.200km about. The Park also encompasses six smaller islands (Peristera, Kyra Panagia, Gioura, Skantzoura, Piperi) and 22 uninhabited islands and rocky outcrops. Generally, the geographic isolation of the area, its morphology, the limited degree of human interference and the excellent condition of the natural environment make the land and sea areas of the Park an ideal habitat for many threatened species of plants and animals.

2.7.2 SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Enhance cooperation with NGO (e.g MoM)
- Protection of local natural habitats
- NMPANS importance for the variety of species in flora and fauna
- Active involvement of local residents
- Important archaeological findings in the area of the Park
- NMPANS provides a satisfied accessibility

Weaknesses

- Absence of a stable management body
- Limited financial resources
- Absence of an "eco" orientation of the Park
- Mass tourism only during the summer season
- Ineffective policing/patrolling of the Park

Opportunities

- Diversification of tourism activities
- Significant contribution to Scientific Research providing scientific career opportunities
- Increase of local environmental awareness

Threats

- Local residents are often disorganized and have little capacity to coordinate amongst themselves
- Absence of state financing
- The loss of cultural and archeological history due to inadequate marketing activities
- Unregulated, tourist industry infrastructure is causing major long term damage to the Park's ecosystem

MoM/Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk Seal, a non-profit, non-governmental environmental organization was until recently the only authority that proposed a Management Plan for the future viability of the Park. The basic characteristics of this management plan are:

- The establishment of NMPANS's Management Body based on the island of Alonissos and capable enough to develop new initiatives and economic activities compatible with the principles of Integrated Management and Sustainable Development.
- The Management Body's Managing Committee should be composed of 9 members with knowledge of and experience in the protection and management of the natural environment. The Managing Committee should include representation from all the necessary central and local government sectors, and organizations as well.

- Considering the current pressures on the natural environment, the NMPANS will constitute a laboratory trying to conciliate the actual tourism development and the objectives of the NMPANS.
- Because of the continuous degradation of the fish stock, it becomes essential to implement an innovative strategy of managing the fishing activity through the use of methods and actions used in other European marine protected areas.

2.8 An Overall View

2.8.1 Introduction

The **SWOT analysis** adopted above for all the regions involved in the Project brings up a few key issues relevant for the future of collaborative management practices in the National Parks and the environmental Protected Areas

In order to formulate a satisfied collaborative strategy of development for both the national parks and the environmental protected areas it becomes of first priority to adopt a realistic analysis of the key strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats for their future development.

An Overall SWOT Approach

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌘ Human Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Role of local community ○ NGO ⌘ Biodiversity ⌘ Rich cultural heritage 	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌘ Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Human Resources ○ Financial Resources ○ Infrastructure ⌘ Managerial/Institutional ⌘ Research and scientific interest
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌘ Protection of Heritage Areas ⌘ Enhancing Tourism Experience ⌘ Management Co operations ⌘ Promoting Educational Activity ⌘ Enhancing Public Support & Awareness 	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌘ Environmental Impacts ⌘ Tourism Industry Consequences ⌘ Infrastructure Projects

2.8.2 Strengths

Human Resources:

- Increased participation role and responsibility of the local authorities & government.

The majority of the regions under consideration provide an enhanced interest of the local authorities. All these stakeholders from the local communities constitute a constant growing network of community groups and volunteers that begin to



undertake conservation interest and working activities.

Therefore in most of the National Parks we can observe a growing shift in attitude and awareness of the local and the broader community, while in some other cases e.g. NMPANS, state based integrated management

framework are put in place in order to enable a coordinated approach to planning and implementation of conservation programs

- Committed and dedicated staff within agencies and NGO organizations, with adequate knowledge and skills.

NGO's actually play an important role in both the operation and the development of the natural Parks and the environmental protected areas. It is important for the current governmental bodies and the managerial authorities to take advantage of the efforts of such organizations towards a certainly better outcome for the areas and the regions generally.

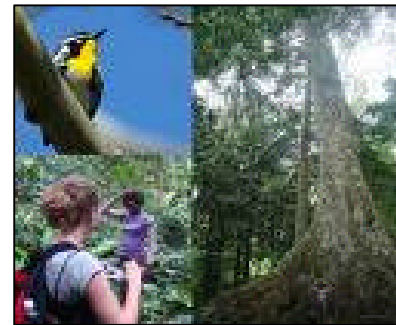
In addition in some Parks (e.g. NPANS) the role of NGO's, especially those with scientific activity, provides an added value to the Park and the region due to the absence of managerial competences and the existence of bureaucratic difficulties.

As we can conclude from the short description provided from the SWOT analysis, the role of such organizations is quite important since in some cases adopt leading initiatives that they considered fundamental for the further sustainability and development of the Parks and the environmentally protected areas.

⚡ **Biodiversity:**

The National Parks and the environmental protected areas constitute significant natural resource/biodiversity values.

Most of them are with high conservation significance since all of these areas are designated flora/fauna reserves.



⚡ **Rich cultural heritage:**

Some of the National Parks and the environmental protected areas retain remarkable set of traditions, monuments and history. Many of these are relevant aspects that should be addressed for the formulation of the strategies for the further development of the Parks. The traditional villages in many regions are also especial representation of historical legacy where the local culture is still represented in terms of architecture, costumes and traditions.

2.8.3 Weaknesses

i. Resources

⚡ **Human Resources:**

Staff resources are critical to performing a number of objectives and operations for the Parks. The observed general absence on adequate capable staff means there are serious weaknesses in Parks' capacity to implement various programs and generally to assure the effective operation of the Park.

⚡ **Financial Resources:**⁵

Most of the Parks and the protected areas have insufficient funds to implement efficiently both natural conservation management and tourist infrastructure management. In the majority of the Parks and the environmental protected areas it is observed a lack of a diverse portfolio of funding sources. Despite the fact that most of the parks and the protected areas have been established in the past, still

⁵ Vietnam, National Report on Protected Areas and Development, ICEM, Indooroopilly, Queensland

there isn't any committed funding on an annual basis in order to guarantee effective management of these particular institutions. In addition, the costs of managing and maintaining of these Protected Areas have increased significantly over the last years. In some cases also the Parks are not capable enough to establish strong relations with a diverse range of founders. Basic components of this funding problem have been identified to be:

- a general "absence" of funding for environmental areas management,
- a differentiation of the annual budget allocation and
- an imbalance in investment priorities for environmental territories with a special interest on infrastructure development while giving insufficient investment priority to conservation.

Therefore the Parks and the protected Areas based merely on research programs are constrained by financial year budgets that do not reflect the real operation requirements.

≈ **Infrastructure:**

Established knowledge database including flora/fauna surveys, plant distribution data etc.

ii. Managerial/Institutional

- The operation of some national parks can be characterised as problematic because of some long lasting conflicts between the various stakeholders (Government, Local authorities, land owners, residents, etc).
- In some partner's cases it is observed an apparent degree of ambiguity and a lack of coordinated effort, between the authorities of the Parks and the associated ministries in each partner's country (Environment, Housing and Lands, Tourism, etc).
- In addition the capacity to develop and implement integrated management plans to address threats to biodiversity is very limited. Actually, there is not any national concern for protected area management planning and many of the protected areas do not have approved management plans. There is no coordinated information management system able to diffuse information on good practices.

- The local managerial authorities of the institutions in some cases adopt a rather very low – defensive profile towards the national Governments. They exhibit relatively low terms of awareness and understanding of the problems occurring, avoiding to ask pressure at the responsible governmental authorities to respond to these problems

iii. Research and scientific interest

- Generally poor cooperation between various research – scientific groups to establish and implement cooperative and integrated research projects
- The existent research capacity is not utilized in satisfactory levels while in some cases a limited interaction with the key management agencies is observed

2.8.4 Threats

The development and conservation of the environmental and ecological reserves is vital for the Parks and the protected Areas in order to meet their natural objectives. However, all these parks and protected areas are not operate isolated but instead they face many threats and pressures that could influence their overall operation and subsequently vital functions. Unfortunately, all the protected areas and national Parks are under some degree of threat. However some of the most important are:

- ***Environnemental Impacts / Climate Change***

The majority of these natural “treasures” are at danger as a result of some serious climate impacts that might include for example rising sea levels, flooding, storms, etc.



Scientists estimate that climate changes such as the “global warming” will have significant effects on protected areas and natural parks, irrespectively of what national or/and international action is taken, since very few protected areas are designed to react to the effects of the climate changes.

Some species are likely to be lost from some protected areas and natural parks, which would not be able to migrate successfully.

- ***Tourism Industry Consequences***

All the tourist organizations (e.g. hotels, restaurants) established in the areas under consideration, irrespective of their location and their degree of comfort that provide consume very important quantities of resources.

The resources can be consumed upwards including all the resources associated with construction (e.g. materials, energetic resources, water, etc) and downwards incorporating resources that are consumed by hotels and restaurants (e.g. food, drinks, ingredients, etc).

- ***Infrastructure Projects***

Many governments through the relative ministries (Tourism, Environment) often establish strategies to promote the tourism in these areas. However these strategies usually incorporate the construction of various infrastructure projects such as road networks, hotels and holiday flats in order to improve the access and the accommodation facilities to these areas. Although such projects aim to the promotion of the regions the construction activities could damage seriously the essential ecological processes of the protected areas.

2.8.5 Opportunities

Beyond the various weaknesses and potential threats described above, the protected areas and natural Parks face many challenges in the 21st century, particularly important for both their present operation but also their future existence. These opportunities are not standard but usually are associated with almost all the aspects of the areas (e.g. environmental change factors).

More specifically some of the most significant and common opportunities are:

- ***Protection of Heritage Areas***

As it has been illustrated from the described SWOT analysis there are many sites of historical importance under the interest of the National Parks and the Protected Areas, which in many cases seem to be ignored or even abandoned. Therefore there is a great opportunity for the authorities of the Parks to incorporate into their overall management plan actions for the Heritages areas under consideration. Specifically⁶ these actions should address issues of management of assets, ecological integrity, public education/awareness objective, etc.

⁶ Parks Canada Agency, "Corporate Plan" 2005/06 – 2009/10

- ***Enhancing Tourism Experience***

All the National Parks and the Environmental Protected Areas under consideration are operating mostly in one or two tourist seasons (e.g. summer or winter). However the managerial authorities of the areas have realized that the tourism sector is constantly evolving. Thus the various tourist operations involved under the existent of the Parks and protected areas could be extended for the other seasons (e.g. spring) by developing tourist niche products and services that would be lasting. In addition, the development of alternative tourism instead of “mass tourism” or “classic tourism” constitutes a category of tourism that should be developed in the regions under consideration

- ***Management Co operations***

Since the authorities of all the Parks and the protected areas have a range of formal cooperative relationships with the members of other environmental organizations this might conclude to an implementation of a common nature based tourism strategy through official agreements of fields of cooperation. The managerial authorities should start to negotiate agreements for future cooperation in order to implement various European environmental projects.

- ***Promoting Educational Activity***

The National Parks should be used for environmental education, both in terms of explaining its purpose and also the opportunities it contains for further development.



There are significant benefits arising from this education “outside the classroom”.

This alternative choice of education would contribute to the enhancement of the eco-values and attitudes, especially in the small ages, helping to avoid initial ignorance and misunderstandings.

- ***Enhancing Public Support & Awareness***

Although most of the National Parks and the protected areas have already established a standard visitor base, due to the various demographic changes (e.g. new ages adopt enhanced environmental intensity) the authorities of the regions should adjust to the new challenges. It becomes of high significance to increase the support and the commitment of the domestic visitors in order to take care of these environmental places. In addition, it is very important to create new potential visitor

“targets” through enhanced investments and the involvement of the tourism companies and non-governmental organizations.

- ***Education and interpretation***

The various activities and products developed from the National parks and the Protected Areas should take into account their educational objectives, becoming extremely beneficial for the young people and the students and encouraging them to become familiar with the protected areas.

2.9 Key issues for the development of collaborative management approaches for protected areas and national parks

The SWOT analysis described above illustrate some important issues necessary for the future of collaborative management approaches adopted from protected areas and national Parks⁷.

- Although the level of interest of some stakeholders is significant, the level of interest for biodiversity and natural resources conservation and also for management planning and implementation is extremely limited even in some cases is almost inexistent.
- Visitor management idensity and management of tourism infrastructure are mainly on the interest list of only of the members of Non Governmential Orgnaizations.
- Education and public awareness activities become of high interest for educational target groups such as universities and schools. Actually it is very important the scientific interest in this area to be further increased through the implementation of various educational programs, in order not only the biodiversity conservation but also the public awareness together with the education on traditional values to be enhanced.
- The financial support for conservation activities in all the areas is limited, depending mostly on international donors and European research programs. For a real collaborative management, financial commitment should increase

⁷ Stanciu E. (2002), *“Steps Towards Collaborative Management in Retezat National Park”*

in terms of state input while some other important stakeholders from the local society should contribute as well.

3. Best & Good Practices identified in the partners' regions

All the Parks' agencies involved in the present project are faced with increasing requirements for their facilities and services together with declining funding and human resources. The main aim of the present section is to determine, describe and analyse the best practices adopted from the Parks and the Protected Areas in their current operation. Also the section provides a framework of other Good Practices for the further management development of the protected areas in order to guide park management agencies in their future operation.

3.1. Best Practice

While many examples of Good Practices came to light during the investigation of the operation of the National Parks and the Protected Areas involved in the Project, it was hard to define the one that demonstrate mastery in a specific area.

However, in the era of the "knowledge society" and new technology we considered that all the management authorities should recognize the need to give these dimensions a high priority.

*✍ **Interactive Educational Destination***

The **European Park of Volcanism** is an impressive exploration destination that covers both educational and recreational needs. Situated in the heart of the Region of Auvergne in France, Vulcania is an ex army camp that was recently and very discretely converted into an entertaining park. The particular recreational venue operates within the area of the Park Naturel Regional des Volcans d'Auvergne.

Vulcania Park of Auvergne



The **European Park of Volcanism** constitutes a Best Practice for the current project by providing the establishment of a Volcanoes recreational and entertainment park within the area of a volcanoes natural park, where the visiting was very scarce. Thus, by attracting the people to entertainment and recreation, the Park also educates and sensitizes the people about the preservation of the nature and vice versa, the park entertains the people that came to the park with an educational scope. Besides, the artificial volcano cone, volcanic garden, shops, information centre, library and play area makes the park a unique destination for the entire region and not only.

There are many activities available for the tourist visitors. With four levels of displays, films, interactivity and other shows, the park provides entertainment and education, emotions and feelings for ages from 6 to 60, and for thinkers to thrill-seekers.

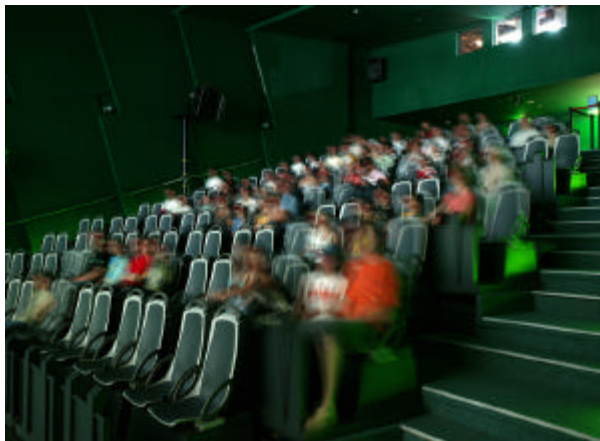
Vulcania's main challenge is to bring science alive with sensations and emotions, while at the same time preserving an educational aspect - an objective that considerably changes both the appearance and atmosphere of the site, with new combinations of fun and learning, emotion and understanding.

Vulcania Park, "magma explorer simulation"



The park it becomes a formidable source of knowledge, offering the opportunity to share and understand the major challenges of the 21st century. Vulcania, in line with its educational objectives, therefore plays a major role in understanding these sometimes violent natural phenomena that govern our planet.

Vulcania Park, "audio visual show"



In specially equipped rooms, the Vulcania scientific team has set up a series of interactive and fun experiments.

The Experiments Area is available for families during weekends and school holidays. Learn while having fun; understand through doing.

The visitor has the opportunity to learn about the Earth's mysterious forces: risks and hazards, earthquakes, volcanoes, etc.

Especially for the children there are brand new attractions with some interactive games for the whole family as well.

Vulcania Park, "activities for children"



In order to assure the value of the provided information, all the information presented at Vulcania has been validated by the International Scientific Committee.

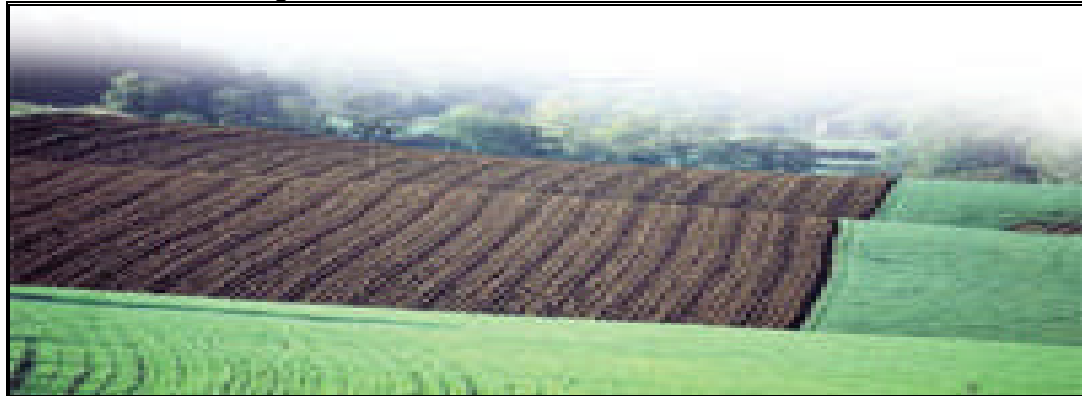
3.2 Good Practices

Many good practices have been identified in the operation of the Partners' protected areas and national parks. It is recommended that these practices should be promoted, and exchanged between the parks and the protected areas, obtaining the ongoing information exchange and improvement in management planning. The challenge for improvement remains for all the Park agencies.

1. New Agricultural Practices

The regional nature park of **Pilat** (Massif Central / France) constitutes an interesting model of testing and implementation of new agricultural practices. Within the infrastructure of the Park, exists a modern laboratory where specialised scientific researchers are focusing on the development of new agricultural practices respectful for the environment.

Nature Park of Pilat, Agriculture territories



This specific action is very important since it can provide significant results about the

Pilat's range of cream products



appropriate method of agricultural management that should be used from the farmers.

The farmers can be constantly informed about the new practices that are developed in the park and adopt them for their own benefits.

Thus, through this good practice significant

benefits can emerge not only for the Park itself but

also for the overall local agro-economy.

Moreover, due to the nature of this specific good practice this can be easily transferred to other regions operating in similar economic sectors since it would be firstly tested and evaluated and then adopted as a scientific recognised agricultural method.

Pilat's famous apples



2. Enhanced Accesability

Triglav National Park public institution decided to enhance the infrastructure of the Park enabling the accessibility for the people that are facing several disabilities.

Triglav National Park, access ramps



The Authorities of the Park decided to incorporate in the region, ramps and the other entire infrastructure in order to provide access to the visitors with mobility restrictions.

In addition, the Park would be equipped in a way that visitors with other several disabilities (e.g. deaf, partially sighted persons) would be in position to experience the natural sights and cultural attractions of the park. Such an evolution, will permit the entrance to the natural environment to all the potential visitors.

This “sensitive” Best Practice attracted the interest of many other Parks.. All the regions under consideration through their State authorities have express willingness to enhance the assistant to the local groups with “special” needs.

3. Application of New Technologies

Connemara National Park established the application of modern technologies within the National Park providing multiple benefits for the visitors. Specifically, the usage of 3-D exhibitions of the Connemara landscape, with translations (6 languages) available at reception for use during visits provides the visitors with all the necessary information available to the most common languages (according the visiting data).

Connemara National Park, 3D exhibitions



During periods of time that weather conditions can not permit the traditional tour in the Park, 3-D exhibitions are offering the best alternative for the effective operation of the Park.

Moreover, **Connemara National Park** and the Local Universities have linked up to develop a field laboratory, which is housed on the grounds of the park. Research students working on various aspects of wildlife in Connemara use the laboratory.

Connemara National Park, Field Laboratory



The data obtained from the studies is beneficial to both the Universities and the management of the National Park.

The involvement of students in research as well as the creation of the laboratory where the visitors and especially the school children are coming, creates a perfect environment for ecological public

awareness both in the short and in the long run.

In addition, the research could help to better understand the whole area in terms of flora, fauna, actors, stakeholders and needs and thus create the best framework for a sustainable development of the natural park.

4. Basic determinants for future development

This section describes the basic management benchmarks that should contribute to the overall success of the further development of the protected areas and the environmental protected areas.

⚡ Different features are required to satisfy the needs of each region

There is no doubt that there isn't an overall or standard strategy to meet the needs and the requirements of ensuring a sustainable development for all the National Parks and the protected areas.

For example, the results of the SWOT analysis for the regions of National Marine Park of Alonissos and the national Parks of Ireland have all shown the need of a separate innovative approach to create new types of organization structure, effective and efficient management mechanisms.

However, the overall findings from all the partners regions, illustrated the importance of adopting a clear philosophy of sustainable tourism development, implemented through an enhanced communication strategy, achieving to attract the commitment and the interest of all the stakeholders.

It is very important that the organization structure themes of the national parks and the protected areas to incorporate both enhanced involvement of the private sector and encouragement of the community participation. The main objective of the new management groups should be the need to implement the strategies of sustainable tourism by providing achievable actions.

⚡ Community awareness and local business involvement

A common feature revealed from the SWOT analysis of every region is the involvement of the local community in some way in the development process. Some of the regions adopt a rather more integrated approach in terms of community involvement than some others (e.g. NMPA).

However the involvement of the local residents is not applicable in every case. Therefore it becomes of high significance to formulate an appropriate organization structure that would “permit” stakeholders to participate in the management planning procedure. At the same time, it is important a successful communication strategy to be implemented in order to keep informed all the stakeholders with the sustainable strategy for the park/ protected area⁸.

The managerial authorities of the Parks/Areas should take into consideration all these factors that have impact on the cooperation between the park/protected area and the local community in the context of sustainable tourism development. Therefore it is important for the principles of the Parks/Areas to convince local residents about the significance of the park for both the nature conservation and the local economic development.

The methods used for this might be:

- ? An effective collaboration between public agencies and private sector operators/landowners
- ? An integrated management strategy
- ? Promotion of the local economic benefits as the main incentive for further cooperation
- ? A constant “focus” on environmental interpretation and education activities

In addition, the local business environment as being described by both the existing and the future tourism companies requires the appropriate guidance in order to respond to the new challenges, to employ sustainable business practices and to provide modern products. Such an evolution leads to beneficial outcomes for the local residents and the tourists who are experiencing real evidence of environmental good practices.

✍ **Marketing Plan of National Parks based on environmental factors**

The tourist markets for national parks should emphasize on the values of sustainable environment. It is very important these values to be highlighted at all times in order Parks and protected areas to become tourist destinations based merely on environmental features.

⁸ Stevens T. (2002), “Sustainable Tourism in National Parks and Protected Areas: an overview *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report*”

The managerial authorities of the Parks and the protected areas should lead all the marketing efforts being increasingly involved in this process. This should incorporate the development of a successful Marketing Plan including an extended promotion of Park's logo, the distribution of Park's, products after a careful selection of distribution channels, the extended usage of Media and Internet as well

☞ **An integrated "holistic" strategy**

Each of the national parks and the protected areas analyzed in previous section has adopted a tourism strategy that in many cases has not been evolved over a long time period. All these different strategies require adequate resources in order to be implemented in terms of funding, manpower, etc.

However, strategies must not be stable as it happens in most of the cases. These tourism strategies should be dynamic and changeable responding to tourism market requirements. For this reason it is very important a stable managerial authority to be established in order to co-ordinate, monitor and review the implemented strategy.

A sustainable tourism strategy for a national park/area must be aligned with the overall tourism strategy in national level and at the same time, it should be integrated with the strategies for other tourism areas. Therefore, both the National Parks/Protected Areas and the neighborhood tourism destinations require a more holistic approach.

The SWOT analysis undertaken, illustrates how specific issues have been addressed in different regions. It can be easily assumed that for various reasons have been adopted different approaches for the effective viability and development of the national parks and the protected areas.

However we concluded that every specific region under consideration should evolve its own practices best suited to meet local requirements. In addition, there is a need for planning and implementing an overall tourism strategy that would ensure the sustainable tourism development for the parks and the protected areas.

5. Management challenges and development strategies for the future

5.1 Introduction

Scientists specialized on environmental issues have noted the need for increased recognition of the crucial role of protected areas and National Parks in achieving sustainable development objectives, particularly since many key stakeholders (local authorities, residents) still consider these areas as a barrier to their activities and benefits.

Among all the other challenges facing the Protected Areas and the National Parks of the project in their effective operation, is the subject of financial resources and infrastructure. These constitute the most significant problems that the managerial authorities have to address as a key component of the local economy.

In addition, all the authorities of the protected areas and the national parks should aim at accomplishing the basic objective of achieving the required synergy between conservation of natural values and sustainable tourism by developing and implementing a sustainable tourism development strategy⁹.

5.2 Governance and institutional reform

The role of the government is very important since it has serious impact on the successful management of the protected areas and national parks. Therefore, it is suggested that there should be a clear relationship between the associated ministries (environment, tourism, etc.) and the levels of involvement of their relative authority in terms of finance and rest of resources. Park's and Protected area's managers need to be sensitive to the evolving bodies of authority within government and target their marketing strategies in a way to encourage networks of alliances and cooperation with agencies and individuals of the local community¹⁰.

⁹ Alsemgeest L. (2007), "Effective Tourism Product Development in PAN Park regions", PAN Parks Foundation,

¹⁰ ICEM, (2003), "Cambodia National Report on Protected Areas and Development". Review of Protected Areas and Development in the Lower Mekong River Region, Indooroopilly, Queensland, Australia. 148 pp

The managerial authorities of the protected areas and the national parks need to illustrate the significance and the importance of these areas and position their environmental role more centrally in the government and the economy planning.

In order to achieve this evolution the related ministries should reorient their own policies and approaches to promote protected areas as a critical engine for achieving the government's overall environmental and tourism policy, and therefore to clarify for enhanced state funds.

5.3 Tourism industry trends

National parks and environmental protected areas constitute significant components of the local economies and also regions of great interest for both national and international tourists.

However, tourism constitutes an opportunity for the protected areas and the national Parks only if net benefits for nature protection and local communities can be assured. It is necessary that the required symbiosis can be achieved between nature conservation and nature-based tourism. Only under these conditions can be achieved the desired quality of the tourism products and the quality of the visitor experience as well as the sustainable use of natural resources on which the tourism products and facilities are based¹¹.

In addition a more intensive marketing orientation should be established for the majority of the National Parks promoting the offered tourism quality as basic brand of their tourism strategy. It is very important for the Parks to develop a very intensive brand that should be able to attract potential visitors/tourists not only domestic but international as well.

However, since the size of the visitors constantly increases (due to the better education), national parks and protected areas could experience an increase in domestic leisure travel during the next few years.

It is very important for the various governments to make National Parks and Protected Areas of their regions preferred tourism destinations. People interested for sustainable and heritage tourism tend to travel farther, stay longer and spend more than the other "simple" leisure travelers. This type of tourism generated in the regions with Parks and other environmental protected areas automatically increase

¹¹ Kun Z. "The PAN Parks Sustainable Tourism Strategy as a tool for nature based tourism development in and around protected areas"

the demand for off-season tourism services. Therefore the development of tourism pressures will place challenges for national parks and protected areas to maintain their ecological integrity.

Parks and protected areas are forced to find innovative ways to manage market demand and to preserve ecological integrity.

For the next years, sustainable ecological tourism would emerge as an important market especially in some regions.

Tourism trends indicate that more green sensitive tourists are looking for environmental and natural based tourism activities. The local products of the regions that are situated the Parks and the protected areas should meet this need. There are many opportunities for Parks to work with local communities to take advantage of these opportunities.

5.4 Local community involvement & educational promotion of the Areas

It is very important that the local communities of the natural parks and the protected areas have to be more effectively involved in the operation and the management of the institutions. Although the involvement of local residents in protected area's management has increased in some cases during the last years still there is a long way to go¹².

The local community should participate actively in the decision making process for sustainable tourism development and for both the creation and the promotion of tourism products.

Since it has been proved that local residents play vital role in the achievement of sustainable development, national parks and protected areas it is important to collaborate with local residents in terms of establishing, implementing and monitoring tourism strategies. The management authorities of the parks and the protected areas should work with the local communities to protect and present their heritage.

Therefore, it is very important for the Areas to establish cooperative management boards. Local community of each region can be considered as a basic provider of tourism products and services. Only through joint strategies and activities can be achieved multiple benefits for both the local economies and the local societies.

¹² World Conservation Union, "Protected areas in Europe: IUCN'S, Program for 2005-2008 background information"

The management of the national parks and the protected areas should encourage consultation with local residents and public education programs in order to promote domestic heritage at the regions under consideration identifying at the same time the economic opportunities associated with the operation of the national parks.

Moreover, according the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy (STDS) proposed by PAN Parks Foundation, all the protected areas and national Parks under consideration should not be treated as isolated territories but as basic parts of the wider regions. However in order to adopt such an approach it is important the local residents to increase there support which can be achieved through:

- Enhanced knowledge of the local community for the benefits generated from the natural Parks and the sustainable tourism
- Efficient alliance/cooperation between local residents and protected area's managerial authorities
- An external facilitator can usually help in solving communications problem between the
- The participation of external experts in order to provide significant help in terms of effective communication and cooperation between the different stakeholders

Moreover, the Parks and the protected Areas, by providing the necessary help (e.g. through publishing and circulating educational material and tourist packages) to all the teachers and students to learn more about their region and its natural resources, should contribute significantly to ensure that individuals behave in an environment-oriented way. By promoting their biodiversity values and existing eco-systems, Parks can achieve the "young" visitors' commitment to sustainability, developing a strong environmental awareness as well.

Therefore, the need to foster the knowledge of the Park and its choice as destination of educational travels should be seen as important first-hand experiences that foster the awareness of environmental protection objectives¹³.

¹³ Adriatic New Neighbourhood Programme, (2000), "Project N.A.P. - Network of Adriatic Parks"

5.5 Financial commitment and funding mechanisms

For almost all the Protected Areas and National Parks the financial resources are inadequate. The observed under-investment by the governments concludes to the incapability of these areas to cover their conservation and social requirements.

Actually, most protected areas and national parks have a small core budget that comes from the province or, in the case of few national parks, from the national government. These funds are seldom enough to cover the protected area's and national park's full operations and maintenance costs. Most other funds are allocated annually and depended on the balance of the state and provincial budgets.

Thus, sustainable financing for the protected area system is an issue of critical importance. Long-term funding is necessary for the national parks and the environmental protected areas in order to ensure their further operation, to implement their recommendations for ensuring the protection of ecological identity in their regions.

Authorities in many cases found concluded that the majority of assets of the Parks and the protected areas have now passed their operation life cycle and most of them are now in fair or poor condition. Based on these findings, it is estimated that additional investments will be required to maintain and improve Parks' infrastructure. Therefore, it is necessary the establishment of a fund raising strategy in order to assure the provision of a stable and long-term financing for the conservation of the biodiversity and the further development of the National Parks and the protected areas. Appropriate condition of the accomplishment of such a strategy should be the institutional political independence of the Natural Parks providing the necessary flexibility and adaptability to donors and European programs.

5.5.1 Funding Mechanisms

Such a funding strategy should incorporate a number of new funding mechanisms that would permit the Protected Areas and the National Parks to raise additional funding¹⁴:

1. **Development of tourism/commercial transactions**, these transactions can include the sales of environmental service and products (collection of royalty payments on brand names and images, etc)

¹⁴ Tourism & Transport Forum of Australia, "A Natural Partnership: Making national Parks a Tourism Priority"

2. **Increased appropriations of the governmental budgets** to the parks' managerial authorities
3. **Direct private investment** towards tourism infrastructure, which might be for the benefit of the visitors and implemented in partnership with parks' authorities (e.g. joint venture).
4. **Community involvement** in the management of tourism infrastructure (e.g. maintenance) through the development of local foundations, trusts, etc.

5.6 Enhanced reinforcement for conservation activities in protected areas and national parks

It becomes of high importance that the staff engaged with the operation of these areas receives the adequate reinforcement to continue its conservation activities. The regular payment of the field staff should be assured together with all the other necessary actions in order to ensure the further improvement of their working conditions. Except the personnel costs and the necessary equipment (uniforms, field equipment, etc.) it is also important to ensure that the staff related with the operation of the regions receives specialized training adapted to the new levels of threats and insecurity.

Through the establishment of regulatory framework the patrolling procedure can be more effective while through scientific based biomonitoring, basic data on biodiversity trends can also be gathered¹⁵.

5.7 Marketing Plan and promotion activities of Protected Areas and National Parks

It is very important for the agencies related to the Protected Areas and National Parks to start to adopt mechanisms in order to attract more visitors. Therefore it becomes of first priority to define which "target group" to aim for, the marketing channels and the contents of the messages that should be used, etc.

All these are significant parts of Marketing Plan that the authorities of the Parks and the Protected areas should incorporate in the framework of an integrated Management Plan.

¹⁵ Patry M. (2003), "World Heritage at the Vth IUCN World Parks Congress", UNESCO World Heritage Centre

As we observed in the SWOT analysis implemented in previous chapter most of the protected areas under consideration are promoted merely only through printed material supplied by Protected Areas and National Parks authorities. Most of the authorities implement a limited advertisement campaign selecting internet and brochures as the main advertisement "tools".

However, the marketing activities should not be considered from the authorities of the Parks as a mechanism for attracting visitors and developing a client base for future revenues. The development of an effective Marketing strategy should aim to the implementation of various others objectives such as the management of tourism visitation, education of the general public for conservation-environmental issues and provision of pre-visit information.

Therefore,

- ? Protected areas that depend on the opportunity of the traditional tourism, should adopt a close cooperation with tourism agencies (ministries, organizations, etc) to ensure the appropriate diffusion of the information and the environmental messages on behalf of the protected areas.
- ? Promotion activities can be used effectively for the provision of conservation/environmental messages and thus to assist the management of the area in the development of the necessary conservation sensitivity

5.8 Development of communication mechanisms

For all the parks and the protected areas involved in this project, becomes of first priority to develop enhanced mechanisms of communication.

The communication between all the involved stakeholders is extremely important and therefore, mechanisms should be developed in order to keep tourism enterprises and other interests aware of the ongoing work and the opportunities that are arise to them.

This communication process should not be limited only in terms of internal contact between the stakeholders. It should be expanded between the involved Parks and the Protected Areas, by developing a communication system based on modern technology, which will link the operation centres of the Parks and the natural areas of the ParkOmotion project, with a view to the integrated use of these areas and the

full, mutual knowledge of territories and protected areas, their wildlife and vegetation, their tourist attractions and their offered services¹⁶.

The proposed communication network should be supported by a technical team, which will be supplied with a number of IT experts Group, and equally paid by each partner. All partner Parks will be responsible for the collection and circulation of valuable information concerning their areas, as well as for establishing and networking at least one visitor "Hub" in each area.

5.9 Staff development

For all the Protected Areas and the Natural Parks employees and volunteers should be recognized as the most important single factor in ensuring the successful management of tourism in protected areas. A successful relationship between staff and visitors can assure the emergence of a number of benefits for both sides.

It becomes of high importance the constant development of the staff participated in Parks' overall operation. The staff involved in the operation of the Parks should receive all the required training from several sources particularly from the various conservation NGO's operating in the neighboring areas of the Parks. Even the government staff should provide enhanced expertise by participating in international conferences and adopting best practices of management.

It is important the competences and skills of the involved staff to increase significantly. A carefully selected and skilfully trained staff of the Parks constitutes a significant asset for the Area since tourists will appreciate and share their appreciation with other potential visitors.

The training of the Park's staff is a vital investment for every institution and it should be strategically planned in order to provide a meaningful learning experience for new or current employees and volunteers. Moreover, this training should not be provided only at the beginning of the employment, but actually must accompany the employee throughout the operation of the Park¹⁷.

However except the required training of the staff, the adequate salaries constitute the necessary financial motivation that increases the required commitment. Only by

¹⁶ Adriatic New Neighbourhood Programme, (2000), "Project N.A.P. - Network of Adriatic Parks"

¹⁷ Eagles P., Mc. Cool S., Haynes C. (2002), "Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas - Guidelines for Planning and Management", IUCN – The World Conservation Union

such improvement can avoid the potential of developing staff that is concentrated only for the implementation of foreign funded projects while some other although the fact that they have broad responsibilities are forced to find additional work to supplement their income.

The placement of additional staff members in the operation of the Parks and the Protected areas has resulted in many benefits for the park, the NGO's involved, the local community but still there are some important details that have to be faced from the managerial authorities.

6. Conclusions

The presented report provides selected information concerning the current situation and the potential in protected areas and national parks. The report contains summarized information for both the problems that some Areas face at the moment and the strategies that should develop for the future.

Providing information about problems of inadequate funding, absence of integrated management and conflicts between the various stakeholders, this final report provides a conceptual background for understanding the parks' overall operation and their inadequate management mechanisms. It provides a theoretical basis for effective management solutions, and it proposes practical suggestions to the responsible management authorities.

The information was received via questionnaires completed by the involved administrations of the protected areas and national parks, followed by visits (Fact Finding Missions) to the referred protected areas.

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8. Appendix I.

Integrated and Sustainable Development of Tourism Regions



MINI PROJECT 1. PARKoMOTION-Promotion of Natural Parks

Work Package 1.:

Evaluation of the current situation in the partner regions

Action 1.1.

Identification and evaluation of existing problems, obstacles, and practices in the partner regions

Project Information Report required by all partners

<p>Partner's name:</p> <hr/>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. January '07 – February '07</p> <p>Please note, report has to be returned to the project manager by the end of the reference period.</p>
<p>Region, Country:</p> <hr/>	
<p>Name of the Natural Park/ Protected Area:</p>	
<p>Please provide information on the following subjects. Your text needs to be as long as necessary in order to provide sufficient information on the topic.</p>	

PART A. General Information

1. Provide general information about the natural park and /or the environmentally protected areas:

In order to answer the above question, follow the guidelines below or answer the questions below:

- ✍ What is the main subject /theme of the park?
- ✍ Where is it located? A brief description providing information about the size, the land use, etc
- ✍ What are the special features of the park?
- ✍ Provide information on the establishment of the national park and /or the environmental protected areas.
- ✍ When it was locally or internationally recognised?
- ✍ Is there any relevant legislation/conditions/restrictions that describe the legal ownership of the natural park?
- ✍ What is the legal status of the park and its features within it?
- ✍ Is there any organisation or authority that is responsible for the operational activities of the park?
- ✍ Describe the infrastructure/ facilities of the park (e.g. roads, facilities, buildings, easements, services, etc)

2. What are the main tourism activities developed so far at the natural Park and/or the environmentally protected areas?

In order to answer the above question, follow the guidelines below or answer the questions below:

- ✍ Identify the tourism activities available for the visitors at the park
- ✍ Are there any well organised and guided tours within the Park and the protected areas?
- ✍ Are there any organised protected sites that can be visited by tourists? What can be seen there? What can be done there?
- ✍ What are the facilities in the area under consideration for the provided tourist activities?
- ✍ Are there any alternative tourist attractions and tourist activities available at around areas of the park?

3. Provide basic visitation data of the park, reflecting the total number of recorded visits¹⁸ for the last few years

In order to answer the above question, follow the guidelines below or answer the questions below:

	in thousands
Park Visits per year/month:	
Organised tour visits per year	
Visitors/Tourists per year	
Other information relevant to the tourist activity	

- ✍ Provide any data about the visitor characteristics and their country of origin?
- ✍ Is there any information available regarding the gender and age characteristics of visitors as well as their different occupations
- ✍ Is there any seasonality of visitors indicated by the visitor book records? This should provide information about the busiest periods of the parks.

PART B. Strategies of Development

4. Describe the Marketing Plan activities taken so far or to be undertaken for the natural Park and/or the environmentally protected areas?

In order to answer the above question, follow the guidelines below or answer the questions below:

- ✍ What are the basic elements of the marketing plan? What are the promotion strategies available to the Park?
- ✍ Are there any publications or brochures on specific languages about the park? Are the existing brochures and promotional programs successful enough?
- ✍ What are the main Marketing channels used (radio and printed program)? How effective is the campaign? Are there any other supporting activities?
- ✍ Are there any strategies to support the promotion of the natural Parks by the Ministry of Tourism or other similar services? The funds for the campaign are the appropriate for a broad based awareness?
- ✍ What is the contribution of the government to the implementation of the marketing policies?
- ✍ In what terms the success of the Marketing activities are measured? (in quantified

¹⁸ Recorded visits are those recorded through campground registrations, trail and traffic counters, and visual counts

attitude changes, number of visitors, or in increased awareness, and knowledge ?)

- ✍ Is there any need for exhibition stands, in events that provide very high levels of exposure with themes sympathetic to the Parks' campaign?
- ✍ Is there a logo?

5. Identify the main strategy of development and the main actions/measures for the natural Parks and the environmentally protected areas?

In order to answer the above question, follow the guidelines below or answer the questions below:

- ? Is there a master plan of development? If it exists, what are the main actions and measures of development? When it was officially adopted?
 - ? What are the main objectives of this strategy?
 - ? What are the main policies?
 - ? Is there any success in its implementation until now?
 - ? Does the policy include any plan for attending international markets that are focused on the natural Parks and the protected areas?
 - ? Has the government any contemplation for taking advantage of the potential of natural parks? Does the Ministry of Tourism have any Marketing Plan for the promotion and the visibility of the Park?
 - ? Describe briefly the main aspects of this Marketing Plan.
 - ? What is the involvement of the local authorities to this strategy until now?
 - ? Have been planned any tourist campaigns that create and promote thematic and special interests for the Park until now?
 - ✍ Is there a development plan in order to ensure that the natural Park is adequately preserved?
 - ✍ Is there a plan for improving natural resources conservation systems in the protected areas and the natural Parks? What is it?
 - ✍ Is there any strategy of development aligned with a the two-component framework that is based on scientific research and sound conservation practices?
 - ✍ Is there any scientific research and the educational facilities developed for the natural Park?
 - ✍ Is the creation of a strong regional network of communication and exchange of experiences possible between all of the protected areas and the Parks?
- Are there any other activities such as deforestation, erosion, unsustainable agriculture, and over fishing that place unnatural pressure on the smooth development of the Park?

7. Identify the main problems of the natural Parks and the environmentally protected areas

In order to answer the above question, follow the guidelines below or answer the questions below:

- a. What are the financing sources for the operation of the park? Are there any funding problems? How serious are the problems of financing the natural Parks and the protected areas?
- b. What are the basic operating and maintenance problems?
- c. Are there staff and funds enough to protect the parks and serve the visitors?
- d. Is the support sought from the academic world and other agencies and organizations sufficient? The funding for scientific research is it meagre?
- e. Is the state provision for the operating funds adequate or not? The maintenance and further development of the natural Parks are consistently among the most under-funded programs?

PART C. SWOT Analysis

10. In your opinion, what are the most important strengths that must be identified and evaluated in this project about the Park and/or the protected areas?

Please evaluate them by the level of importance and explain briefly why they constitute significant strengths for the viability and the further development of the natural Park and the protected area.

11. In your opinion, what are the most important weaknesses that must be identified and evaluated in this project about the Park and/or the protected areas?

Please evaluate them by the level of importance and explain briefly why they constitute significant weaknesses for the viability and the further development of the natural Park and the protected area.

12. In your opinion, what are the most important opportunities that must be identified and evaluated in this project about the Park and/or the protected areas?

Please evaluate them by the level of importance and explain briefly why they constitute significant opportunities for the viability and the further development of the natural Park and the protected area.

13. In your opinion, what are the most important threats that must be identified and evaluated in this project about the Park and/or the protected areas?

Please evaluate them by the level of importance and explain briefly why they constitute significant threats for the viability and the further development of the natural Park and the protected area.

PART D. Maps, Photos, Documents

14. Provide digital maps, photos or other documents of the parks or natural resources in separate files. In case that you have specialized maps please provide them all.