

IMPACT Project International meeting n°3 - Conference

25th October 2017

Proceedings

The Conference on up-coming “**Protected area reform in Lithuania**” was organized during the IMPACT Project 3rd International meeting in order to compare Lithuanian and international experience in Protected areas management.

Program

1. **Presentation by Prof. Ramūnas Povilanskas, Vice-president of EUCC – Coastal and Marine Union: A potential contribution of the IMPACT project of INTERREG Europe in reforming the protected area management system of Lithuania**
2. **Presentation by Mr. Darius Nicius, President of the Association of Regional Parks and Reserves of Lithuania: Position of the Association of Regional Parks on the state park reform in Lithuania**
3. **Presentation by Mr. Juozas Mazeika, Kretinga district municipality mayor: Self-governance approach to the management of protected areas**
4. **Presentation by Dr. Teresa Pastor, EUROPARC Project and Policy Development Manager: Innovative models and advanced policies of protected area management in Europe**
5. **Presentation by Mr. Francisco Solano Cobos Ruiz (Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of Andalusia. Regional Government of Andalusia): Andalusian experience in natural park administration and community involvement into sustainable development.**
6. **Interview of Dr. Teresa Pastor for Klaipeda newspaper.**
7. **Round table discussion moderated by Ramunas Povilanskas**

1. Overview of Presentation by Prof. Ramūnas Povilanskas

Prof. Ramunas Povilanskas made a 40 min long presentation on **IMPACT project contribution in plans of reforming protected area management system of Lithuania.**

The EU Cohesion Fund, INTERREG and LIFE as the key programs for strengthening the effectiveness of nature conservation and education in protected areas were reviewed in Prof. Ramunas presentation. Some projects implemented under those programmes were mentioned like an example of not using the EU ERDF support effectively. Because all managers of protected areas are ready to receive EU ERDF support but not all of them are able to use it effectively.

IMPACT – INTERREG Europe project in Lithuania is dedicated to improve management of littoral protected areas: Kuršių nerija national park and Pajūris (Littoral) regional park.

A joint common plan for the implementation of more advanced governance is being prepared for both state parks. Two ERDF projects for the Curonian Spit environment protection (Live Lagoons) and heritage conservation (DUNC) have been prepared and approved. Another ERDF project for capacity building of the Littoral Regional Park communities (CICPA) has been prepared but not yet approved.

Exchange of experience with protected territories of other EU countries, study tours by the representatives of local communities to other areas participating in the IMPACT project are being prepared.

2. Overview of Presentation Presentation by Mr. Darius Nicius

Mr Darius Nicius as director of Pajūris (Littoral) Regional Park and President of the Association of Regional Parks and Reserves of Lithuania during his 20 min presentation overviewed the **Protected area system of Lithuania and its peculiarities.** The audience was introduced with issues arising from up-coming protected area reform: is it a reform for the sake of reform? The main idea of the reform of the management of regional parks and reserves is centralization and consolidation of the departments. And because of that a lot of questions arise: What issues are addressed? Who is going to fix the problems? Which statutory functions are performed poorly? What are we going to gain? What are the guarantees that the Protected area management structure will not become more complicated? Is the proposed transformation not weakening the Protected areas?

Some attitudes of authors of up-coming protected area reform were noted: At the very beginning of the reform, such "methods" are applied: „Zero" communication; Divide-conquer "principle; Specialists' withdrawal from the territories; Merging of „Mystical" centres; Instead of a simple two-stage management structure, the more complex one is created - a three-way system.

3. Overview of Presentation by Mr. Juozas Mazeika

Mr. Juozas Mazeika, Kretinga district municipality mayor presented his approach to the management of protected areas based on his 37-year experience as officer and politician. During the presentation, all protected areas that Kretinga district territory includes were mentioned. The experience of creating a positive image of **Salantai regional park** was mentioned especially collaborating with local communities, Salantų estate - the city park, Imbrae hillfort arrangement and adjustment to visiting, Dauginčių village is equipped with Šilpelkės forest cognitive walking trail, Minija river Information System and Water Route are equipped, other cultural and natural objects where adjusted for visiting, which enriches Kretinga district. Thus, the Administration of Salantai Regional Park also contributed to the positive image of Kretinga district. Working locally with local people, the Administration of Salantai Regional Park contributed not only to the development of Kretinga region, but brought tangible benefits and created a mutual understanding of the protection of the countryside and natural values. In addition, many well-managed objects have become widely known, representing the Kretinga district. The presentation took 20 min.

4. Overview of Presentation by Teresa Pastor

Dr. Teresa Pastor shortly introduced the audience with protected area establishment history and proceeded with current rural and local periurban parks that undoubtedly play a key role both in nature protection and society wellbeing. The great need of **ecosystem services** (clean air, water supply, wood and crop production) for the European population that live in cities was highlighted as well as **climate change issues**. The economic crisis affected protected areas governmental support. That's why new Policies and management of protected areas are needed. Such issues like to better preserve biodiversity; the **Green Infrastructure strategy**; and, protected areas should not be seen as a place that constrains and limits all types of activities, it should show what activities for living can be carried out in them for local people. Useful ideas regarding Protected Areas and policies / management models were presented in the speech that took 20 min.

5. Overview of Presentation by Francisco Solano Cobos Ruiz

Mr. Francisco Solano Cobos Ruiz representing Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of Andalusia made a 20 min presentation on **Andalusian experience in natural park administration and community involvement into sustainable development**.

Andalusia as a region was presented with its natural environment, traditional agricultural peculiarities. Some weaknesses of Andalusian protected areas were noted – all of them appear because of reduce of population in the countryside.

The IMPACT project will help to build up *sustainable development plans*, with the aim of foster economic development. Citizens, entrepreneur, visitors, will by giving their opinion and will be informed about the development of the plan. Each park in Andalusia has it owns biodiversity, population and economic situation. **Plans are adapted to every area.**

The structure of plans implementation was presented together with Actions, Budget, Management model, Evaluation and Monitoring and continuity of the project.

6. Interview of Dr. Teresa Pastor for Klaipeda newspaper

An interview from Dr. Teresa Pastor for Klaipeda newspaper was taken. The responsible person of the interview process and the results is **Mr. Erlandas Paplauskis**, ecologist in Pajuris (Littoral) Regional park.

7. Round table discussion moderated by Ramunas Povilanskas

The round table discussion took place after all the presentation in order to find out common principles in protected area management.

It was noted that the **regional park system of Lithuania is unique in Northern Europe**, it is exceptional being developed in a quarter-century based on a natural framework theory. **Its reform for the sake of reform is unacceptable.**

It is necessary, as much as possible, to utilize the experience of IMPACT project partners and assess possible consequences of the reform

If Lithuania is divided into two NUTS-2 regions, it is possible to merge the administrations of the regional parks in the Capital region for comparison.

If Lithuania is divided into four NUTS-2 regions, it is preferable not to establish four regional park administrations but rather start concentrating the management of the regional parks in a stepwise way by learning from own lessons and those of the neighbors.