



IMPACT
**REPORT on the International Conference,
and Study Visits in Hațeg Country, Romania**

6th-8th of March 2017 | HAȚEG, ROMANIA

1. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The purpose of the conference was to share experiences between partners and stakeholders in the IMPACT project in the field of protected areas management.

Target group of the event:

- partners in the IMPACT project and their stakeholders, to whom good practices in Romania will be presented;
- Romanian stakeholders in the project, respectively the representatives of the administrations of protected areas from Romania (Hațeg Country Dinosaurs Geopark, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority, Rodna Mountains National Park, Iron Gate Nature Park, Vânători Neamț Nature Park, Retezat National Park), representatives of the Ministry of Tourism, National Agency for Natural Protected Areas, Economic and Social Development Agency of Hunedoara County, WWF, Retezat Tourism Association.

The unfolding of the conference:

The conference was opened by Mrs. Cristina Lixândroiu, *INCOT*, who welcomed all the partners and participants on behalf of the organizers.

During this plenary session, welcome remarks were also expressed by Mr. Mayor Marcel Goia, Hațeg City Hall and Mrs. Diana Iakab, The Economic and Social Development Agency of Hunedoara County.

Speakers:

Mrs. Cristina Lixândroiu, National Institute of Research and Development in Tourism

Mrs. Madalina Teodora Andrei, National Agency of Natural Protected Areas

Mr. Cristian Ciobanu, Hațeg Country Dinosaurs Geopark

Ms. Petra Lînaru, Ms. Armina Miclăuș, Ms. Alicia Petresc, Ms. Claudia Drăgan, Ms.

Oana Indrecan, Mr. Rareș Coantă, Mr. Robert Dumbuleu and Mr. David Muntean,

Hațeg UGG Volunteer and Ambassador Program

Mr. Alexandru Bulacu, Retezat Tourism Association

Mr. Florin Halastauan, WWF

Mr. Iusan Claudiu, Rodna Mountains National Park Administration

Mrs. Alina Codreanu, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority

Mr. Felix Baratky, Iron Gates Natural Park Administration

Mr. Sebastian Cătonoiu, Vânători Neamț Natural Park Administration

Moderators:

Mrs. Cristina Lixândroiu, National Institute of Research and Development in Tourism

Mr. Cristian Ciobanu, Hațeg Country Dinosaurs Geopark

In the opening of the conference, **Mrs. Cristina Lixăndroiu**, the project manager belonging to the National Institute of Research and Development in Tourism (RO), made a short description of the IMPACT project. In it were presented the project partners, the project objectives, the implementation period, it was described the manner in which the first phase of the project would be run, emphasizing simultaneously the role of the stakeholders in this process, and also how the second phase of the project would unfold.



The second presentation was delivered by **Mrs. Madalina Teodora Andrei**, National Agency of Natural Protected Areas - ANANP (Romania).

ANANP is a public institution with legal personality, operates under the authority of the central public authority for environmental protection. This institution was established by Law 95/2016 and G.D. no. 997/21.12.2016 and is financed from own revenues and subsidies granted from the state budget.



In the first part of the presentation, Mrs. Andrei made a description of the national protected area system, which covers approximately 23% of the country's surface (including "Natura 2000" sites). In the second part of her presentation, Mrs. Andrei laid out the reasons why this institution

was established, its mission and its main tasks, highlighting the role of ANANP in the unitary monitoring of the management of protected natural areas and in the harmonizing the national policies in the field of the protection of biodiversity.

The next presentation was that of **Mr. Cristian Ciobanu**, who offered an overview on the meaning of the concept of a geopark that is part of Global Geoparks Network, a network working under the aegis of UNESCO.

Hațeg Country Dinosaurs Geopark is one of 127 geoparks of the 35 countries which are part of this network. The Geopark has been established in 2004, and since 2005 it has been part of the network. The speaker made a presentation of the geopark and of the activities that are carried out there.

Starting with 2014, Hațeg Country Dinosaurs Geopark has developed a unitary interpretative concept in which there are three strategic directions of interpretation: "the Story of Earth – Geodiversity", "the Story of Life - Biodiversity", and "the Story of the Human Being - Culture".

Instead of building a large geopark visiting hub, a network of interpretation that includes seven visiting centres, based on different themes and spread in several localities of the park, has been



developed. (House of the Geopark, House of Science and Art, House of Volcanoes, House of Miniatures, House of Traditions, House of Dwarf Dinosaurs, House of Stones). Also, a calendar of annual events (the Cross of the Royal Fortress of Hațeg, the European Geoparks Week, the Celebration of the Geopark, the Dinosaurs' Festival and the Annual Day of the Volcanoes and so on) was drawn.

Similarly, several projects have been developed, combining the visiting infrastructure with volunteering and education actions, including "Geopark Volunteers" (200 enrolled volunteers), and "Geopark Ambassadors" (18 Ambassadors).

Over the last years, the Geopark has been involved in the sustainable development of tourism, being an active partner within the ecotourism destination of Hațeg Country – Retezat. As a result of tourist monitoring activities, it stood out that the geopark was the second reason motivating tourists to travel to this destination, after Retezat Mountains.

A moment that benefited from very much appreciation from those who participated in this conference was the presentation made by a group of **eight young ambassadors of the geopark**, who talked about the two programmes: "Geopark Volunteers" and "Geopark Ambassadors".



There were highlighted the training courses and the activities that must be performed by a volunteer in order for he or she to become an ambassador. They spoke about the activities that volunteers are involved in (building the visiting centres - House of Stones, House of Volcanoes etc.; in running local events - the Cross of the Royal Fortress of Hațeg, the European Geoparks Week, the Annual Celebration of the Geopark, the Dinosaurs' Festival and the Day of the Volcanoes etc; in the cultural exchanges - the Journey of

Andi Andezit; in the promotion of the geopark - GGN Youth Instagram Project etc.). They also talked about the impact that these programmes has had on communities and about how the volunteers have changed their lives with joining the team of the geopark.

Mr. Alexandru Bulacu (Retezat Tourism Association) made both a presentation of the association and a presentation of the ecotourism destination of Hațeg Country – Retezat. Retezat Tourism Association, established in 2007, is a management unit whose main purpose is the development and promotion of the ecotourism destination of Hațeg Country – Retezat, certified by the Ministry of Tourism in 2016. The destination was established on the basis of a partnership of institutions and units involved in the field of tourism, environmental protection and education and bodies of the local and central public administration.



The ecotourism destination of Hațeg Country – Retezat is part of a network of several destinations developed at the national level with the support of the Ecotourism Association of Romania and recognized by the Ministry of Tourism (four destinations have benefited so far from being recognized and other eight are being recognized currently).

Subsequently, Mr. Bulacu talked about the tourist zoning of the destination and the tourist activities carried out within each area. He also talked about organized tourism and educational activities, promotional activities, the events organized and so on.

Mr. Florin Hălăstăuan (WWF) presented the *Project to reintroduce the bison into Romania, in the South-West Carpathians*. The project, started in 2012, is the second of its kind in Romania



after the one developed in the Vânători Neamț Natural Park. Currently, there are about 24 animals in the area of Țarcu Mountains and in the future there will be created another dedicated habitat in Poiana Ruscă Mountains, and a corridor will be created between the two areas.

Mr. Hălăstăuan explained the process of releasing to the wild of the European bison / acclimatization of the European bison and the infrastructure created for this purpose. The WWF project also pursues two

secondary directions:

- a. education and raising awareness on the importance of releasing the bison into the wild;
- b. development of local communities through tourism, through programmes related to the release of the bison into the wild.

Mr. Iusan Claudiu (Rodna Mountains National Park Administration) delivered a presentation on the Rodna Mountains National Park (of the natural values that the park boasts) and the activities carried out by the Park administration (*biodiversity conservation; ecotourism management; environmental education; habitat restoration; culture preservation; Biosphere reserve management*).



The participatory monitoring system (one of the good practices selected by INCDT under the IMPACT project) was also presented. Participatory biodiversity monitoring has been initiated in 2004, when there have been established the first student clubs around the protected area and whose purpose was to collect field data on certain target species of flora and fauna (daffodils, bats, birds, bugs, butterflies, black goats, marmots). Between 2004 and 2017, the core of ECO Clubs had expanded, forming a network of 20 clubs in ten neighbouring locations (over 500 volunteers - students, over 50 researchers, over 25 coordinating teachers, rangers, and supervising biologists). A monitoring system for key species in the park was put in place by developing monitoring protocols for 30 species and habitats. The sustainability of the monitoring system was ensured by creating an NGO that accessed more than 25 projects that were implemented in the protected area, as well as through the support provided by the Park Administration. A brief description of these projects was provided in this presentation.

Mrs. Alina Codreanu (Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority) made a



presentation of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and of the *public awareness and ecological education* activities within this reserve.

Danube Delta is one of the largest delta in Europe (580.000 ha), including one of the most unspoilt wetlands on the continent. It was declared a biosphere reserve in 1990 by the Government of Romania and by the Romanian Parliament. The universal value of the reserve was recognized by the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme of UNESCO in 1990, through its inclusion in the international network of biosphere reserves. Also, the DDBR is listed as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention (1991) and in the World Heritage List under the World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention (1990).

Raise the environmental awareness (both for visitors and local people) and education children and pupils are two of the objectives o DDBRA.

Forwards Mrs. Codreanu has presented public awareness strategy and the environmental education programmes developed by DDBRA. There were presented the activities carried out within the seven Information and Ecological Education Centres, the activities carried out during various events, the activities carried out in local schools and so on.

The next presentation was delivered by **Mr. Felix Baratky** (Iron Gates Natural Park Administration). In his speech, Mr. Baratky presented the initiative called "Friends of Nature". Through this project, ever since 2012, it was proposed that in each school of the 11 territorial administrative units in the park were to be created 11 "Friends of Nature" Groups, selected from among primary and lower secondary school students. Also he presented the attributions of the Group *Friends of Nature*, respectively:



• information-documentation actions, carried out on a monthly basis, among the pupils in the school;

- actions of greening of the whole protection zones and of the visiting routes;
- participation in patrol actions with the park rangers;
- reaching/repainting the existing markings on the visiting routes;
- actions to prevent illegal deeds that endanger the state of preservation of biodiversity;
- expanding the "Friends of Nature" group with new pupils who are interested in and noticeable in their actions.

The last presentation of the conference was delivered by **Mr. Sebastian Cătonoiu** (Vânători Neamț Natural Park Administration). Mr. Cătonoiu presented the communication means used by Vânători Neamț Natural Park as well as the monitoring indicators against which the performance of the communication activity is measured.



2. STUDY VISITS

Hațeg Country Dinosaurs Geopark is a UNESCO Global Geopark, the only one in Romania and one of the first to join the European and Global Geopark Networks in 2005. It covers 12 communities from the Hațeg Country cultural area, a depression in the Carpathian Mountains. This territory contains extraordinary geological heritage and also natural and cultural heritage, being one of the most interesting areas in Transylvania. The core of the geopark is the ancient Cretaceous fauna, or the Dwarf Dinosaurs found only in this region. Other relevant sites are the ancient roman capital, the stone medieval churches, the bison reserve, carnivorous plants, many species of butterflies and a rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

The Geoparks UNESCO designation is coordinated by the University of Bucharest, which was also in charge of the creation of the Geopark in 2000-2004 through a bottom-up approach, in partnership with local administrations, companies, universities, NGOs, schools and other. The University employs an integrated management of education, conservation and sustainable development. The Geopark uses local values to give the communities a sense of place and identity and to generate new incomes, especially through geotourism.

The Geopark is an open air laboratory for academic studies; it developed its own interpretation network. During the scheduled study visits, five of the seven Visitor Centres of the Hațeg Country Dinosaurs Geopark were visited. Instead of building a large geopark visiting hub, it has been developed a network of interpretation that includes seven visiting centres, with different themes, and spread across multiple localities of the park (House of the Geopark, House of Science and Art, House of Volcanoes, House of Miniatures, House of Traditions, House of Dwarf Dinosaurs, House of Stones). These, focusing on complementary themes, have managed to create an interpretive labyrinth within the geopark and at the same time to offer a variety of new tourist attractions within the ecotourism destination.

Also, the geopark created an educational network – EduGeopark and one of the most appreciated volunteer programs in the country – Volunteers for the Geopark.

The purpose of these visits was to observe how these three aspects of Interpretation - Education - Volunteering have been combined within the Geopark.

Also, other representative tourist objectives were visited at the destination (St. Nicholas Church of Densuș, Hațeg Village Museum of Peșteana or Mălăiești Fortress, and "Hațegana" Cooperative, a unit that has behind a tradition of 47-years in clothes craftsmanship). All of these objectives are partnered with the Geopark, being promoted by the latter or collaborating with it in various projects.

An important point within the study visit was the contact with the members of the Retezat National Park and the visit to the Falls of Lolaia. Hațeg Country Dinosaurs Geopark is a partner with Retezat National Park in the development of the ecotourism destination of Hațeg Country - Retezat and that is one of the four ecotourism destinations recognized so far by the Romanian Ministry of Tourism.

Another objective of the visit programme was the trip to Slivuț European Boar Reserve. During this visit, was emphasized the rich effort made at the international level to save this mammal race that is about to disappear. Also, on this occasion was presented the project related to the release of the bison into the wild.

A last aspect of the planned study visits was related to the involvement of local communities in Geopark's activities, and on the evening of 8 March 2018 was organized a traditional tasting of the typical products offered by the Women's Association of Sântămăria Orlea.

7th of March 2018

The House of Dinosaurs

The Exhibition "Dragons, Raptors and Dinosaurs" is housed at the headquarters of the Geopark of Hațeg. This concept exploits the legends of the dragons, the dragon myth and the fascination with dinosaurs that we display. The main hero is «*Balaurul bondoc*» / «*the stocky dinosaur*», a species of Transylvanian dinosaur, and the story of its discovery and reconstitution is the main attraction of the exhibition. Its reconstruction is carried out by Brian Cooley, who is a highly reputed international expert.

The House of Science and Art – is one of the Geopark's interpretation centres which tell the story of the dwarf dinosaurs' nests and eggs. Here can be seen three original 70 million years old nests and a scientific reconstruction of *Magyarosaurus dacus*. A second section of this visitor centre is dedicated to local artists, by providing a space where their works are exposed.

Hațeg Village Museum is a private museum where Nea Anton gathered, during a lifetime, interesting objects from the community's past and present.



Peșteana Marsh Nature Reserve – the place of the carnivorous plant *Drosera rotundifolia* or the Sundew. It is also an important mythic place for the locals, where animals are swallowed by the evil forces.



St. Nicholas Church Densuș - Some believe that it was at first a Roman temple of the Mars, transformed into a church in the 12-13th century. Others believe that it was the mausoleum of Roman general Longinus Maximus, whose wife discovered the Christian religion and arranged the first church north of the Danube in the place of the mausoleum. Today, the church is unusual, being a mixture of styles and materials.



The House of Volcanoes is part of the visiting and education network of the Hațeg Country Dinosaurs Geopark - a UNESCO International Geopark. This is an example of a partnership between the Geopark, the "Drag de Hațeg" Association ("[We are] Fond of Hațeg") and the local community and a model of good practice in involving volunteers into several activities. Through this infrastructure, visitors are given the opportunity to actively learn, experience, explore and fathom the Earth's Story.



8th of March 2018

"Hațegana" Association, a unit that has behind a tradition of 47-years in clothes craftsmanship.



Retezat National Park- Containing more than 60 peaks over 2,300 m and over 100 crystal clear deep glacier lakes, the Retezat Mountains are some of the most beautiful in the Carpathians. The area shelters one of Europe's last remaining intact old-growth forest and the continent's largest single area of pristine mixed forest. In 1979 the Man and Biosphere Program of UNESCO included the park in the international network of biosphere reserves.

Mălăiești Fortress - The only medieval reconstructed fortress in the region. It tells the stories of the Age of Knights in a dangerous region at the edge of Europe.

Bison Reserve, Slivuț - The reserve was founded in the late 1950s, being the oldest in Romania. The bison is the largest land animal in Europe, a re-wilding project is undergoing in the region.

The House of Dwarf Dinosaurs was set up in a former pub of Sânpetru Village. The role of the exhibition is not only to provide information, but also to educate those who come to see it, for people to become familiarized with the geological past and heritage of this area. The centre hosts a reconstruction of *Elopteryx nopcsai*.



The House of Traditions is a centre set up by Orlea Sănămăria Women Association in partnership with the Geopark.

The Centre regularly organizes events such as: Tincture Plant Workshop, Local Produce Fair (fabrics, pumpkin oil, and soap), Annual Celebration of the Geopark, Dinosaur Workshop.

