

CONNECTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND PROTECTED AREAS

Community Involvement Assessment

Capacity Development Plan



**Authors: Wilf Fenten, Jana Kus Veenliet, Violeta Orlović Lovren, Richard Partington
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1. Introduction and background

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is one of the world's leading non-governmental and non-profit organisations for nature protection. Established in 1961 it is now represented in over 80 countries. In 2015 a new division was created, WWF Adria, covering Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo¹, Macedonia, Slovenia and Serbia.

This area, the Dinaric Arc region, encompassing the area from Trieste in Italy to Tirana in Albania, is without doubt one of the largest unspoiled areas of Europe. Large forests, extensive grasslands, diverse freshwater ecosystems and a karst underground world contain a high diversity of species, making this area one of the biodiversity hot spots of Europe. The region is also culturally diverse, with many local communities maintaining traditional practices and knowledge.

As in other parts of the world, protected areas have an important function for safeguarding biodiversity. The number of protected areas in the Dinaric Arc region is steadily increasing and by mid-2017 about 9 % of the territory of the Dinaric Arc countries (without Italy) had been designated as protected areas. However, many areas of great biodiversity importance do not have any formal conservation status and their future is not yet secured.

In preserving biodiversity, it is not only important how much territory is protected but also how efficiently it is managed and whether the necessary conservation goals are achieved. An important but often overlooked aspect in analysing management effectiveness of protected areas is the communication and collaboration between the management authorities and the local communities – the people and stakeholders who inhabit the territory of protected areas and the area around them. Involvement of the local communities in protected area management is vital for successful

protected area management and governance, the achievement of conservation goals and for the social and economic development of local communities.

For more than a decade and with great success, WWF has been promoting protected areas in Dinaric Arc region. Recognising the vital importance of community involvement, WWF Adria in late 2015 launched a 4-year project called *Protected Areas for Nature and People (PA4NP)*. The project's aims are to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources as a foundation for socio-economic development, and focuses attention on the cooperation between protected area management authorities and local communities. One of the main objectives of the project has been an assessment of the current level of involvement of local communities and to provide clear recommendations for improvements and assisting protected areas in their implementation.

In the past several tools for assessing the management effectiveness were developed (see e.g. Ervin, 2003, Hockings et al., 2006, Stolton et al., 2007). While some of them touch on the interaction between management authority and local communities, these tools do not provide enough detail to assess adequately the scope of local community involvement and work out definitive recommendations. WWF Adria, therefore, commissioned the development of a new methodology that would allow a detailed assessment of community interaction, show any gaps and allow the preparation of an authoritative capacity development plan that would lead to improvements of the current situation.

In 2016 a team of four experts, drawn from different countries and with a wide range of practical and academic experience, was selected to develop a new methodology for analysing the collaboration and communication among protected area management authorities and their local communities.

¹ Without prejudice to the position or status and in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

This newly developed *Community Involvement Assessment* (CIA) methodology was prepared by the international team including Wilf Fenten, an independent environmental advisor from the United Kingdom, Jana Kus Veenvliet of Institute Symbiosis, Slovenia, Professor Violeta Orlović Lovren of University of Belgrade, Serbia, and Richard Partington, an independent advisor on national parks, cultural and protected landscapes from the United Kingdom. Additionally, invaluable technical advice was received from Professor Goran Opačić, University of Belgrade.

2. Results of the Community Involvement Assessment

2.1 Approach to the assessment

The overall goal of the assessment was to put in place a mechanism to achieve improved relationships between protected areas, their local communities and key stakeholders. This report summarises the results of the first CIA. The assessment was conducted in 66 Dinaric Arc protected areas in 2017 and sets out the approach to the work. It enabled the team to make concrete recommendations to improve and maintain good community relationships.

The CIA results provide a detailed insight as well as revealing some major gaps which influence the performance of protected areas across the Dinaric Arc region. The results are presented in seven sections that are considered to be essential for a successful community involvement. They are the baseline used to develop a Capacity Development Plan (CDP) to strengthen and maintain relationships between protected areas and their local communities. Each section in the Capacity Development Plan provides key recommendations, possibilities for quick improvements and some of the best-practice examples from the region in order to help improve collaboration. Furthermore, a set of detailed recommendations is provided

Support from WWF Adria and the Park Dinarides Association was crucial and, in particular, thanks are due to Marija Kukec, Leon Kebe and Deni Porej from the WWF Adria and WWF Mediterranean Programme, as well as Lidija Brnović, Zoran Mrdak and Ljubiša Pejović from the Park Dinarides Association. Also, special thanks to the assessors who, with great enthusiasm, carried out the assessment workshops, and to all the participants of those workshops.

for each section on how best to advance to a higher level or rank from little or no interaction through to exemplary.

The CDP shows a clear path towards strengthening community involvement in protected areas. Given the importance of these relationships for the effective management of protected areas, their progress in advancing through the levels or ranks will significantly help improve their role as conservationists as well as drivers of sustainable socio-economic development.

2.2 Outline of the methodology

The CIA methodology is based on quantitative and qualitative methods and tools, to assess interactions from the perspective of protected area representatives and from the perspective of local communities, through a survey and facilitated discussion of members of both groups. A detailed methodology manual is provided as a separate document (Orlović Lovren, et al., 2017) but here we summarise the main elements which enable understanding of the context of the assessment and this Capacity Development Plan.

The main CIA tools are two extensive questionnaires, each consisting of 39 questions. The questionnaires, one for the protected area management authority and the other one for the local communities, follow the same structure. They enable the survey of opinions along the seven sections which were identified as essential for community involvement.

These are:

- I. Decision-making and decision-influencing
- II. Management planning
- III. Communication
- IV. Education
- V. Social development
- VI. Economic development and
- VII. Equal rights and opportunities

Following the development of the methodology and its testing through piloting, WWF Adria recruited a team of assessors from all eight Dinaric Arc countries. After a 2-day training workshop the assessors performed assessment workshops in 62 protected areas. Four protected areas were assessed in the development phase to test the quality of the methodology. Altogether 66 protected areas were assessed which is nearly 80% of the managed protected areas in the Dinaric Arc region.

The assessments are conducted in a workshop format, facilitated by a team of two trained assessors. Selected staff of the protected area management authority and representatives of the local community are brought together, thus offering opportunities for an exchange of views and for raising issues regarding their collaboration. Afterwards, each group was independently asked to fill in a questionnaire. The staff from the management authority

completed one questionnaire, assuming that their opinion is more or less unanimous.

The representatives of the local communities each completed their own individual questionnaire and for further analysis, average values were calculated from their scores. In the analytical phase the scores were converted to ranks/levels from 1 to 5.

- Level 1: Virtually no involvement of the local community.
- Level 2: The local community is receiving information.
- Level 3: The local community is receiving and sharing information.
- Level 4: The local community is consulted.
- Level 5: The local community is actively participating in decision-making.

The raw results of the assessment produced 14 ranks: one set of ranks per section based on the protected area responses and another set of ranks per section based on the averaged results from the local communities. Then followed a stage in the process where the team of experts, acting as a Validation Panel, validated the results to create a single rank per section. This allowed the firm placement of each protected area in a current rank. During the whole process it also became clear that looking at the raw scores from the protected areas and local communities some particular conclusions could be reached. The differences in perception between them can sometimes be illuminating. For example, if protected area authority representatives claim they are doing well in the area of communication but this is scored low by the local communities, than this could indicate that the communication is not efficient and should be improved. In the summary of results we therefore present raw ranks and comment on them.

2.3 Summary of findings

2.3.1 Overview of protected areas included in the assessment

WWF Adria invited 82 protected areas from across the Dinaric Arc region to participate in the assessment. Of those, 62 protected areas completed the assessment by the end of May 2017. In addition, four protected areas undertook the assessment during the testing or pilot phase of the methodology. These pilot results are included in the final analysis and the results of the assessment total 66 protected areas (78%) of protected areas in the region (Figure 1).

The lowest percentage of protected areas assessed was in Kosovo (25%), Slovenia (58%) and Macedonia (75%). Only in Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro were all the planned protected areas assessed (Figure 2).

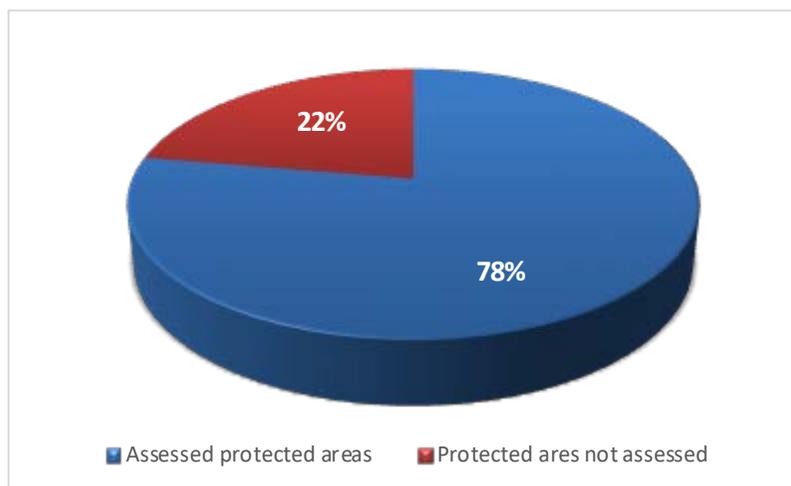


Figure 1. Percentage of assessed protected areas in the Dinaric Arc region

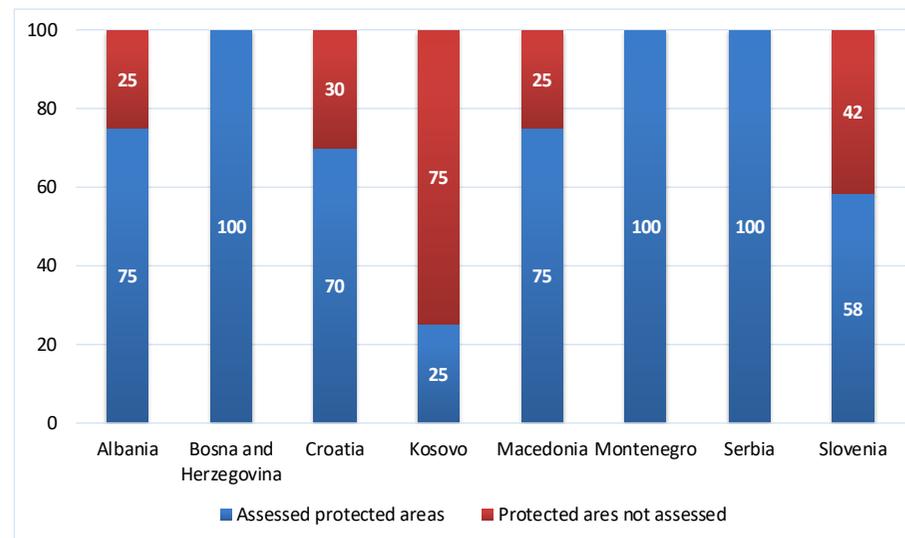


Figure 2: Percentages of assessed protected areas per country

2.3.2 Summary of statistical analysis

For this purpose, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for all indicators and countries (separately for estimations of representatives of protected areas and local communities, named here as “source”), were calculated. Univariate ANOVA (repeated measure) and bi-factorial ANOVA (mixed model) were used in order to find statistical differences. In addition, as a measure of statistic power, partial eta square correlations were added. Pearson linear correlations were used as a measure of concordance between estimations of protected area and local community representatives.

2.3.3 Aspects of community involvement (“sections”)

Both the quality analysis of the data and this one, based on results of above described statistical analysis, show that social development is on average the highest ranked “section” or aspect of community involvement, according to the data presented in Figure 3. Education and capacity development as well as communication are next well ranked aspects. According to both groups of participants in this research (protected area and local community representatives) management planning is the least developed field of their mutual engagement in the Dinaric Arc region. Among those poorly ranked ones by all is also economic development. The lowest rank, from the perspective of local communities, are equal rights and opportunities.

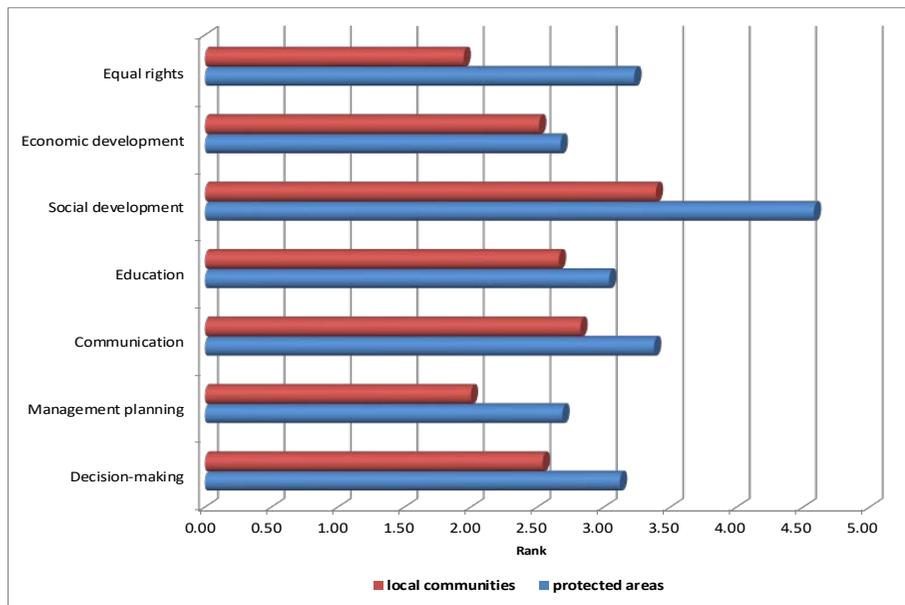


Figure 3: Protected areas by “sections”

A common tendency perceived in all the countries is that protected area representatives estimate their role in community involvement as better in all the countries, for all the aspects of the community involvement assessment, when compared with the perception of local community representatives. This discrepancy is clearly shown in Table 1.

As it can be seen from the presented calculations, there is a statistical significant difference between the protected area (PA) and local community (LC) assessment in all aspects of community involvement except economic development. In other words, **there is a constant obvious gap in perception of most of the community involvement aspects between the protected area staff and local community members. It is particularly clear in the areas of social development, equal rights and management planning.**

Table 1: Differences in scoring between PA and LC by sections

It is indicative that this gap exists both in highly ranked (social development) and the lowest ranked aspects of community involvement (equal rights, management planning). Thus it could be assumed that there is some considerable misunderstanding between the protected areas and the local communities in these aspects.

Either the local communities do not understand what is meant by social benefits provided by the protected area, for example, or they simply do not feel they benefit from it. In both cases, it is necessary to improve the local community's understanding of this issue as well as awareness of the protected area regarding their role in this respect.

The large discrepancies between the two groups in the least developed aspects of involvement - equal rights and management planning - may also mean that these practices do not exist in the protected area as claimed or, if they do exist, then the local community is not aware of that. Both of these causes will have the same effect of lack of involvement of local communities in management planning and to their experience, or at least perception, of unequal treatment of different community groups by the protected area administration.

According to the statistical analysis, the smallest gap between the perceptions of the protected area and the local community exists in the area of economic development. One of possible reasons may be found in the content covered by this segment of the assessment (assignment of responsibilities for sustainable economic development to personnel, integration of this topic in plans, branding and different forms of support to local businesses by the protected area) and/or in their common agreement

	Protected areas		Local Communities		F (1,73)	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation			
Decision-making	3.122	.7394	2.541	.6660	26.818	.000	.269
Management planning	2.689	1.2042	2.000	.9363	15.471	.000	.175
Communication	3.378	.6127	2.824	.6050	39.218	.000	.349
Education	3.041	.8348	2.662	.6880	11.143	.001	.132
Social development	4.581	.6195	3.392	.7180	138.016	.000	.654
Economic development	2.676	.7957	2.514	.7261	2.628	.109	.035
Equal rights	3.230	1.4482	1.946	.7745	60.548	.000	.453

that these activities are not yet very developed in the protected areas or by them.

The overall gap in assessment between the two groups indicates that **there is obvious and urgent need for improvements in their mutual communication, understanding and engagement in all the aspects of community involvement.**

2.3.4 Perceptions of community involvement in different countries

Reliable comparison between all the countries, based on the data received and its statistical analysis, is limited by the variations in the number of protected areas assessed. The fewest were assessed in Macedonia (only 3),

while in Kosovo only one protected area (Germia) was assessed. That obviously limits the interpretation of the assessment results. However, the quality analysis as well as the statistical analysis for most of the countries give an indication of some trends and tendencies that may be useful for designing capacity development programmes and for the regional perspective.

Beside the common trends already mentioned, such as the constant gap in perceptions between the two groups, some country-specific tendencies may contribute to a better understanding of the current situation of interactions between protected areas and local communities in the Dinaric Arc region.

One such example may be found in Albania. According to the data analysed both statistically and qualitatively, the local community estimates decision-making, management planning, education and economic development higher than protected areas. The highest discrepancy between them is in the sections of social development and equal rights. What then contributes to their better perceptions of community involvement than is the case in other countries? Is it that they feel they are better economically supported or involved in decision-making, management planning or education activities? Or maybe the fact that difference in their mutual perception of communication as community involvement aspect, is the smallest when compared to all the other countries, and very close to one in Slovenia (not only in terms of discrepancy, but in its level as well) (Figure 4).

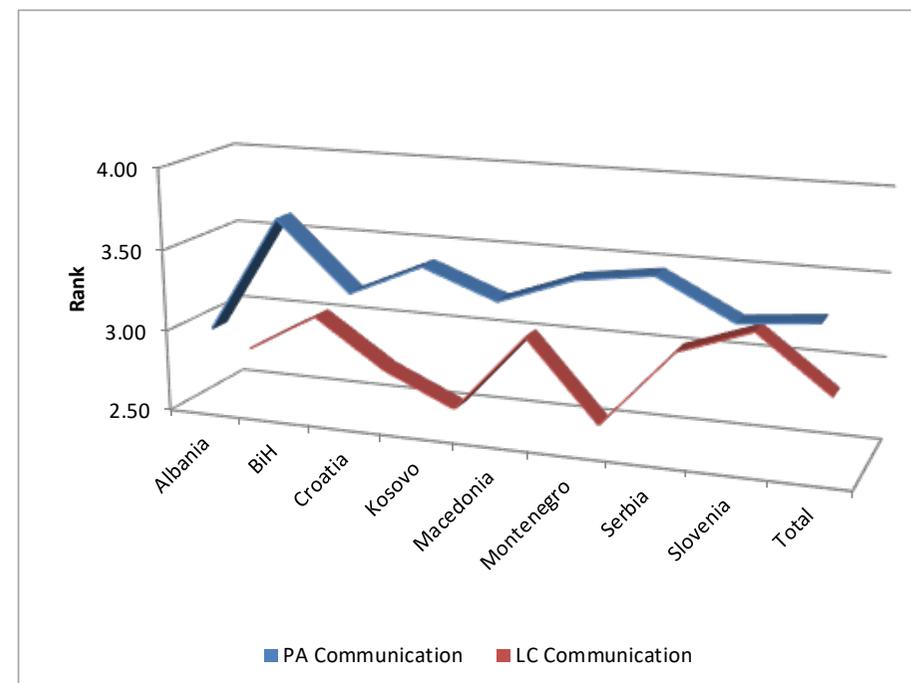


Figure 4: Countries by communication

Another interesting tendency may be seen in comparison between the gap existing in this aspect and in decision-making when, for example, Montenegro or Croatia are concerned: while the data at this aspect in these countries indicate the obvious gap between PA and LC, there is very similar relation shown in the decision-making field (Figure 5).

As already mentioned, the management planning scored very low in majority of countries, with highest discrepancies in BiH, Croatia, then Montenegro and Serbia. Again, two countries with higher scores given by LC than by PA are Albania and Slovenia.

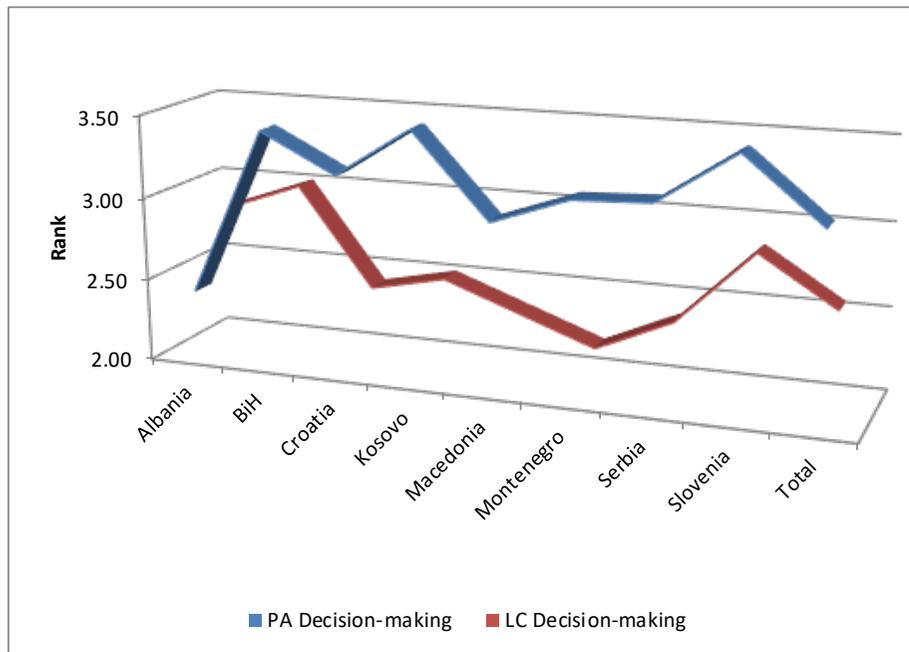


Figure 5: Countries by decision-making

Similarities between the most developed and significantly less developed country in this Region – Slovenia and Albania – in assessment results at few aspects (like management planning and economic development) and, at the same time, very close gap between PA and LC perceptions in communication field, indicates one more time that successful community involvement does not depend on economic context as much as on good communication and education initiatives established through interactions between local community and protected areas.

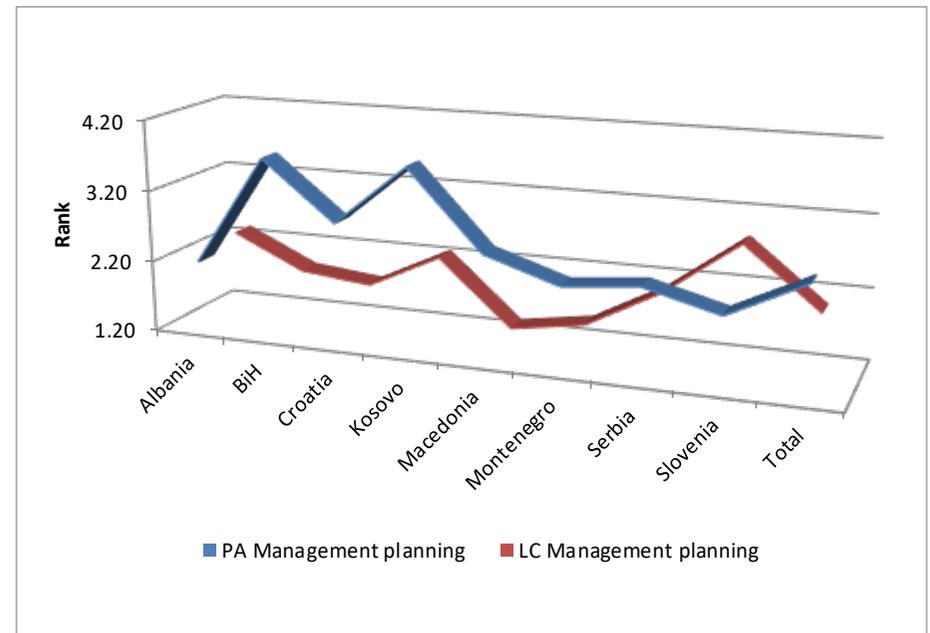


Figure 6: Countries by management planning.

In all the countries, education and capacity development provided through interactions with local community, for them or for the PA staff, has been assessed lower by LC than by PA – except in Albania (MPA:MLC*= 2,16:2,66) and Bosnia & Herzegovina (MPA:MLC= 2,85:2,85).(Figure 7)

Such a perception of local community in majority of countries might have roots either in lack of existing activities and institutional solutions (engagement of the staff in charge, long term education and capacity development planning, etc.) in protected areas or in lack of available information about the programmes that are undergoing.

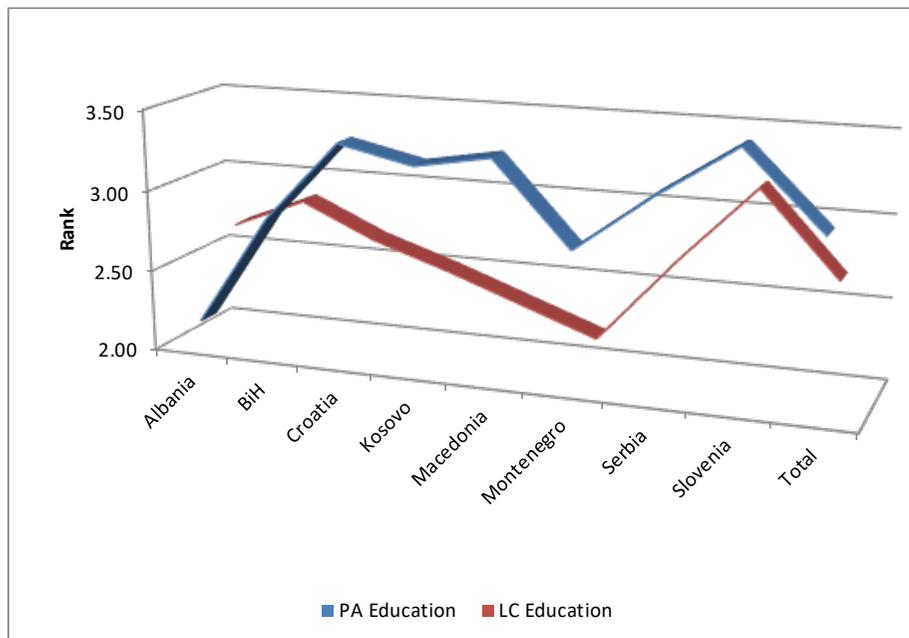


Figure 7: Countries by education and capacity development

In addition to that, as realised from the assessment, in several cases it is related to lack of programmes tailored to the local community needs. These trends and tendencies need to be further explored and used for well-designed programmes for improving community involvement. The best way is to rely on mutual engagement and careful consideration of needs and interests to achieve these improvements. Based on both qualitative and quantitative analyses, there are in the following chapter carefully considered recommendations and best-practice examples offered to help that process in the Dinaric Arc region.

3. Recommendations for improving community involvement – a Capacity Development Plan

3.1 The structure of the Capacity Development Plan

The recommendations below follow the seven sections of the questionnaires used in the Community Involvement Assessment. Each section has a brief introduction summarising its relevance for achieving the long-term goals of protected areas. Listed under the heading **Key Recommendations** are some of the most important actions that protected area authorities should take in order to improve their interactions with local communities. Then, under the heading **Possible Quick Wins**, there is

practical advice on how protected areas may quickly achieve progress. Then follows a short summary of **examples of good practice** from various protected areas-across the Dinaric Arc region during the assessment workshops. It is hoped that such knowledge and practice could be exchanged and shared among protected areas. At the end of each section is a clear table with **detailed recommendations** for protected areas to advance to a higher level.

3.2 The Capacity Development Plan

3.2.1 Section 1: Decision-making and decision influencing

The results of the surveys indicated a correlation between high scores in this section and generally higher scores in other sections suggesting that, if the local community is well involved in general decision-making and decision influencing, other sections do better as well. It shows that local community participation is essential for the wellbeing of a protected area.

Key recommendations

- Ensure that local communities understand how decisions are made and that they know their rights and duties regarding decision-making in the protected area.
- Ensure, if needed with necessary changes in the legislation, that local communities are present in the highest decision-making bodies of the protected area management authority and that their opinions are taken into account.
- Create/establish a formal stakeholder forum with regular scheduled and publicised meetings to inform and consult with local community representatives.
- Arrange a series of informal site visits of local community members from the protected area to learn and understand and to discuss issues from all sides to gather views and facts. Importantly, no decisions are made at the site or informal meeting but the information or views made can be represented in the published papers for a future meeting.
- Ensure that all meetings involving the local community and key stakeholders are publicly announced and include a public notice agenda and supporting material which must be sent to participants at least one week before the meeting rather than people arriving and not being informed beforehand.

- Encourage participation by local community representatives and key stakeholders in meetings and that any decisions made are only after listening to all views and after reaching a consensus.
- Ensure that any decisions affecting local communities or a particular group in a local community are taken in a transparent way, informed properly and in a timely manner.

Possible quick wins

- Develop a list of stakeholders and their skills that could help/contribute to future planning and advice.
- Use local community representatives and stakeholders expertise in future planning and decision-making by establishing working/focus groups in specialist areas.
- Provide learning opportunities about the importance and benefits of stakeholder involvement in the work of the protected area to achieve better management.
- Inform regularly all interests and stakeholders about protected area activities generally using collaboration meetings, newsletters via email, Facebook page etc. (see communications section 3.3.3).

Examples of good practice

Medvednica Nature Park, Croatia:

Forum of stakeholders

This protected area has a stakeholder forum with regular meetings where issues, ideas, opportunities, etc., are discussed. Participants know each other very well and are all aware of mutual benefits where together they make plans and actions. The protected area has small number of employees and they see the local community as a useful extension of expertise. The

stakeholders use the protected area institution as a support and a reference in their projects and actions.

Una National Park, BiH:

Sustainable Tourism Forum

This protected area is a member of the *European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas*. It is mandatory for Charter Parks to have a Sustainable Tourism Forum which in this protected area is well-established by now and of great benefit. Although it is not directly involved in general decision-making, this type of forum can serve as template for a full stakeholder forum recommended above.

Zasavica Special Nature Reserve, Serbia:

Resolving conflicts in land use

An action plan developed between October 2015 and September 2016, within the “Zasavica FLOPP” activity. It was part of the wider EuroNatur project on the protection of river Sava and its flood zones, to help resolve conflicts with land owners from Sadzak village about the optimal water level for both agriculture and nature protection. The action plan was developed through a survey with land owners and decision-making was enabled through the establishment of a forum of stakeholders interested in this issue. The action plan (2016 - 2020) will guide further activities for resolving this conflict leading to better management and cooperation between Zasavica and its local community.

Table 1. Decision-making and decision influencing - detailed recommendations for advancing

Advancing from level 1 to 2	Advancing from level 2 to 3	Advancing from level 3 to 4	Advancing from level 4 to 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make time and space for meetings, at least informal ones, where issues are discussed in-depth with key stakeholders. • Provide a key stakeholder meeting, forum or similar for some open and visible input, even if informal, to help influence some decision-making or advisory bodies for the protected area. If a forum or similar already exists but it does not meet often, arrange for additional meaningful meetings. • Encourage the local community to ask for information and involve them or a wide range of its representatives including key stakeholders in meaningful discussion/debate. • Involve the local community in occasional consultation on specific policy/practice aspects of their concern even if the protected area does not have, at this stage, mechanisms to take them fully into account. • Allow a more formal voice for non-public and for public authority stakeholders of the protected area to make their position known and increase their influence on decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a forum for key stakeholders to have some formal open and visible engagement with important decision-making or advisory bodies for the protected area. If a forum already exists but it hardly meets, arrange for meaningful meetings at least twice a year. • Ensure that the key stakeholders are provided with general information before they attend or participate in some public discussions. • Consult key stakeholders in general terms on particular policy/practice aspects of their concern, even if this does not happen regularly or as a matter of course. • Ensure that public and non-public authority stakeholders of the protected area have some influence on decision-making, even if it is not very strong, so that they are given a voice to make their position known. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that key stakeholders are integrated in some important decision-making or advisory bodies of the protected area and are meeting three to four times a year to discuss some issues in-depth with the protected area. • Organise policy/practice issues in such a way that they are more often than not “on the table” for meaningful discussion/ debate with key stakeholders who are usually consulted on those issues. • Ensure structures are in place for key stakeholders to be consulted in general terms on particular policy/practice aspects of their concern most of the time. • Create structures so that public and non-public authority stakeholders of the protected area are offered formal and informal consultation to make their position known in most of the cases and usually have a high degree of influence on decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have formally established that both non-public and public authority stakeholders are equal partners in influencing the protected area authority in decision-making and have a formal voice to make their position known. • Have a governance structure organised in such a way that key stakeholders are fully integrated into important decision-making or advisory bodies of the protected area. • Hold regular formal meetings with key stakeholders and the local community at which issues are discussed in-depth with key stakeholders. • Regular non-formal contacts are established and working well with the local community. • A forum of all key stakeholders is in place and it meets frequently, i.e. 3 or 4 times a year. • The protected area authority systematically improves the participatory capacities of key stakeholders and local community. • Key stakeholders are being specifically consulted on particular policy/practice aspects of their concern as a matter of course.

3.2.2 Section 2: Management planning

The management plan is one of the key documents for the work and good governance of any protected area. It is not only the strategic document for the protected area authority but also for all the other stakeholders and members of the local community in general. In Europe as a whole, more and more tasks in the management plan are now being devolved to other stakeholders, apart from the protected area authority itself. It can be very beneficial to involve local communities in the implementation of the management plan but there is a need to be cautious about devolving tasks. For example, it is no good just saying or agreeing this unless they have the financial and other resources to do anything otherwise resentment builds. However, involving stakeholders in all stages of management planning is essential.

Key recommendations

- Ensure that key stakeholders and the local community fully understand why there is a need/requirement for a management plan and be clear about its scope and legal status.
- Ensure that key stakeholders have realistic expectations about the management plan (i.e. it cannot go beyond the mandate on the legal basis establishing a protected area).
- Ensure that the timescale of the management planning process is published and understood by the local community and key stakeholders. They need to understand the reasons for preparing the management plan and to see it as an opportunity for them to have their say about the area where they live and/or work.

- Ensure that the management plan development process is transparent, that key stakeholders know in which stages and how they can collaborate and contribute.
- Create/establish a formal stakeholder forum to help prepare a management plan.
- Hold a series of seminars/workshops/meetings to introduce the management plan process and influence content.
- Ensure that papers are prepared and circulated in advance of pre-publicised seminars/workshops/meetings.
- Consult on draft versions of the management plan which must be timely, follow agreed dates, and discussed in open public meetings.
- Arrange regular review meetings to assess progress of the implementation part of the management plan, inform all interests and get their feedback.
- Publish a simplified or summary “layman’s” version of the management plan and disseminate it widely in the local communities.

Possible quick wins

- Use the preparation or review of a management plan as a focus for dialogue and organise stakeholders into several committees/working groups/formal and informal as part of the preparations (even if there is no legal requirement to include them) to improve and ensure greater local community involvement and influence.
- Establish regular scheduled meetings with local community representatives and all interested stakeholders to review progress.
- Include education institutions in regular meetings for management plan development and implementation
- Organise workshops, training and lectures on protected area activities in collaboration with educational institutions.

- Inform regularly all interests and stakeholders about protected area activities generally and management plan development specifically, using collaboration meetings, newsletters via email, Facebook page, etc.

Examples of good practice

The scores in this section were generally low. In some protected areas there were the beginnings of good examples such as the development of a 10-year management plan where some parts of the local community were involved.

There are many excellent examples of good management plans available online which can be found with very little research. Good participatory decision-making and developing a good management plan is usually the key to improvements in all other parts of protected area activities.

Table 2. Management planning - detailed recommendations for advancing

Advancing from level 1 to 2	Advancing from level 2 to 3	Advancing from level 3 to 4	Advancing from level 4 to 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When preparing or reviewing the protected area management plan, ensure that the local community or a wide range of its representatives including key stakeholders are informally consulted during the process, instead of not being involved at all. • When developing the management plan the protected area should include tasks which could be agreed to be devolved to the key stakeholders or local community, even if it cannot be done at the moment. N.B. Tasks can only be devolved if the third parties agree. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the progress of developing or reviewing the management plan the local community or a wide range of its representatives including key stakeholders should be informally involved in the process. • Ensure that the management plan contains some agreed tasks that will be devolved to key stakeholders or other groups in the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local community or a wide range of its representatives including key stakeholders must be involved, fully understand and committed to influencing some aspects of the developing management plan. • It is clear to all involved that the management plan is not just for the protected area authority but a plan for the area and wider community interests which includes a minority of tasks that are definitely agreed and will be devolved to the local community including key stakeholders and local groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local community or a wide range of its representatives including key stakeholders are fully involved in developing the management plan. Their influence on its content is very high and all understand its relevance and consider they are working in an equal partnership. • The local community or a wide range of its representatives including key stakeholders and local groups see themselves as joint “owners” of the management plan and are fully involved in the practical implementation of key aspects within it.

3.2.3 Section 3: Communication in the protected area

Good communication is at the heart of everything a protected area does. It starts with the way the protected area projects itself to the outside. It includes everything from media work including social media and internet interaction to the way it communicates with other people, be they remote stakeholders or the local community. Communication is a precondition for mutual understanding and working towards the protected area's goals.

Key recommendations

- Consider carefully what a protected area wants/needs to communicate before developing its communication strategy. This preliminary work towards a full-scale communication strategy must be discussed with the local community to know its needs.
- Provide a clear and welcoming message recognising that communication should always be mutual and engaging and that the protected area management body appreciates suggestions on the content and appropriate way the local community would like to communicate.
- Develop a robust process for producing an effective roadmap/framework/action plan for communications, which sets out prioritised communication actions linked, closely to the protected areas' management priorities.
- Develop a communication strategy/plan where none exists after following the above three points.
- Ensure that it is not just the person who is responsible for communication does so. Communication is all-embracing and all protected area staff are involved and must be trained appropriately.

- Increase the presence of the protected area authority in the local community by organising events itself and also cooperating in events which are organised by the local community.
- Ensure that the communication with the local community is frequent, up-to date and that they learn of any important developments in the area from the management authority not first from the media.
- Establish frequent direct contacts with the local communities by having clear open hours at the headquarters and in larger areas at some local offices or establish a mobile office to reach people in remote areas.
- Support and assist local communities in accessing EU funds informing them about open calls, organise workshops to develop project applications, etc.

Possible quick wins

- Assign a trusted person responsible as a first point of contact for general communication with local community and media.
- Create short monthly newsletters about the protected area's work to be available in local outlets (shops/bars, etc.) and sent via email to local community representatives and all interested parties.
- Train rangers can to act as community liaison officers even if they have other roles involved in enforcing regulations or laws.
- Establish a mobile information office (vehicle/community building, etc.), which can serve to inform local inhabitants in remote areas.
- Involve all aspects of the media in the work of the protected area.
- Ensure that the work of the protected area is presented clearly and favourably at events organised by the local community (e.g. a stall or tent with information material).
- Increase participation by protected area staff at events organised by the local community.
- Develop a mechanism for avoiding and resolving conflicts.

- Consider providing live-stream or a short video summary of meetings with the local community if appropriate.
- Consider engaging an impartial person who can make a better connection between the protected area and the local community.
- Engage with young people in any way you can, for example consider bringing somebody young into the action circle of the protected area in order to create a direct line to local young people.
- Encourage and support grass root initiatives and campaigns, which engage young and other local people or community of interest.

Examples of good practice

Pelister National Park, Macedonia:

Cooperating with local community through seasonal work

Although this example shows the economic benefits of the protected area, it nevertheless highlights how economic and social benefits interact. The national park management cooperates with the local communities and supports them in their income generation through the year, by engaging the local representatives in seasonal work in the national park. This is a practice that happens every year, and it was positively assessed by both the local communities and the national park. The experience showed that cooperation with local communities improves the reputation of the national park and increases local community support in the park's efforts of conserving and protecting the environment and unique beauty of the area. The scheme is also good for communication and general involvement of local communities in activities of the protected area.

Sutjeska National Park, BiH:

OK Fest

Festivals are an excellent way of communicating with the local community. The survey showed many examples such as the "OK Fest" which has become

one of the major regional festival events. Held every year in July, it features a music programme plus fun/educational zones within the protected area. The local community is engaged in many ways through employment of local people during the organisation, but also offering the accommodation, food, souvenirs, etc. Also this supports the social and economic development of the area (see sections 5 and 6 below).

Škocjan Caves Park, Slovenia:

Ambassadors of the park

In 2004 the park was included in UNESCO's Man and Biosphere programme. Local people from various institutions were awarded a title "The Ambassador of the Park" as acknowledgment of their role in promotion and protection of the park. Among the ambassadors are several primary school teachers who, over many years, played an important role in the network of schools programme (see also Education section), as researchers and supporters of the park.

Table 3. Communication with local communities - detailed recommendations for advancing

Advancing from level 1 to 2	Advancing from level 2 to 3	Advancing from level 3 to 4	Advancing from level 4 to 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area must have assigned a particular person (staff or external) to communications tasks when needed, even if it is not a formal appointment. • The protected area must be planning a formal communication plan. • The protected area must engage with the local community through at least one of the communication categories (i.e. website; press/media; newsletter; social media; information office/mobile visits). • The local community must be aware of the protected area’s communication efforts although it considers them in need of improvement. • The protected area involves journalists and the media but the local community does not consider the protected area’s involvement with journalists and the media as being very effective. • The protected area provides some information to key stakeholders and the local community but the information is generally considered to be poor. • The protected area participates sometimes but rarely in community events. • The protected area authority from time to time cooperates with external experts in research/monitoring activities. • The protected area has developed an informal grievance and dispute procedure for disputes and conflicts with members of the public, even if it has not been tested yet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area must have assigned a particular person allocated to communication tasks of up to 0.5 full-time equivalent. • The protected area must have a formal communication plan which is generally considered to be sufficient, or has activities and resources in its annual operational budget to cover this. • The protected area communication personnel must use at least 2 of the communication categories (i.e. website; press/media; newsletter; social media; information office/mobile visits) to engage with the general public including local community and key stakeholders. • The local community is aware of the protected area’s communication efforts and considers them to be average. • The protected area does engage with journalists and the media but its efforts are considered average by the local community. • The protected area takes part in community events but not on a regular basis. • The protected area authority must regularly cooperate with external experts in conducting research/monitoring activities. • The protected area must have an approved formal grievance and dispute procedure for its dealings with members of the public (including key stakeholders and the local community) in place and it is ready for use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area must have assigned a particular person allocated to communication tasks of between 0.5 and 0.9 full-time equivalent. • The protected area communication plan does engage with the local community when necessary and is considered by the local community as fairly successful. • The person/staff in charge of communication does engage with the local community and the key stakeholders, using at least 3 of the communication categories (i.e. website; press/media; newsletter; social media; Information office/mobile visits). • The local community and key stakeholders consider that the level of engagement could be improved but it is above average. • The protected area does engage successfully with journalists and the media but does not always provide consistently good information for the local community and key stakeholders. However, much of the community is well informed. • The protected area regularly takes part in most community events. • The protected area cooperates with experts and also involves local people in research/monitoring activities. • The protected area has a formal grievance and dispute procedure for its dealings with members of the public (e.g. key stakeholders/local community). Members of the public are made aware of the process and how these disputes and concerns can be raised and satisfactorily resolved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area must have assigned 1 full-time staff equivalent or more to the communication task and trains all protected area staff to communicate successfully. • The protected areas communication plan must engage fully with the general public including local community and key stakeholders. It has been shown to work successfully. Staff or others assigned by the protected area to be responsible for communication use at least four out of 6 of the communication categories (i.e. website; press/media; newsletter; social media; information office/mobile visits). • The protected area engages successfully with journalists and the media as well as providing good information for the local community and key stakeholders. The local community is informed well about conservation and other goals of the protected area. • The protected area must regularly take part in community events. • The protected area regularly cooperates with experts and the local community in research and monitoring, disseminating its results to them. • The protected area must have a fully functional formal grievance and dispute procedure which has been shown to work well in practice.

3.2.4 Section 4: Education and capacity development for local communities

In this context, education and capacity development refers, inter alia, to the following activities: non-formal learning programmes provided by protected areas – by them or in collaboration with local and other resources (NGOs, institutions, experts, etc.); contributions from protected area staff to formal learning processes (guest lectures or joint projects in schools, serving as experimental or learning/internship site for students, etc.); support to community and visitor informal learning (provision of tailored-made promotion materials, events, specific learning experiences on the site, etc.) Capacity development refers both to efforts provided by a protected area for external audiences, as well as those directed towards their own staff and volunteers. Improving knowledge, skills and understanding of protected area staff for their role in community engagement increases the chance that more interaction and greater involvement with the local community will be based on the local community's specific needs and characteristics as well as on mutual understanding.

Key recommendations

- Assign clear responsibility for education activities and capacity development to at least one person.
- Create a capacity development plan for protected area staff and make sure to organise continuous improvement of:
 - staff members' awareness of the role they have regarding sustainable development in the local community;
 - their communication skills;
 - their understanding of sustainability principles and the socio-economic sustainable development/functions of the protected area.

- Develop a protected area education plan and involve stakeholders in the planning of education and capacity development as much as possible. Utilise existing meetings of councils, stakeholders or similar to assess the needs for education and capacity development in the local community.
- Develop joint local community workshops to create new information materials about the benefits of the protected area.
- Work closely with education institutions in and around the protected areas and develop long-term education programmes.
- Offer education and training opportunities for adults after carefully assessing their needs on their topics of interest.
- Offer working opportunities for young people (internship, seasonal work, etc.). They are the foundation on which to build the future of the area.
- Organise regular events promoting the values of the protected area to local people so that they understand, appreciate and work to protect them.

Possible quick wins

- Establish regular educational events for the local community (lectures, seminars, workshops, training including anti-discrimination diversity training, the values of biodiversity, natural history, etc., which directly addresses issues that may be seen as problems.
- Create a list of specific institutions/organisations for possible collaboration and providing possible support for their activities (e.g. sailing school, student internships, etc.).
- Ensure that the press/media are well informed about the educational opportunities in the protected area.
- Add a "Get involved" section on protected area website with a list, short description and contact for educational opportunities.

- Offer learning opportunities for local people about sustainable development and how to use the potential opportunities in and around the protected area.
- Integrate educational components into the protected area infrastructure (information, trails, etc.).
- Recruit qualified educational personnel, initially at certain times of the year or for specific projects.
- Actively seek opportunities to join EU projects or similar that address human resource development.
- Organise/provide support for educational activities (electronic newsletters, via websites and other media, provide venue, etc.).

Examples of good practice

Biogradska gora National Park, Montenegro:

“Let’s make the nature happy” (Obradujmo prirodu)

The main goal of this activity is to involve the youngest in environmental education and action. It is organised in different national parks in Montenegro, currently in Biogradska gora National Park. It involves 450 elementary school (6th grade) children from nine schools and is implemented through workshops, interactive activities in the park, etc., geared towards learning about all national parks in Montenegro. Learning material has been developed in accordance with formal curricula for elementary schools and therefore contributes to their knowledge gained through the formal education. This activity is supported by the NLB Bank of Montenegro as part of their corporate social responsibility programme.

Kovilj - Petrovaradin marche Special Nature Reserve, Vojvodina, Serbia:

Education programme for local people

The Vojvodina Environmental Movement is a very active organisation and initiates many activities within the protected area. Every year it organises the *Novi Sad Spring* event in March, together with PE “Vojvodinašume”,

which involves an education programme for the local community of Novi Sad and surrounding area dealing with key issues regarding nature. The organisation is also active in other fields of the protected area organising tours, camps and similar activities oriented towards the understanding of principles of sustainable development.

Lonjsko Polje Nature Park, Croatia:

Working on actions with mutual benefits

Undertaking actions and projects where both the protected area and the local community benefit is a win-win situation. In Lonjsko Polje the protected area and the local community are very aware that retaining the presence of local residents and preventing rural depopulation is very important, especially as the protected area landscapes and natural processes exist because of the local people. Making life easier for the local community is the protected area’s contribution to fighting against rural depopulation processes.

Škocjan caves:

Network of schools and universities of the park

Since 1999 the park within UNESCO's Man and Biosphere programme were actively cooperating with primary schools in the wider park territory, even with some schools over the border in Italy. They organised various activities including education opportunities for school children and their teachers to join international projects on sustainability and biodiversity, a congress of young researchers about Karst systems and training and excursions for teachers. In 2016 they received a special award of the Republic of Slovenia for outstanding achievements in the elementary schools education. In 2014 the park also established a network of universities of the park. The three largest universities have joined the network in order to collaborate in research and use the results for management of the Biosphere area.

Table 4. Education and capacity development in local communities - detailed recommendations for advancing

Advancing from level 1 to 2	Advancing from level 2 to 3	Advancing from level 3 to 4	Advancing from level 4 to 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure someone is assigned by the protected area to work on education when needed, even if not formally. • An education plan is beginning to be prepared by the protected area for its local community and target audience. • The protected area is planning to start allocating funds for educational and learning activities. • The protected area has plans to reach out to local schools/educational facilities. • The protected area is planning to develop an internal educational programme for improving staff knowledge and capacity. • The protected area provides at least 2 of the educational activities (i.e. lectures; seminars; conferences; workshops; courses including language; field or study visits). • The protected area is planning to develop material about protected area values which is local community specific and can be used promoting the area. • The local community and key stakeholders are beginning to become aware of the values of the protected area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area has assigned a particular person to educational and learning tasks of up to 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE). • The protected area has an education plan in place for its local community and target audience but it has not as yet been fully implemented. • The protected area has allocated funds for occasional education and learning activities, mainly through some projects. • The protected area has begun to reach out to local schools/educational facilities. • The protected area occasionally organises knowledge raising opportunities to improve staff capacity. • The protected area provides at least 3 of the educational activities (i.e. website; press/media; newsletter; social media; information office/mobile visits). • The protected area occasionally provides specific information about its values, mainly through projects or campaigns. • The local community and key stakeholders are becoming increasingly aware of the values of the protected area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area must have assigned particular staff to educational and learning tasks of between 0.5 and 0.9 FTE equivalent. • The protected area has a good education plan for its local community and target audience but the local community is not very aware of it. • The protected area actively seeks additional resources (grants, donations, etc.), in order to allocate more funds to its education and learning activities during each year. • The protected area authority has initiated cooperation with the majority of relevant local schools/education facilities. • There is a structured internal educational programme for improving staff knowledge and capacity which is just being implemented. • The protected area provides at least 4 of the educational activities (i.e. lectures; seminars; conferences; workshops; courses including language; field or study visits). • Protected area information material is specifically tailored to the local community audience and is widely disseminated and available. • The local community and key stakeholders are aware of the values of the protected area and are starting to use them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area must have assigned 1 full-time equivalent or more to educational/learning tasks. • The protected area must have a fully functional education plan for its local community and target audience. • The protected area must be systematically allocating funds for the education activities from its core budget as well as seeking additional resources (grants, donations, etc.). • The protected area authority must be working with local schools/ educational facilities on the basis of mutual interest and initiative. • There must be a well-developed programme of volunteering, awards, training, seasonal student or adult work, trainee/intern/and scholarships etc. • Structured improvement of knowledge and capacities of the protected area staff must be part of its regular good practice. • The protected area provides at least 5 of the educational activities (i.e. Lectures; Seminars; Conferences; Workshops; Courses including language; Field or study visits). • The local community and key stakeholders are fully aware of the values of the protected area and contribute to its promotion in a way which is sympathetic and discerning.

3.2.5 Section 5: Social development

Well-managed protected areas have been shown to provide and support a range of social benefits through their work. In working together with local communities, organisations, businesses and individuals in or nearby protected areas it helps in that local people are often best placed to identify and address local concerns. In addition, their participation and views will help shape projects and activities to mutual benefit. This, in turn, can help empower communities to strengthen civil society as well as to feel a greater sense of ownership and pride in their local areas. This is especially so as protected areas, together with their local communities, work on developing well-managed and sustainable tourism which can bring many advantages such as employment, infrastructure and trust among local partners and stakeholders.

Key recommendations

- Consider the benefits and opportunities in working towards joining the *European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas* and strive for European best practice.
- Establish a tourism forum/partnership based on the *Charter* model.
- Encourage involvement to develop social benefits.
- Develop a strategy for improving the socio-economic benefits of local people, revitalise local communities and slow down or even reverse rural depopulation.

Possible quick wins

- Increase involvement of the protected area in the cultural and social activities organised by the local community.

- Create joint protected area/local community cultural and social projects/activities/events that involve cherishing local culture, way of life and traditional crafts.
- Consider how the protected area organisation can play a positive role in improving inter-municipal dialogue that improves social development.
- Incorporate local culture within the protected area brand/identity.
- Organise familiarisation tours and lectures, helping to build trust, awareness and understanding.

Examples of good practice

Galičica National Park, Macedonia:

Galičica Mountaineering Tour

This protected area organises this sports and social event in cooperation with local communities, local authorities and tourism businesses in the National Park. They provide support through finance, people and infrastructure.

Mavrovo National Park, Macedonia:

Waste disposal initiative

Mavrovo National Park organised an event for the collection of waste in various “hotspots” in the protected area. This waste originated mainly from careless tourists visiting the national park. The local community voluntarily participated in this event, on the initiative of the Mavrovo National Park. The Public Communal Hygiene Enterprise (PCHE) from the municipality Mavrovo-Rostushe had also been included in this activity. As a result of this type of collaboration between the Mavrovo National Park management, the local community and the PCHE, the “hotspots” have been cleared from the offending waste. This activity has shown the positive impact that can be achieved through cooperation between relevant stakeholders in the protected areas.

Paklenica National Park, Croatia:

School of Rock Climbing

The protected area worked with local climbing event organisers, civil society and tour operators to establish a skills development programme for rock climbing. The programme enabled local young people to participate and offered skills development for potential guides. The programme also enabled the tour operators to add the school to their offer, thus improving the overall tourism offer of the destination. The value of stakeholder collaboration to achieve a joint goal was a positive experience which protected areas use.

Prokletije National Park, Montenegro:

Preserving the traditional handcraft

Prokletije National Park recently opened a visitor centre in which one of the rooms is dedicated to the culture and tradition of the area. The room was equipped with handmade objects from local collector, Ms Ifeta Rasic, the only professional knitter in the town. For visitors who are particularly interested Ms Rasic prepared a room with about 1000 exhibits in the town of Gusinje. Visitors have opportunity to hear hundreds of stories connected to these traditional objects. The project also inspired others to promote and care for their traditions.

Telašćica Nature Park, Croatia:

Dugi otok Trail

The Dugi otok trail was jointly organised by the tourist board, the municipality and Natural Park. It promoted protected area values along the trail and at the end the local products were presented and offered. This event also had an important social component with an evening concert providing an opportunity to meet new people and make new contacts, ideas

etc., which is something that is lacking during the low-season. It was a well-attended event and confirmed the collaboration between the protected area and the local community creating a very positive atmosphere.

Velebit Nature Park, Croatia:

Linden Tree Retreat & Ranch

An example of sustainable tourism is a private, eco-luxury mountain resort, nestled at the foot of Velebit Mountain. This old wild west-style ranch offers horse riding, trekking, hiking, mountaineering, educational activities for children, multi-day expeditions and more. It provides new business opportunities for the local community members and more services for tourists. It has also given good opportunities for the retention of young educated people in the region. As the ranch develops, the improved offer and increase in the number of visitors offers an opportunity for wider job creation and the need for even greater cooperation with the local community.

Table 5. Social development - detailed recommendations for advancing

Advancing from level 1 to 2	Advancing from level 2 to 3	Advancing from level 3 to 4	Advancing from level 4 to 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area provides at least 2 of the social benefits (i.e. food; wood, health; flood and erosion protection/prevention; cultural and spiritual; recreation and tourism). • The protected area is currently working on plans for actively developing sustainable tourism as the current tourism offer could reduce the quality of life of the local community. • The protected area is preparing plans to support and contribute actively to the cultural and social development of the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area provides at least 4 of the social benefits (i.e. food; wood, health; flood and erosion protection/prevention; cultural and spiritual; recreation and tourism). • The protected area has developed an agreed working plan for actively promoting sustainable tourism. However, it has not been fully implemented; therefore current tourism could still reduce the quality of life of the local community. • The protected area has prepared a plan to support and contribute actively to the cultural and social development of the local community but this plan has not as yet been fully implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area must be providing more than 5 of the social benefits (i.e. food; wood, health; flood and erosion protection/prevention; cultural and spiritual; recreation and tourism). • The protected area must be implementing its agreed plan to promote sustainable tourism but its effects are not being experienced by the local community. • The protected area actively supports sustainable tourism but it still does not make a significant contribution to the cultural and social development of the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area must be providing 6 social benefits to its communities (i.e. food; wood, health; flood and erosion protection/prevention; cultural and spiritual; recreation and tourism); the local community and key stakeholders consider the protected area very beneficial regarding social benefits. • The protected area must fully and actively promote sustainable tourism which supports, and not reduces, the quality of life of the local community. The effects of this are clearly visible. • The local community and key stakeholders agree that the protected area makes an important and positive contribution to the cultural and social development of the local community.

3.2.6 Section 6: Sustainable economic development

The relationship between protected areas and economic development is often complicated. In some European countries protected areas are sometimes discouraged to become involved at all. Yet working together with local communities and local businesses can be the best way of achieving sustainable economic development that fosters local communities and provides opportunities for the future while protecting and enhancing the environment. Sustainable economic development is supportive of protected area objectives and enhances the quality of life of local communities in and/or around the protected area. The close involvement of the protected area is essential.

Key recommendations

- Consider the benefits and opportunities in working towards the *European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas* and strive for European best practice.
- Establish a balanced group/forum to develop a sustainable economic partnership to develop economic opportunities in harmony with the environment.
- Develop a strategy for improving the socio-economic benefits for local people and revitalising local communities to slow down or even reverse rural depopulation.
- Provide learning and education opportunities for the local community regarding sustainable development and how to use the potential offered by the protected area and its surrounding area.
- Develop or support development of brands of products which support the maintenance of traditional landscape, knowledge and culture, and

examine the benefits of creating a specific brand in partnership with the local community.

Possible quick wins

- Implement activities for promoting sustainable economic development contained within the protected area's management plan.
- Inform and consult all interested stakeholders about developing a possible specific brand (through meetings, workshops, website, email, newsletters).
- Assign/employ a well-qualified person in charge of sustainable economic development in the protected area.
- Investigate possible interest within the local community for specific business skills development courses/workshops and invite experts to run the courses/workshops.
- Develop joint protected area/local community projects (products or services) with sustainable tourism businesses in the local community and generate media interest.
- Maximise the benefits and success of increasing outdoor recreation and events, which unlocks opportunities for promotion of both the protected area and its outdoor activities offer, but always considering the carrying capacity of the landscape.
- Support learning and educational activities of stakeholders to improve their own cooperation.
- Encourage the local community to consider the potential of developing a wide range of activities and innovative tourism offer including local product sales which could aid sustainable growth.
- Work together with the local community on improving product marketing (e.g. present local business and products on the protected area's website, mutual advertising via leaflets, local product sales, etc.).
- Encourage the establishment and support the work of local associations or cooperatives (e.g. food producers, farmers' cooperatives, etc.).

- Investigate protected area/local community joint applications for funding of projects that will bring mutual benefits.
- Increase cross-border cooperation with other protected areas and tourist agencies, encourage visitors to purchase local products and local services.
- Employ more local people within protected area organisations.

Examples of good practice

Blidinje Nature Park, BiH:

Association VIZIT BLIDINJE

A private initiative of a local stakeholder from Blidinje. The association is led by a young woman, also owner of a small local family hotel. Arranged a cooperation agreement with the protected area, mountaineering companies, local tourist facilities, mountain rescue service, etc. (30 members working together, taking part in exhibitions, events, etc.).

Butrint National Park, Albania:

Employment opportunities for women

The women's association of Saranda, in collaboration with the national park authority, National Authority of Food Control, local women, etc., created an eco-business employing ca. 10 local women around Butrint National Park. In this eco-business local women prepare traditional snacks and sell them at the Butrint Archaeological Park. The Archaeological Park is visited by around 2000 visitors per day on average and the amount of snacks sold was sufficient to provide a good salary for each of the employed women. It started in 2014 and it is still organised each summer. It shows how important is to think about ways of generating employment through sustainable livelihood activities, based on the potential offered in the context of each protected area.

NP Đerdap, Serbia:

Beekeeper society initiated branding of honey from protected area

The branding process to promote and sell honey from the protected area has not yet been completed but is clearly supported by the protected area. This example of stakeholder initiative and possible social and economic benefit can be transferred to some other typical products of this area (special cheeses, etc.), thus supporting local community development.

Krka National Park, Croatia:

Krka Green Table

Registered manufacturers of local agricultural products and handicrafts, through a public invitation by the national park, are exhibited and the products sold on planned dates throughout the year. Priority is given to ecological producers whose products are grown and/or produced within or close to the boundaries of the national park. This shows that the protected area supports local people in the production and marketing of their products and promotes cooperation with local residents and equal opportunity to all interested parties who meet the conditions of the public invitation. This cooperation between the protected area and producers shows other members of the local community that collaboration with protected area is possible.

Kornati National Park, Croatia:

Local community promotion

Building mutual respect and better collaboration with the local community is a permanent promotion of local producers and services on the protected area's website in a "We recommend" section. There is a short description,

address, email and a phone contact for each local producer and service/business.

Kozjansko Park:

Conservation of old-type orchards

Kozjansko is a regional park particularly valued for its extensive meadows and orchards. To maintain the landscape and biodiversity connected with old-type tall-trunk apple trees in meadow orchards, the park has for more than two decades actively promoted the maintenance of orchards. The park has purchased a mobile fruit press and bottle filling machine, enabling inhabitants to produce high-quality apple juice with lower production costs. They are also active in maintaining old varieties of apple trees and have established a sample orchard and nursery in which they are maintaining 52 varieties of apples and pears. Each year they also organise a promotional event “Day of Kozjansko apple”.

Papuk Nature Park, Croatia:

“Medeni Papuk”

An idea by the local Association of Beekeepers working cooperatively with the protected area to develop a series of “honey trails”, or hiking routes, that ended in tasting the local honey in Voćin where the bee products are available for purchase. The aim is to encourage local beekeeping and develop the brand of honey produced in the UNESCO Geopark and Nature Park. It can sold locally to visitors as well as placed on the wider market. Future plans to create educational workshops for school and other groups on the production of honey are underway.

Sutjeska National Park, BiH:

OK Fest

Festivals are an excellent way of communicating with the local community. The survey showed many examples such as the “OK Fest” which has become one of the major regional festival events. Held every year in July, it features a music programme plus fun/educational zones within the protected area. The local community is engaged in many ways through employment of local people during the organisation, but also offering the accommodation, food, souvenirs, etc. Also good for communicating with the local community and its social development (see sections 3 and 5 above).

Una National Park, BiH:

Sustainable Tourism Forum

This protected area is a member of the *European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in protected areas*. It is mandatory for Charter Parks to have a Sustainable Tourism Forum which is well-established by now and of great benefit.

Vransko Lake Nature Park, Croatia:

MTB race around the lake

In cooperation with TZO Pakoštane the protected area supported the development of a mountain biking (MTB) event around the Lake. The ongoing relative success led the protected area to begin collaboration with other organisations to host more events (now over 5 events/year). From the perspective of the TZO, the event seems to have levelled off in terms of participant growth; however, the increase in total event numbers has been very positive from the protected area perspective. The protected area is examining possible improvements to other trails to enhance the quality and support more MTB visitors.

Table 6. Sustainable economic development - detailed recommendations for advancing

Advancing from level 1 to 2	Advancing from level 2 to 3	Advancing from level 3 to 4	Advancing from level 4 to 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area has no person in its organisation responsible for dealing with sustainable economic development but the protected area can make (under contract/partnership with other or own staff) resources available if needed. • The protected area is currently preparing a strategy, in partnership with others, for the active promotion of sustainable economic development in harmony with protected area values. • The protected area is making active preparation to become involved in promoting a protected area brand based on agreed values and identity. • The protected area promotes sustainable economic development in at least 2 of the areas listed (i.e. workshops and lectures; direct financial support; project proposal development; developing business skills; product marketing; investing in business; joint bodies/forum). • Contacts between the protected area and the sustainable tourism business community are very limited and mostly legally necessary. • The protected area is planning to promote, in partnership with others, local products in and/or surrounding the protected area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area has assigned a particular person to work with others in partnership on appropriate sustainable economic development of up to 0.5 full-time equivalent. • The protected area has prepared a strategy in partnership with others for the active promotion of sustainable economic development but implementation of this plan is just beginning. • The protected area has prepared plans to be actively involved in promoting a protected area brand based on agreed values and identity. • The protected area promotes sustainable economic development in at least 3 of the areas listed (i.e. workshops and lectures; direct financial support; project proposal development; developing business skills; product marketing; investing in business; joint bodies/forum). • Although there is no formal legal and financial support by the protected area to the sustainable tourism and business community, some informal support is noticeable. • The protected area is beginning to promote, in partnership with others, local products in and/or surrounding the protected area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area must have assigned a person responsible for dealing with sustainable economic development tasks of between 0.5 and 0.9 full-time equivalent, perhaps under contract/partnership, etc. • There is a chapter or section of the management plan which addresses the promotion of sustainable economic development, but this chapter or section does not have the same importance as others. • The protected area is one of the partners in promoting a protected area brand but not as a leading partner. • The protected area must promote sustainable economic development in at least 4 the areas listed (i.e. workshops and lectures; direct financial support; project proposal development; developing Business skills; product marketing; investing in business; joint bodies/forum). • There must be a number of different forms of support by the protected area to the sustainable tourism business community but the business community feels they could be improved (e.g. joint marketing, product development, advertising, permits and concessions, financial support). • Local products are increasingly promoted in partnership with others in and/or surrounding the protected area but there is room for improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a person responsible for dealing with sustainable economic development who is available full-time and successfully involved in projects promoting sustainable economic development, perhaps under contract/partnership, etc. • There must be a chapter or section of the management plan, carrying equal weight to other chapters or sections, which addresses the promotion of sustainable economic development and is being fully implemented. • The protected area is a leading partner in promoting a protected area brand. • The protected area promotes sustainable economic development in 6 of areas listed (i.e. workshops and lectures; direct financial support; project proposal development; developing business skills; product marketing; investing in business; joint bodies/forum). • There must be frequent and regular contacts and joint activities between the protected area and the sustainable tourism business community. • Local products are well promoted in and/or surrounding the protected area.

3.2.7 Section 7: Equal rights and equal opportunities

Freedom from discrimination, the right to participate in policy and decision-making processes and the right to be given an equal opportunity are at the core of European civilisation. Protected areas right across Europe have realised that treating all people fairly and equally, making them part of open decision-making, enhances human relationships and makes for good community cohesion and sustainability. Protected areas practising full non-discrimination have found that using all available talent and expertise, wherever it comes from, is good news for nature conservation as well.

Key recommendations

- Develop and implement a full equal opportunity and non-discrimination policy in place, which finds its way into all parts of the protected area's activities making sure it works in practice.
- Carry out a revision of all procedures and forms to ensure equality and non-discrimination is working well.
- Organise equality and diversity training workshops.
- Ensure the protected area organisations reviews and assesses its employment and interviewing practices to eliminate bias and prejudice.

Possible quick wins

- Develop well-defined criteria/job descriptions for all protected area staff positions, ensuring that they are gender neutral.
- Provide learning and educational opportunities for protected area staff highlighting good example practices (to expand horizons/perspective).
- Publish, promote and emphasise the principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination policies of the protected area on Facebook,

social media in general and the protected areas website. Also mention those aspects of the protected area policy in workshops, lectures and promotional materials (e.g. leaflets).

- Provide special events that support rights of people with disabilities, ethnic groups and national minorities.

Examples of good practice

Only one example of good practice was found in the assessment survey but it has subsequently encountered difficulties. Nonetheless it gives one example to look at. Many good examples exist in other parts of Europe and should be researched carefully. The inclusion of the rights approach in all protected area practice makes good moral and economic sense. For example, people with impaired mobility are economically just as important as other visitors and any form of exclusion or unfair treatment has a socio-economic impact.

Zasavica Special Nature Reserve, Serbia

Activities for children with disabilities

SNR Zasavica offered a piece of their land to the Sremska Mitrovica Inclusion Centre to be temporarily used for activities with children with disabilities. The idea was to help enhance the children's motor skills and contribute to their social inclusion by involving them in growing aromatic herbs and ancient varieties of fruits and vegetables, applying the principles of organic agriculture. This was successfully implemented and worked well until last year because of lack of transport.

Table 7. Equal rights and opportunities - detailed recommendations for advancing

Advancing from level 1 to 2	Advancing from level 2 to 3	Advancing from level 3 to 4	Advancing from level 4 to 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area is currently planning an equal opportunity and non-discrimination policy. • The protected area applies 3 of the 8 areas listed which support equal opportunity and non-discrimination, (i.e. gender; ethnic or national origin; race or colour; sexual orientation; physical or mental disability; religion; age; or other characteristics such as background, skills, expertise and experience). • The protected area organisation still shows signs of institutional discrimination in its day-to-day practice. • The protected area is currently planning to cooperate with organisations opposed to discrimination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area has put in place an equal opportunity and non-discrimination policy for 4 of the areas listed (i.e. gender; ethnic or national origin; race or colour; sexual orientation; physical or mental disability; religion; age; or other characteristics such as background, skills, expertise and experience). • The protected area organisation still shows some signs of institutional discrimination but is demonstrating willingness to change. • The protected area has begun to cooperate with organisations opposed to discrimination in at least half the areas listed (i.e. gender; ethnic or national origin; race or colour; sexual orientation; physical or mental disability; religion; age; or other characteristics such as background, skills, expertise and experience). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area must have a formal and agreed equal opportunity and non-discrimination policy applying to the majority of its areas of operation and influence, at least on paper. • Implementation of the equal opportunity and non-discrimination policies is happening in most of the areas and plans have been made for those areas which are not yet free from institutional discrimination. • The protected area is cooperating significantly with organisations opposed to discrimination in all the areas listed (i.e. gender; ethnic or national origin; race or colour; sexual orientation; physical or mental disability; religion; age; or other characteristics such as background, skills, expertise and experience). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected area must have a fully functioning, accepted and implemented equal opportunity and non-discrimination policy applying to all its areas of operation and that the organisation is free from institutional discrimination. • The protected area works openly with organisations opposed to discrimination in all the areas listed (i.e. gender; ethnic or national origin; race or colour; sexual orientation; physical or mental disability; religion; age; or other characteristics such as background, skills, expertise and experience).

4. Concluding remarks

The Community Involvement Assessment conducted in 2017 across the protected areas of the Dinaric Arc is, to our knowledge, the first detailed assessment of the interactions between protected areas and their local communities. It offers an authoritative insight into the perception of the protected area management authorities and local communities regarding their involvement in decision-making and management planning, opportunities for education, access to information and communication, socio-economic development and equal rights.

All of these topics are the main pillars of successful community involvement and essential for effective protected area management and governance. Without this, the protected areas and local communities cannot work effectively together towards achieving essential conservation and sustainability goals.

The completed assessment across the protected areas of the Dinaric Arc region reveals some serious gaps in community involvement. Furthermore, the comparison of the results of the protected area and of the local communities has shown major differences in perception regarding the quality of the involvement. Protected areas often estimate their efforts to include local communities as sufficient, whereas local communities do not perceive themselves as being adequately involved.

The CDP provides an extensive set of recommendations, mainly directed at the protected area management authorities. Some progress can be achieved

fairly quickly and without significant costs. Others may need more time and in some cases even changes in law.

Bearing in mind the main findings based on the assessment results and their analysis, the most important recommendations can be summarised in the following **priority areas of improvement**:

(i) Communication

Despite the fact that it was not amongst the fields of involvement with the lowest scores, the overall gap in perceptions between the protected area and the local community shows that this would be the first step from which to start. It requires a synergy of the following processes:

- (a) improving communication skills for both the protected area and the local community;
- (b) joint preparation of activities and plans;
- (c) institutionalisation of communication within the protected area authority (person in charge, plan/strategy, evaluations of satisfaction of stakeholders).

Since the lowest gaps in perception are in Slovenia and Albania, these countries should be further directly consulted and an explanation of this trend sought through sharing with others. The close connection identified between communication and decision-making seems to indicate that an increase in the quality of communication and in communication activities generally, will help the process of improved decision-making, in particular

improved functioning of existing bodies and in the sharing of important information and decision-making opportunities between the protected area and the local community.

(ii) Education

Again, the results show that this is another solid area of involvement, in comparison with others as seen by respondents. However, existing lower satisfaction by local communities with this section (in most assessment areas), even in areas where there are plenty of activities of this type underway, indicates that it is necessary again to institutionalise education (e.g. person in charge, plan/strategy, investments planned for these activities, etc.) and to formulate plans for the involvement of stakeholders and their education/learning needs.

In order to do so protected areas have to provide skills and competences needed for their staff as well as carefully develop and use the network of volunteers and experts in the field.

(iii) Social development

It is clear that, in many cases (the most visible being the social development field), both groups do not understand the real meaning of services and social benefits for local communities and therefore there it is the highest gap in their perception. The continuous development of participatory skills is one of preconditions for a better protected area and local community participation in the future.

(iv) Economic development

The highest agreement between the perceptions of the protected areas and the local communities was in the economic development field (both giving low scores here). It shows that it is not well-developed but it may also mean that both of the groups do not even see that this is the function of a protected area authority. It is necessary to further explore this in structured discussion with members of the Dinaric Parks Association.

(v) Management planning

This section was among the weakest aspects of community involvement, according to the assessment results. This area, therefore, requires particular attention and is related to education (improving the planning skills of the protected area and stakeholders), communication, decision-making (improving the participatory skills, conflict resolution skills, joint decisions on the plan tasks and its implementation, etc.) and of course to the other areas (inclusion of economic development and social development in plans, involvement of stakeholders/institutions from those fields, etc.).

This is one of the key fields for protected areas. The effective involvement of the local community is only achieved through complex and long-term activities. An opportunity must be created to prepare protected areas which are going to start their management planning soon. They should carry out this task by following the recommendations outlined in the CDP and by monitoring their success along the way, using experience from the Dinaric Parks Association membership as well as external expert support.

(vi) Equal rights and opportunities

This section covers some of the weakest aspects of community involvement, as the assessment results clearly show. This is closely related to a lack of institutionalised solutions in most of the protected areas (non-existing policy, planning in accordance to non-discrimination principles, etc.) as well as to the transparency of it, even when it does exist (as in a minority of cases).

This is one of the fields where it is necessary to assure synergy between protected area and national policies. It is more sophisticated in Slovenia and intensified in countries such as Macedonia. It could be good practice to organise a sharing of experiences with them through the Dinaric Parks Association channels.

For the next stages of the project, all the protected areas for within the programme, together with WWF Adria and the Dinaric Parks Association, should strive to find the best way to implement the proposed priorities, key and detailed recommendations as well as regional good practice.

This CDP lists specific examples of good practice which, perhaps through the Dinaric Parks Association, can provide opportunities for an exchange of experience and knowledge-sharing across the region.

Progress can also be achieved through a variety of other proven methods:

- workshops,
- training,
- field visits,
- reassignment of tasks of existing staff or employing new staff,
- changes in internal procedures of the management authorities,
- web based learning,
- sharing expertise and knowledge, etc.

By working together, exchanging mutual experience and researching new ways of doing things, perhaps with the help of external experts, it should be possible to improve the ranking of most protected areas in a relatively short time.

5. References

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Groups of protected areas according to their ranks per each section

Will make this after we add results from Kosovo