# COMMUNICATON CONCEPT

**D.T2.2.2**

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# CONTENT

# 1. Introduction

This communication concept is a deliverable (D.T2.2.2) of Activity 2.2 "Development of requirements and strategies for buffer zone management". The result (see below) is a joint development of communication concepts (e.g for brochures/posters, guided WH tours, WH stakeholder action days, guided WH hiking trips for locals, movie, advertisement activities, mobile exhibition etc.) with all project partners and selected associated partners.

The concept is the outcome of a two-day online workshop which was held in October 2020, organised by Kalkalpen National Park. Participants from nearly all project partners discussed the necessary communication for UNESCO World Heritage Sites in their different phases, from the nomination to the inscription and the established World Heritage status.

To make use of the overall knowledge of the partners about communication in and of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, their expertise was an important input to this communication concept. As already a lot of experience have been made by the project partners, they were asked to contribute with their experience as an input for the workshop in the following working tasks:

- o Networking with other World Heritage partners,
- o World heritage program to schools and kindergartens,
- o Involvement of local stakeholders (landowners, authorities, tourism providers ...),
- o Communication and information to local population (other to stakeholders),
- o Information offers to tourists.

The experience and best practice were then sorted and structured in the workshop. There were 4 working groups, which represented the overall topics of this communication concept:

- o Tourism
- o Local population & schools/kindergartens
- o Local stakeholders
- o ▯WH partner network

The collected information from the workshop served as a basis for the development of this communication concept. It presents best practise examples, necessary communication activities and the risks that can come with communicating UNESCO World Heritage Sites addressing the abovementioned target groups.

With this detailed communication concept for the communication between the protected areas and tourism, local population & schools/kindergartens, local stakeholders and the World Heritage partner network, the protected areas can implement this concept and its activities individually and adapt them to their current status and needs.

# 2. Phases of (future) UNESCO World Heritage Sites

To make use of this communication concept, it is necessary to understand the different phases, protected areas can be in within its life cycle. In 2005 the Carinthian Government in Austria published the so-called IPAM Toolbox (source: IPAM-BookletsPublisher: Office of the Carinthian Government; A-9020Editor: Johann WagnerISBN: 3-9502026-8-4), which shall support protected areas in all their phases and presents field of activities (see figure 1). Planners and managers of protected areas should run through all the fields of activity to ensure the best quality of their protected area.

| Phases | | Fields of Activity (FoA) |
|---|---|---|
| Pre-Phase | | Development of Idea and Vision |
| | | Feasibility Check |
| | | Communication and Participation I |
| | | Incorporation into PA-Systems |
| Planning Phase | Basic Planning | Planning Handbook |
| | | Communication and Participation II |
| | | Basic Investigation |
| | | Implementation Planning |
| | | Designation and Establishment |
| | Detailed Planning | Mission Statement and Basic Concepts |
| | | Ecosystem-based Management Plans |
| | | Design of (Regional) Economic Programs |
| | | Specific Planning (Subsidiary Plans) |
| Implementation Phase | | Personnel and Organisational Development |
| | | Evaluating Management Effectiveness |
| | | Financing (Business Plan) |
| | | Impact Assessment and Limitation |
| | | Data and Information Management |
| | | Research Setting and Monitoring |
| | | Communication and Participation III |
| | | Development of Protected Area's Region |
| | | Co-operation Design |
| | | Information, Interpretation and Education |
| | | Visitor Management, Services and Infrastructure |
| | | Marketing and Public Relations |

Figure 1 The fields of activity in Protected Area management-an overview

When it comes to communication and participations, the above shown figure, shows clearly the importance of these activities throughout all the phases of a protected area life cycle as it is the only activity represented in each phase of a protected area (see Communication and Participation I, II and III).

For this communication concepts, the above listed phases of protected areas have been adapted for UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These develop in the following four phases, corresponding to the phases of the IPAM-Toolbox:

- Preparation of Tentative List (Pre-Phase)

- Preparation and Submission of Nomination Dossier, evaluation (Planning Phase)

- Inscription into UNESCO World Heritage List (Implementation Phase)

This communication concept follows these phases to support existing and planned UNESCO World Heritage Sites during their development and existence.

# 3. Tourism

To ensure touristic visitors in an UNESCO World Heritage on the long term, it is important to involve all touristic stakeholders from the beginning of a planned UNESCO World Heritage Site. As the protection and conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value and the integrity of the site should be the main priority, it is from uppermost importance to ensure sustainable tourism and a well working visitor guidance system for the whole site. In the case of the UNESCO World Heritage Property Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe, tourism will happen mainly in the buffer zone, only guided tours shall be offered inside the component part.

## 3.1. 1.1. Which offers are most attractive to tourists?

### 3.1.1. PR activities

In modern times, being active on social media is one of the most important PR activities for protected areas. This ensures the information of all interested persons and makes it possible to keep everybody updated about the process and all activities that are planned and happen in and around the World Heritage Site.



Figure 2 A movie can help communication the values of the site

The production of a film about the process and the World Heritages Site and its special features can help local tourism agencies as well as national and international tourists to get to know the World Heritage Site and learn more about it. The film can be shown in schools, on fairs and in local and national tourist offices and can help communicate the message of the World Heritage Site.

To ensure personal contact with local people and tourism agencies, local festivals with traditional music, arts and food markets can be very effective. The combination of an interesting offer for locals and tourists, also opens possibilities to communicate the values of the World Heritage Site, its history and the offers that are currently available and/or planned in the future.

At such local festivals as well as in shops of protected areas and tourism agency, souvenirs of the area should be offered. Tourists like to take them home or use them as presents of their visit. World Heritage Sites should ensure the originality of souvenirs and consumable souvenirs which are offered in their region, using the name of the World Heritage Site. They should represent the region and the World Heritage Site and be authentic and at best, handmade in the region of the World Heritage Site.

### 3.1.2. Touristic infrastructure

**Touristic infrastructure** is very important for tourists, especially for their individual experience of the World Heritage Sites. As visitors usually use this infrastructure individually, it is important to ensure their sustainable use by the visitors. Additionally, it is from uppermost importance to select the location of these touristic infrastructures very carefully and in accordance with the protection and conservation of the World Heritage Site, its Outstanding Universal Value and integrity.

Thematic infrastructure as paths, trails, info points, observation decks and tree canopy walks can attract attention of tourists and travel agencies and serve as a very prominent promotional tool for the World Heritage Sites. Additionally, they can use communication methods as information boards, digital information, or other communication channels to raise awareness for the World Heritage Sites and its

protection and values. The management as operator of these individual thematic infrastructures must ensure their maintenance and keep all information up to date.

**Exhibitions** can also be very informative and additionally serve as alternative offers for tourists on bad weather days when the outdoor sites cannot be visited. Exhibitions shall present the World Heritage Site and their characteristics and must be designed according to the target group of the World Heritage Site. An up-to-date pedagogical concept is as important as a modern design and interesting content.



Figure 3:Thematic canopy trails can attract tourists.

Another important issue for tourists, especially for international tourists, is a wide option for **accommodation**. It is important that there are options to stay longer than one day. Locals should own and run these accommodations, which also ensures the greatest possible added value that comes with tourists for the region. If international tourists shall be addressed with the offers of the World Heritage Site, English speaking personal should be mandatory.

### 3.1.3. Touristic offers

If tourists and visitors are welcome in a World Heritage Site, it is crucial to also offer interesting and exceptional experiences in or around the World Heritage Sites. These offers shall be created by or together with the World Heritage Site to ensure a certain quality, and their contents are accurate and in line with the overall communication strategy of the World Heritage Site.



Figure 4 Field visits with trained guides and experts are an interesting experience.

Tourist guides are the most important offer for tourists and visitors of World Heritage Sites. They shall be very well educated and well informed about the World Heritage Site and its characteristics. Guides ensure personal contact with visitors and tourists and can share their own experiences in and around the site directly with the visitors.

Experts visits on different topics (e.g. botany, zoology, geology, history) can serve even more detailed information about the sites and addresses interested visitors and experts equally.

Tourist packages which combine all necessary bookings (accommodation, food, activities, excursions) in one programme can be offered by single World Heritage Site and together with other ones in the region or the country. Even international programmes (e. g. for serial, transnational sites) can be offered. If international tourists shall be attracted, English guides are necessary. The tourist agency offering these travels/programmes should be located in the region of the World Heritage Site and work together with local businesses.

## 1.2. Communication tools tourism – which channels and partners can be used to inform tourists about World Heritage offers?

Table 1: Communication tools tourism

| Phases | Activities |
|---|---|
| **Preparation of Tentative List (Pre-Phase)** | Cooperation with local mountaineering associations |
| **Preparation and Submission of Nomination Dossier, evaluation (Planning Phase)** | Create a platform for nature activities |
| | Cooperation with tourist agencies (regional & national), national tourist boards, regional tourist boards, local info centres and all tourist providers from the area |
| | Cooperation with local private accommodation hosts |
| | Creation of World Heritage partner network (with regional businesses) |
| | Engaging locals (calls for participation, social media campaigns, articles…) |
| | Cooperation with travel businesses (tour operators, travel agencies, travel guides) |
| | Foster cooperation between different levels: state, regional and local |
| **Inscription into UNESCO World Heritage List (Implementation Phase)** | Active involvement of the World Heritage management in local and regional planning (management docs, strategies of development etc.) |
| | Building institutional capacities |
| | Establish a network with regional authorities (communities and municipalities) and neighbouring protected areas |
| | Establish an event calendar |
| | Cooperation between private tour guides and World Heritage Site managements |
| | Engage local travel businesses and the local population |
| | Set up a clear communication strategy and goals for communication |
| | Establish social media cooperation |
| | Use local media, press, radio, and TV |

## 3.2. What are the risks for sustainable development in eco-tourism?

There are some risks that come with tourism and World Heritages Sites. Especially the UNESCO World Heritage label attracts more visitors and tourists than other protected areas. Some common mistakes and risks which should/can be avoided are listed below.

In some World Heritage Sites high expectations of visitors/tourists face a lack of communication within the region. This can have different reasons. On the one hand, visitors may have too big expectations of the local community and tourist organisations. Especially in the early phases of World Heritage Sites, not all communication activities have already started and there might be not enough staff and budget to manage all issues accordingly. Other possible issues are communication problems within the region (e. g. lack of

interest, lack of information offers), which can lead to the local public not identifying with the World Heritage Site. This should be avoided using the activities listed in the table on the previous page.

Another big issue, especially in World Heritage Sites, is overtourism. The label UNESCO attracts a lot of visitors and tourists which can lead to too many visitors in sensitive areas, pressure on infrastructure and staff, and visitors creating illegal paths which leads to a lack of control. These problems can be avoided by informing locals and tourism agencies about the type of tourism World Heritage Sites can bear. This is of course an individual decision, which must be made according to the Outstanding Universal Value and the integrity of each site. Additionally, a professional visitor monitoring system should be in place as well as a visitor guidance system, avoiding sensitive areas of the World Heritage Site. If the number of tourists gets too high, parking possibilities and other infrastructure facilities (e. g. toilets) can be reduced, which usually leads to a lower number of tourists.

# 4. Local population & schools

Local population and schools are important partner for World Heritage Sites. Ideally, they identify with "their" World Heritage Site and care for its protection and conservation. To ensure a positive relationship between locals and World Heritage Sites, the joint activities can already start in kindergarten.

## 4.1. What are the most successful communication channels to communicate to local population and schools?

### 4.1.1. Schools

To ensure an identification of the local public with the World Heritage Site, different age groups (kindergarten to high school) should be included with different program offers into the communication concept of the World Heritage Site.

Lectures and workshops on-site and in classrooms can offer different insights into the World Heritage Site and its characteristics and protection.

Educational work sheets, interpretative guiding and kids-universities during holydays can be offers for all age groups and ensure a close relationship between the children, their parents, and the World Heritage Site.



Figure 5: Excursions with schools can have a huge impact in the region.

Wildlife experts (as in Paklenica National Park), junior ranger programmes (as in Kalkalpen National Park) and regional competitions of different schools (like Waldjugendspiele in Lower Austria) are additional possibilities to engage young people. These individual offers for children and youth shall ensure a sustainable way to raise awareness for the World Heritage Site and its needs now and in the future.

## 4.1.2. Local population

To reach the local population it is important to design different programmes for different groups and ages to better gain their interest. Rangers can also help here to reach out to the local public. Well trained rangers, ideally from the region, can communicate very easily with the locals and can work with children to seniors, schools, and families.

Volunteer programmes can also attract the local public. There can be volunteering days within one week during summertime, where some works can be done by locals together with experts from the management (e. g. pull out neophytes, collect garbage, fix paths).

Regular events, like an annual World Heritage Celebration Day (e. g. Kalkalpen National Park on the 18th of April) or Mountain Days (e. g. in cooperation with Velebit National Park) could also be possibilities to reach out to the public. Additionally, public lectures and guided field trips could be part of these events. Science days for schools and the public are another possibility to show different aspects of the World Heritage Sites.



Figure 6: Girls from Austria volunteering in a protected area.

Very important to reach out to the local public are local radio, newspapers, and TV stations. They should be invited regularly to make sure the World Heritage Site is represented in the local media.

## 4.2. Communication tools local population & schools – which activities can trigger a positive perception of the World Heritage Site in the local population?

Table 2: Communication tools local population & schools

| Phases | Activities |
|---|---|
| **Preparation of Tentative List (Pre-Phase)** | Making the local population feel like they are part of the World Heritage story, with local working groups that give input and ideas |
| | Exchange with other World Heritage Sites |
| | Information with rules of behaviour in the protected area in general and in the World Heritage Sites |
| | Nature trails with information about the protected area (to experience the future World Heritage Sites) |
| | Inspire staff – make them proud/inspire them (experience the future World Heritage Sites) |
| **Preparation and Submission of Nomination Dossier, evaluation (Planning Phase)** | Develop educative programs (for kindergarten and elementary school), inform them with stories, not just facts |
| | Promotion of benefits through media: local newspapers, documentary, radio – ideally through story telling |
| | Develop brochures about World Heritage Site |
| | Educative boards with information about World Heritage Sites |
| **Inscription into UNESCO World Heritage List (Implementation Phase)** | Reference work about forest ecosystems |
| | Volunteer opportunities: for schools, students, and adults |
| | Playful approaches (board game, computer game, virtual trail) |
| | Wilderness summer camps: survival know-how in the wild, workshops on biodiversity |
| | Junior ranger/guide training |
| | Information/excursions for students to become teacher/guides |
| | Visitor centre |
| | Guided tours with national park staff (e. g. director) |
| | World Heritage Movie: The World Heritage Site on its road to success |
| | Regional souvenirs, artwork, food, beverages (enjoy World Heritage with all senses) |

## 4.3. What are the risks in the communication with local population & schools?

To make an on-site communication possible for the local population & schools, the accessibility of the World Heritage Site is from uppermost importance. Missing trails, information panels and visitor guidance systems will have a negative impact on the identification of the local public with the World Heritage Site. This does not mean, that locals can go anywhere in the site, but that there are ways and trails to experience it.

Local transport connections are also very important to make it possible for locals and schools to visit the area without a personal car.

Often there is a language barrier between locals and visitors. Especially when international tourists shall be attracted, it is important to inform the local public about the World Heritage Site and find English speaking persons to communicate with tourists and visitors.

Another issue, occurring in protected areas is a lack of interest in the local public and preconceptions (e. g. strict rules of the protected area, permissions). This can be targeted by communication and reaching out to the public as often as possible.

# 5. Stakeholders

Communication with regional, national, and international stakeholders can make a big difference in a lot of thematic fields of protected areas. From management aspects (e. g. regional/national forest agencies, landowners) to finances and budget (e. g. national ministries, international funding), to keep in touch with the most important stakeholder is always important.

## 5.1. What are the most successful communication channels to communicate to local stakeholders?

Basically, World Heritage Sites should be integrated into regional economy, education, and politics (multisectoral). To make the communication with stakeholders a success, the communication concept of the World Heritage Site should be tailored to the individual needs and situations in different regions and countries.

Helpful for the communication with stakeholders are also a central based marketing concept and a World Heritage Partner network (regional restaurants, accommodation, local distributors).

To reach all stakeholder, first thew committed ones should be involved to create positive examples for the other ones. It is also possible to reach out to the stakeholders in combination with a specially organised event (e g. go to the field with them) or at local festival and events (to increase visibility).

For the communication with stakeholders there are two different types of communication. First, there is personal, direct communication where the recipients can add questions and concerns directly (e. g. for explaining the rules and zonation of a World Heritage Site). Second, digital communication channels can be used.

Personal communication with stakeholders:

- o Package offers, combining different activities
- o Regular stakeholder meetings to keep them informed and updates
- o Decision making involvement
- o Stakeholder board (e. g. Kalkalpen National Park)

- o Excursions to sites
- o Creating a youth fan club (e. g. Gesäuse National Park)

Digital communication with stakeholders:

- o Website, where all necessary information regarding communication can be found (email, phone numbers, etc.)
- o Information materials for communication
- o Newsletter and active email network with easy access
- o Groups within social media sites (e. g. Facebook groups)

## 5.2. Communication tools stakeholders – What is needed to have a good two-way communication (stakeholders – management)

Table 3: Communication tools stakeholders

| Phases | Activities |
|---|---|
| Preparation of Tentative List (Pre-Phase) | Requires tailored methods, suited to each stakeholder |
| | Communication strategy must be developed individually at the beginning |
| | Need of a complete list of stakeholders |
| Preparation and Submission of Nomination Dossier, evaluation (Planning Phase) | Clear communication about World Heritage and possible compensation (e. g. for landowners) |
| | Look at lessons learned from other sites |
| | Regular communication with stakeholder so they are informed of changes and not surprised by new developments (e. g. with newsletters, regional newspapers) |
| | Excursions to sites and personal communication |
| | Day of (at) the beech |
| | Outreach events to maintain awareness |
| | Let them show their knowledge of and experience within the World Heritage Site (e. g. as rangers) |
| | Create advisory boards with all kinds of stakeholders like youth, creative sector, art, tourism sector etc.) |
| Inscription into UNESCO World Heritage List (Implementation Phase) | Cooperation with festivals and events, being part of the game (increase visibility) |
| | Make a movie of the history of UNESCO in general and the site in particular |
| | Invite other World Heritage managers and let them present to the stakeholders, invite mayors |
| | Excursion to sites and personal communication |

### 5.2.1. What are the most important risks in stakeholder communication?

Two major risks regarding the communication with stakeholders is to choose the wrong channels to reach certain stakeholders or that the recipients are not willing to change their opinion respectively sometimes it is hard to change traditional opinions. Both can be addressed with the activities and measures described above.

To make the communication with stakeholders work it is very important to involve all parties and not to forget certain persons or organizations. For this it is important to create a list of all stakeholders before starting the official communication (as shown in the table above).

Another risk is insufficient and incomplete information. Not addressing problems or avoiding conflicts with stakeholder and sticking to "beautiful" topics can lead to a lack of understanding. Incorrect information about the World Heritage Site, the restrictions that come with it and possible compensations for landowners can also be problematic and should be avoided.

Especially in World Heritage Sites as international label, it is important to understand cultural sensitivities that might occur during the process of becoming a World Heritage Site. There could be different "languages", which means different understandings of certain technical terms (e. g. forestry and nature conservation). Communication should therefore be as simplified as possible to make it easier for everybody to understand the message.

Most importantly, managements of World Heritage Sites need to try to understand the other persons needs and problems and address them accordingly and honest.

# 6. Networking with partners

Networking with partners on different levels (regional, national, and international) is crucial for World Heritage Sites. Lessons learned and best practice should be exchanged between partners and new inputs can have positive impacts on the management and the conservation status of World Heritage Sites.

## 6.1. What are the most successful communication channels to communicate to other World Heritage partners?



Figure 7: Exchange with other World Heritage Sites brings new inputs.

As a World Heritage Site it is very important to be well connected with the national ministries and organizations responsible for World Heritage Sites and their issues.

International cooperation within networks (e. g. European Beech Forest Network) and common project proposals to understand the needs and activities of other World Heritages Sites is important to develop the own World Heritage Site. Also study trips to other World Heritage Site managements can help to learn about procedures and organizational structures.

Joint research activities will also bring new ideas, experts, and technical approaches into the region and the World Heritage Site and can set new standards in monitoring and research activities on regional and national level.

## 6.2. Communication tools networking – What activities can be set to foster the cooperation between World Heirtage Site network partners?

| Phases | Activities |
| --- | --- |
| Preparation of Tentative List (Pre-Phase) | Establish a data-platform to provide access to all existing materials (e. g. data, experience, materials, concepts, strategies, project (results), funding programs, proposals, publications) |
| | Make a list of contacts of other World Heritage Sites and maintain it |
| | Provide experts support in project development to the sites – many do not have experience to tap into EU funds efficiently |
| | Prepare a list of possible funding programs that World Heritage Sites can use to partner up with you |
| | Language: apply for ERASMUS programs and join partners at activities on language development programs combined with expert trainings |
| Preparation and Submission of Nomination Dossier, evaluation (Planning Phase) | Clear communication strategies (national and international level= |
| | Raise awareness in the relevant ministries about the importance of World Heritage Sites |
| | Newsletter to keep all partners updated |
| | Joint promotion of World Heritage Sites |
| | Establish long-term bilateral cooperation with other World Heritage Sites |
| Inscription into UNESCO World Heritage List (Implementation Phase) | Get a blogger/traveller on board who visits different World Heritage Sites and make a travel blog |
| | Exchange of best practice between World Heritage Sites |
| | Make a call on internship programs to have volunteers especially in the main seasons in order to make the management less load/overwhelmed by extra tasks |

## 6.3. What is limiting the cooperation and communication between World Heritage partners most?

The biggest risks regarding networking are the lack of resources for exchange and cooperation as well as a language problem. It is very important to communicate the importance of networking with other sites to the national ministries and funding organisations. A budget for exchanging experience with other sites is very important for the management of World Heritage Sites. Human capacity and budget must be ensured to be able to work internationally with other site managements.

It is also necessary to ensure the communication between UNESCO, ministries, national governments, and the management of the sites. A platform/meeting where all important information, news, and tasks are shared between the different partners in a World Heritage management is to be ensured.