D.T1.3.3

Guidelines on communication between protected areas and local communities in the Carpathians

List of acronyms

AT	Austria
BR	Biosphere Reserve
CE	Central Europe
COP	Conference of Parties
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CS	Citizen science
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
EU	European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HU	Hungary
IT	Italy
NFA	National Forest Administration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PA	Protected area
PL	Poland
PPs	Project Partners
RO	Romania
SK	the Slovak Republic
TTTF	Thematic Transnational Task Force
UA	Ukraine
WPT1	Thematic Work Package No 1

PREFACE

Address by the Presidency in the Carpathian Convention

The Carpathians are a mountain range of unique beauty, with reach biological and landscape diversity and cultural heritage and with huge potential for sustainable development of local communities. They occupy a prominent place on the map of Europe and constitute an ecological, economic, cultural, recreational and living environment in the heart of Europe, shared by numerous people and countries. As a result the Carpathians play a very important role in the natural, social and economic situation of the region.

Framework Convention on the protection and sustainable use of the Carpathians, also known as the Carpathian Convention, was adopted in 2003 with the general objective to work together for the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians with a view to improve quality of live, strengthen local economies and communities and conserve natural values and cultural heritage. Those objectives have guided work of the Convention under consecutive Presidencies, each of them carried by different Party and lasting three years.

During several years that have passed since the Carpathian Convention entered into force, the Parties defined main areas of interest that require immediate action on the transnational, national and local level. *Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians* from 2008 and *Protocol on Sustainable Tourism to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians* from 2011 are among first sectoral protocols adopted by the Parties. Their successful implementation depends among others on the ability to communicate their objectives to the entities that should be involved in their implementation, especially at the regional and local level.

Polish Presidency in the Carpathian Convention shares the assumption on which the Centralparks project is based: that it is possible to reconcile and link the conservation of biological and landscape diversity with sustainable development of local communities and to raise their support for protected areas, and that in order to achieve this, protected areas should be properly used as the drivers and assets for the local economic development (including sustainable tourism), and benefits arising from this should be effectively communicated to the local stakeholders.

One of the priorities of the Polish Presidency in the Carpathian Convention is supporting implementation of the convention at regional and local levels. It is at those levels that the activities necessary to protect natural values of the Carpathians must be undertaken and the actions aiming at sustainable development of local communities should be designed and implemented.

Similar approach is a distinctive feature of the Centralparks project – the Strategies that we have been presented are addressed to the local level, not to the central one.

We are thankful for the efforts of the partners involved in the project that resulted in development of the *Strategy for enhancing biodiversity and landscape conservation outside and inside protected areas*, the *Strategy for local sustainable tourism development based on natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathians* and *Guidelines on communication between protected areas and local communities in the Carpathians*.

Polish Presidency would also like to thank the Interreg Central Europe Programme for supporting the Centralparks project, including its work (package) on "Integration of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the Carpathian region". It is a very valuable contribution to the implementation of the Carpathian Convention and its core elements.

Polish Presidency hopes that the results of this project will help to achieve the objectives of the sustainable development of the Carpathians.

Address by the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention

Address by EURAC Research (Centralparks Lead Partner)

Address by Ekopsychology Society (Centralparks Project Partner responsible for WPT1)

The Ekopsychology Society is based in the Polish part of the Carpathian region, which includes parts of the three provinces characterized by the highest population density in rural areas (in two – over twice the average for the country), while protected areas of different categories encompass almost 70% of this territory (e.g. 6 national and 13 landscape parks cover around one third, hence thrice the country average). Under such circumstances, nature and landscape conservation cannot be effective without the support and involvement of the local communities.

However, in addition to their role for biodiversity and landscape conservation, protected areas can also become drivers and assets for the sustainable local economic development, which is one of the basic assumptions and main objectives of the Centralparks project, being already the 20th project implemented by the Ekopsychology Society in support of the Carpathian Convention since 2003.

We highly value the fact that under the Centralparks project we could simultaneously pursue our several statutory objectives, related to the protection of natural and cultural heritage, support for local sustainable development, and fostering the involvement of the local communities in the implementation of the Carpathian Convention and its thematic Protocols.

The Centralparks project allowed us to pool, use and share the experience and expertise acquired in the course of many projects to which the Ekopsychology Society

previously contributed, including "Carpathian University of Participation" (co-financed by the EEA and Norway Grants), "Carpathians Unite – mechanism of consultation and cooperation for implementation of the Carpathian Convention" (Swiss Contribution), "Carpathian Space – Spatial planning as a tool for nature protection in the Carpathians" (EU), "Supporting the sustainable development of the Carpathians through environmentally friendly tourism" (EEA and Norway Grants), and "INRUTOU – Innovation in Rural Tourism" (EU).

We would like to thank the Interreg Central Europe Programme for supporting the Centralparks project, including its work package "Integration of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the Carpathian region", for which the Ekopsychology Society is responsible. This project was another great opportunity for us to contribute to the implementation of the Convention in a constructive manner, allowing to identify common transnational approaches and innovative solutions to challenges vital for our shared Carpathian region.

We would like to thank all project partners and experts who contributed to the work of the Centralparks Thematic Transnational Task Force, whose involvement and constant dedication allowed to elaborate these Guidelines on communication between protected areas and local communities, which was in fact the first ever attempt to cover the above topic under the framework of the Carpathian Convention.

We sincerely hope that these Guidelines will become a useful tool for its target audience, and facilitate building strong partnerships between protected area administrations, regional and local community authorities, and other relevant stakeholders, also for the application of the two strategies drafted under the Centralparks project, concerning biodiversity and landscape conservation outside and inside protected areas and the local sustainable tourism development. We also hope that these Guidelines would enable protected area managers to speak the 'language of benefits, and common interest' when communicating conservation objectives and requirements to their local communities and municipality authorities.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Guidelines for communication between protected areas and local communities in the Carpathians

These Guidelines were developed under the project 'Centralparks - Building management capacities of Carpathian protected areas for the integration and harmonization of biodiversity protection and local socio-economic development' (CE1359), supported by the Interreg Central Europe Programme.

The target audience of these Guidelines are managers and administrations of protected areas (PAs), nature conservation and landscape protection agencies, and other nature and landscape conservation bodies and authorities in the Carpathian region.

The main objective of these Guidelines is to raise the capacities, knowledge and skills of Carpathian PA managers for effective communication with their local communities and stakeholders.

Effective communication between PAs and local communities could facilitate raising support of local communities and stakeholders for the conservation of biological and landscape diversity, as well as reconciliation and integration of nature protection with the local socio-economic development. The above issues are among the main objectives of the Centralparks project, which also aims to support, facilitate, and enhance the implementation of the Framework **Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians** (Kyiv, 2003) and its thematic Protocols.

During the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP1) to the above 'Carpathian Convention' held in Kyiv, Ukraine, 11-13 December 2006, the Conference of the Parties (which is the main decision-making body of the Convention) recommended to *establish and develop national mechanisms to foster the implementation of the Carpathian Convention, including information, involvement and capacity building of all relevant stakeholders and civil society, related to the progress and the further development of the Carpathian Convention* (Decision COP1/12, paragraph 5).

Furthermore, closer cooperation with the local and regional level is among the priorities of the current (2020-2023) Presidency of the Carpathian Convention.

As for the Guidelines' rationale, most often PAs are well advanced and experienced in implementing environmental education programs, and interpretation of their natural values to the visitors. But, simultaneously many Carpathian PAs have limited capacities for efficient communication with their local communities and stakeholders, mostly due to the lack of staff specialized (or at least trained) in communication techniques. In result, the understanding of the 'common interests' of PAs and local inhabitants, as well as the support of local communities and stakeholders for PA operations is often missing. Consequently, interactions with the local stakeholders belong to the common managerial challenges of PA administrations in the Carpathian region.

Centralparks project and approach

The Centralparks project was implemented in 2019–2022 by the consortium of 8 project partners (PPs) from Italy (Lead Partner: Eurac Research) and 5 'Carpathian' countries (CZ, HU, PL, SK, RO), as follows:
- European Academy of Bozen-Bolzano (Eurac Research)
- State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic (SK)
- NFA-Romsilva-Piatra Craiului National Park Administration R.A. (RO)
- Ekopsychology Society (PL)
- Danube-Ipoly National Park Directorate (HU)
- Pronatur NGO (SK)
- European Wilderness Society (AT)
- Education and Information Centre of BíléKarpaty Mountains (CZ)

supported by 8 Associated Partners (including 5 Ministries) from 8 countries (AT, DE, HU, IT, PL, RO, SK, UA), and 3 volunteers from UA (another Party to the Carpathian Convention).Unfortunately, Serbia which is also the Party to the Convention remained non-involved.

The basic assumption and intervention logic of the Centralparks thematic Work Package No 1 (WPT1) 'Integration of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the Carpathian region' was that the reconciliation, linking the conservation of biological and landscape diversity to sustainable local socio-economic development, and raising the support of local communities for protected area operations is possible, if well protected natural and landscape values are properly used as the drivers and assets for the local economic development (including sustainable tourism development), while the conservation objectives, and benefits arising from the above synergy are effectively communicated to the local stakeholders.

Following the above concept, and translating the motto 'think globally, act locally' into the Carpathian context, three related multinational expert groups, further called the Thematic Transnational Task Forces (TTTFs) were established under the Centralparks project WPT1, in order to:
- enhance transnational cooperation in addressing and finding solutions to the common challenges in the Carpathian region, and harmonize approaches at the international level
- pool the expertise of Project Partners, PA managers and experts from the Carpathian countries, and capitalize on the exchange of information, experience, and best practices
- involve different target groups (PAs, universities/research institutions, relevant NGOs) in Centralparks project activities.

The above three Centralparks TTTFs were tasked with the development of the three compatible and mutually reinforcing tools, each targeted at the local level: two draft strategies (concerning biological and landscape diversity conservation, and the local sustainable tourism development),and Guidelines on communication between protected areas and local communities in the Carpathians.

Hence, it is recommended that the managers and administrations of protected areas (PAs), nature conservation and landscape protection agencies, bodies and authorities apply the following Guidelines for:

- communicating the conservation objectives to the local target groups
- building the sense of the common ownership and responsibility for safekeeping the unique natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathian region
- promoting public participation, and involving the regional and local authorities, and other relevant stakeholders in strong partnerships with PAs for the implementation of joint activities for the benefit of all local stakeholders (in particular on the basis of the two above mentioned Centralparks strategies).

Centralparks TTTF on Communication – development of these Guidelines

Centralparks TTTF on Communication was the smallest in terms of membership among those three established under WPT1, as it involved only 16 PP representatives & external experts:

1) Matyáš Adam (CZ),
2) Györgyi Bela (HU),
3) Isidoro De Bortoli (IT),
4) Małgorzata Ratajczyk-Dobrowolska (PL),
5) Alina Marek (PL),
6) Barbora Duží (CZ),
7) Ján Kadlečík (SK),
8) Lucia Minova (SK),
9) Zbigniew Niewiadomski (PL),
10) Monika Ochwat Marcinkiewicz (PL),
11) Zuzana Okániková (SK),
12) Marie Petrů (CZ),
13) Jana Reznickova (CZ),
14) Borbála Szabó-Major (HU),
15) Juraj Švajda (SK),
16) Nicolae Talpa (RO),
17) Florea Trifoi (RO).

Centralparks TTTF on Communication met for the first time in Czerwienne (PL) on 24-26 June 2019. Later the TTTF members carried out individual desk studies in order to get acquainted with the Carpathian context (incl. Carpathian Convention documents), as well as collected best practice examples of relevant communication and informative campaigns in respective countries.

Moreover, at this stage of work, a considerable number of relevant useful specialistic literature and materials has been gathered, and stored at a dedicated Google drive for the use by the TTTF. Selected materials from this on-line WPT1 thematic knowledge repository on communication issues are recommended as further readings for the target audience in Chapter 4 of these Guidelines.

Firstly, the TTTF discussed online the possible contents of the Guidelines, and agreed upon its desired structure. However, due to the COVID-19pandemic outbreak and related travel and border control restrictions in CE countries in spring 2021 the next TTTF meeting planned in Nowy Sącz (PL) has been cancelled. Since then the TTTF cooperation was possible only by using the electronic communication means, which included intensive e-mail communication between TTTF members. Instead of the 2nd 'physical' meeting, three online TTTF meetings were prepared and organized.

During the 2nd TTTF meeting (held online on 30 April 2020) the experts agreed on the work division, and ad-hoc formation of smaller thematic teams composed of TTTF experts, responsible for particular chapters of the draft Guidelines. On 8 June the 1st consolidated draft version was circulated for experts' comments. The first round of consultations, submission and accommodation of experts' comments (to other chapters than prepared by themselves) by the individual authors or smaller thematic teams responsible for particular chapters or sections of the draft Guidelines lasted until 26 June, when the 2nd consolidated draft version was circulated for comments.

During the 3rd and 4th TTTF meetings (held online on 29 June and 4 September 2020 respectively)the participants worked on subsequent consolidated draft versions of Guidelines (including most recent comments and amendments) in 'share screen live mode', chapter by chapter and page by page.

The 7threvised and upgraded working draft version of Guidelines was submitted in September 2020, accommodating comments, new formulations, and including changes commonly agreed during the 4th TTTF meeting. Centralparks TTTF on Communication worked under the leadership of Ms. Monika Ochwat-Marcinkiewicz (Chair of the Ekopsychology Society), while Mr. Zbigniew Niewiadomski moderated all 4 TTTF meetings (each documented by a detailed report, consulted with, and approved by TTTF members).

CHAPTER 2. LEGAL BACKGROUND

The Guidelines on communication between protected areas (PA) and local communities aim to support, facilitate, and enhance the implementation of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Kyiv, 2003) and its two thematic protocols:

1) the Protocol on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity (Bucharest, 2008),
2) the Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011),

as well as foster the achievement of the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 'Bringing nature back into our lives'.

The Guidelines shall assist protected area managers (PA managers) in promoting public participation, and involving the regional and local authorities, and other relevant stakeholders in measures undertaken for the maintenance or restoration of the biological and landscape diversity values of the Carpathian region, and for the development of sustainable tourism (in line with Article 2 paragraph 2 of the Convention[1], and Articles 6 of both above thematic Protocols[2]).

Furthermore, these Guidelines should also facilitate building strong partnerships between PA and local communities in the Carpathians, and undertaking joint actions for the benefit of nature and local inhabitants – the need for strengthening such cooperation has explicitly been emphasized in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030[3].

Last, but not least, building effective partnerships between public institutions, regional and local authorities, volunteer groups and others is an indispensable precondition for successful achievement of the goals set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and resulting Sustainable Development Goal Targets, including the promotion of sustainable tourism (Target 8.9), and ensuring the conservation of mountain ecosystems (Target 15.4)[4].

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[1] Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Kyiv, 2003), Article 2General objectives and principles, paragraph 2.: In order to achieve the objectives referred to in paragraph 1., the Parties shall take appropriate measures, in the areas covered by Articles 4 to 13 of this Convention by promoting: (c) public participation and stakeholder involvement. http://www.carpathianconvention.org/text-of-the-convention.html

[2] Protocol on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity (Bucharest, 2008), Article 6Participation of regional and local authorities, and other stakeholders, paragraph 2.: 'Each Party shall take measures to involve the regional and local authorities, and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of these policies and measures'.http://www.carpathianconvention.org/protocol-on-biodiversity.html

Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011), Article 6 Participation of regional and local authorities, and other stakeholders, paragraph 1.: 'Each Party shall take measures, within its existing institutional framework, to involve relevant institutions, regional and local authorities, and other stakeholders concerned in preparing and implementing policies and the resulting measures for the development of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians'.

http://www.carpathianconvention.org/protocol_on_sustainable_tourism.html

[3] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030Bringing nature back into our lives COM/2020/380 final: \protecting and restoring nature will need more than regulation alone. It will require action by citizens, businesses, social partners and the research and knowledge community, as well as strong partnerships between local, regional, national and European level'.

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590047327627&uri=COM:2020:380:FIN

[4] United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda forSustainable Development, Targets:

CHAPTER 3. HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

The Guidelines contain relevant information on communication process and techniques in order to provide PA managers with a general background for an effective communication. Moreover, these Guidelines provide a lot of practical tips and recommendations that can be easily adopted by PA managers and can improve their communication skills. At the end of the Guidelines in Chapter 4. there is a list of references to resources – recommended further readings for a deeper study on the topic of an effective communication.

Contents of the Guidelines:

Part 1 – Who should be involved?- describes the importance of the identification and analysis of the target audience. This Part provides some useful tips how to understand the position of the stakeholders in a comprehensive environment, their relation to PA, and their role in the communication process.

Part 2 – What to communicate? Key messages- focuses on the outstanding importance and values of the Carpathians as a key overarching message. Obviously, each PAharbours specific treasures which can be communicated locally, however the overarching Carpathian theme is the value behind.

Part 3 – How to communicate? Basics of the communication- provides information what we should focus on, in order to be successful in our communication process. This part gives insight in the communication schema, describes various communication techniques, leads you through 'one-way' and 'two-way' communication, and gives you tips on how to improve your interpersonal communication skills to be able to deal with conflict situations. This part contains also general advices to help you cope with challenging situation such as e.g. how to handle 'problematic' people.

Part 4 – How to bring the message to stakeholders- presents information on how can we select the proper communication channel. Further you can find an overview on channels and tools recommended particularly in the field of nature protection both in case of personal contact as well as remote contact. Special attention is paid to innovative communication tools, based on the modern technologies.

Part 5 – Risk and assumptions- focuses on miscommunication and conflicts, and brings practical advices on conflict understanding and resolution.

Part 6 – How to write a communication plan- indicates how to make the best use of all information provided in previous parts in real life situations while adopting a systematic planning of the communication within your organization.

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a. 8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism thatcreates jobs and promotes local culture and products;

b. 15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including theirbiodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essentialfor sustainable development.

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld

Part 7 – Evaluation: Indicators of achievements- describes the importance of gathering and analyzing the stakeholders' feedback, and introduces the evaluation process that should further improve the effectiveness of your communication.

> **! Worth remembering**
>
> Here you can find key information, which is worth to remember.

> **📄 Example box**
>
> Here you can find examples in boxes can be inspiring for 're-use' or to adopt for your specific situation.

> **💡 Tips**
>
> In Guidelines you can find practical tips that can help you solve some situations easily and efficiently.

Part 1. Who should be involved?

1.1. Introduction

The target audience of these Guidelines are their expected end-users:

1) the Carpathian PA administrations,
2) the communicators – creators and senders of communication messages to the communication target audiences.

The target audience for communication based on the use of these Guidelines are the recipients of different messages communicated to them by the Carpathian PA managers.

An important step in communication process is the identification of stakeholders (people who are affected by the PA or interested in participation). Most often they are residents living inside the PA or in its vicinity, local community/municipality authorities, the land owners, farmers, entrepreneurs in tourism and other services, governmental and non-governmental organizations, local opinion leaders. A very important target group is represented also by the media and important personalities who help to build favourable atmosphere and present the goals of PA management. Stakeholders can be engaged in the process on a voluntary basis, but much better way is their systematic information and involvement. There are several methods of good communication, the choice depends on the type of audience.

The identification of stakeholders by examining the relationship of different people to the PA and the effects of their activities on the area is described by Thomas & Middleton (2003). Furthermore, Alexander M.(*Management Planning for Nature Conservation*, 2008) recognizes different groups of stakeholders:

1) primary (e.g. landowners) are directly affected by the existence of the PA,
2) secondary (e.g. residents of the immediate vicinity) are indirectly affected by the existence of the PA,
3) tertiary (e.g. politicians) do not have a direct interest but have strong influence and powers,
4) others (e.g. the general public) are interested in a certain area or nature protection.

The next steps should define the content of the communication for each stakeholder group, determination of methods and procedures for informing and involving the public. The forms and methods of communication and public participation depend on the specific situation (e.g. when establishing new PA or when a PA existed for decades and managers must solve some conflicts).

For further information read Part 3 and Part 6.

1.2. Stakeholder (target audience) classification

Stakeholders should be linked to specific institutions and sectors that may affect PA. They can be divided into two groups: direct and indirect.

Stakeholders with **direct influence** on situation in PAs:
- Local inhabitants and their community authorities
- Industries, business and/ or the private sector planning investments, using space, etc.
- Sector programmes impacting on natural resources and biodiversity (e.g. PA managers)
- Visitors and tourism.

Stakeholders with **indirect influence** on PAs:
- Urban and rural citizens using ecosystem services (e.g. water, air, soil)
- National and international policies affecting rural areas and biodiversity (e.g. Ministries).

1.3. Stakeholders' categories

Groups of different stakeholders can be joint in different categories:
- Government or public sector: policy-makers, state / regional / district and municipal level institutions, PA staff
- Civil society (not for profit): NGOs, universities, research institutes, local community organizations, and other groups
- Private sector (for profit): firms, associations, tourism, developers, etc.
- General public.

1.4. Stakeholders' potential role

To understand an importance of stakeholders it is useful to look from the perspective of potential role of stakeholder in PA:
- **Key actors**– stakeholders with high interest and influence.
- **Context adjuster**– highly influential stakeholders, but having little interest. They may be a risk, should be monitored and managed.

- **Subjects**– stakeholders having high interest but low influence. They usually support the process, but they neither have skills nor competencies to perform interactions (strengthened reinforcements). Gather alliances and thus become influential.
- **Crowd**– stakeholders who have little interest or influence over desired outcomes. There is little need to consider or engage them.

Graph 1. Interest – influence matrix.

Subject *	**Key actors**	✱ They usually support the process, but they neither have skills nor ccompetencies to perform interactions (strengthened reinforcements). Gather alliances thus become influential
Crowd *	**Context adjuster *****	✱✱ There is little need to consider or engage them
		✱✱✱ They may be a risk, should be monitored and managed
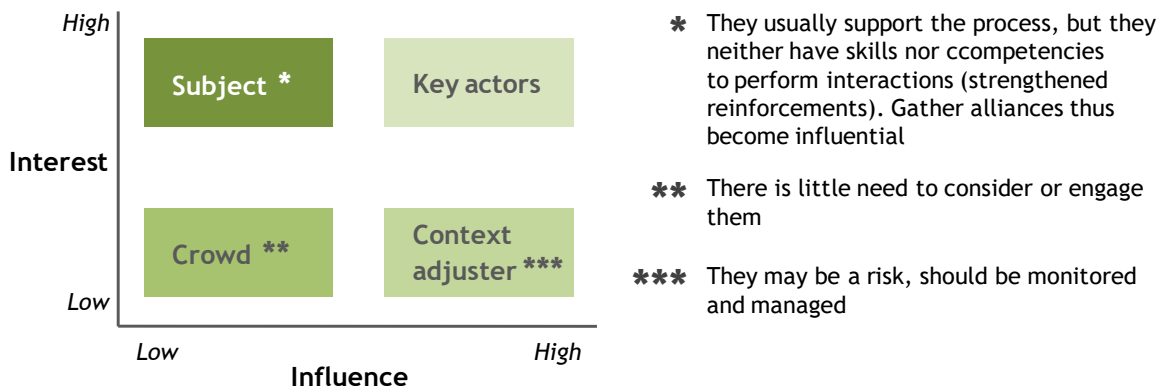
Source: Journal of Environmental Management: Who's in and why? A typology of stakeholder analysis methods for natural resource management, 2009.

> **! Worth remembering**
>
> **Stakeholders are not only local people**
> They include governments and their agencies, as well as people, organisations, institutions and markets, which are not necessarily located close to the natural resource that is being managed.
>
> **Stakeholders are not only organisations and formal groups**
> They include individuals, communities and informal networks. You must be prepared to recognise and involve the sectors of society that are not formally represented and organised.
>
> **Stakeholders are not only the users of PAs**
> They include people and institutions that impact directly but also indirectly on the PAs even without using them, and they include people who may not even be aware that they have influence.
>
> **Stakeholders change over time**
> New stakeholders can enter, while others may lose their role or interest.

1.5. Potential stakeholders for your PAs

For each PA manager it is important to identify, know, and understand groups of stakeholders.

Below please find part of a tool which helps to better recognize stakeholders' attitudes, needs and could be used to manage and plan your communication more effectively. Its full version is available in Appendix 1.

	Needs/ beliefs/ attitudes/ influences/ behaviours	Audience considerations	Potential delivery\ channel	Role
Government or public sector				
Members of Parliament				
Government				
Ministers, Vice-Ministers and Directors of Ministries (various sectors)				
Governmental agencies				
Civil society				
NGO staff members				
Leaders of opinion				
Social groups				
Media, journalists				
General Public				
Youth groups				
National and international PA visitors				
Community leaders (elders, formal and informal authorities, religious and traditional leaders, social grassroots organizations, business leaders, etc.)				
School children				

Example box

Describe your communication activity/practice:

Communication actions organized by Life4Oakforests partners (http://www.life4oakforests.eu/).

One of the main goals of the LIFE4OakForests is to restore all those micro-habitats in the forests (e.g. breeding and nesting places, moss layer, cavities in the oak forest etc.) which have been significantly reduced due to the long-term intensive forest management and land use. In many places, first the oak forest must be re-established. The replacement of *Robiniapseudoacacia* and *Celtisoccidentalis* by planting oaks (with acorns) and other mixed species. A restored oak forest provides higher biodiversity compared to forest consisting of invasive alien or non-native species.

Related PA: Duna-IpolyNemzeti Park, BükkiNemzeti Park, BalatonfelvidékiNemzeti Park

Target group: local authorities ☑ farmers ☐ land owners ☑ land users ☑ Local Action Groups ☑ NGOs ☑ tourists ☑ local residents ☑ national park staff and experts ☑ entrepreneur

Focus topic(s) of the communication activity:

landscape beauty ☑ species values ☑ activity(s) of Protected Areas management ☑ unique habitat ☐ habitat degradation ☑ threats to ecosystems ☑ ecosystem services ☐ restoration ☑ human- wildlife issue ☐ Natura 2000 network ☐ species loss ☑ invasion ☑ ecoturism ☑ landraces ☐ conservation planning and policy ☑ other

Things we can learn (5-6 sentences):

The project is interesting because it successfully implements a multi-channel and multi-audience communication strategy. It communicates simultaneously with the local residents and the scientific community.

As the project implements habitat reconstruction or invasive shrub replacements in both rural and urban environments, it also formulates messages for various segments of target audiences. There is constant and close contact with the residents and NGOs, and communication takes place in many small steps, preferably before an action or intervention.

As the project takes place in several countries and involves several National Parks, it also implements cross-organizational communication action in several languages.

The project uses two forms of communication:

1) 'one-way' communication and interpretation campaigning to provide the target group with practical information

2) 'two-way' communication approach to engage the public.

The public residents are involved in the planning of certain actions (e.g. placement of benches, info boards) or the maintenance of habitat reconstruction interventions (e.g. planting and care of trees). The project provides knowledge for both children and adults through certain targeted actions (publications, quiz booklets, targeted programs).

Messages

Natural forests with a lot of deadwood and coarse woody debris are very valuable because they are full of life. The number of such forests should be increased and their management (e.g. replacement of invasive species) should be addressed. The project will carry out improvements thanks to the cooperation of local residents, which will create local spaces full of life.

Communication channels

The project did not create its own social media interface but uses pre-existing channels where a sufficient number of readers are already present. Communication, messages and knowledge are transferred in several channels in parallel: website, printed materials, events.

Part 2. What to communicate? Key messages

2.1. Introduction

The potential of the Carpathians is priceless. All identified stakeholders will see common value for all. All interested groups are here, though for a different reason.

Tourists - in search of unforgettable places. Investors - because they appreciate the economic potential, beauty of the area and the value of the region. Residents - because here is their place on Earth. PA managers- because thanks to their work, what is valuable is effectively and constantly protected.

The social ecosystem, in order to cooperate effectively, must make every effort to communicate effectively to develop the Carpathian region and reconcile the needs of all social groups.

Each day spent in the Carpathians is a gift and a privilege. An extraordinary privilege - although it is often paid for with hard work - just like the everyday conditions are difficult.

It is also a commitment - to care for the protection of valuable species of flora and fauna and to preserve the beauty of the Carpathian landscape.

Let's do everything to pass this Earth - even more magnificent and flourishing - to the next generations. That it would be a source of opportunity to fulfil not only our dreams but also those who will come after us.

2.2. Types of key messages

The key messages to be effectively conveyed by the administrations of PA to the local communities and identified stakeholders are as follows:
- The presence of PAs in their area / close neighbourhood is in fact an important location factor, driver and asset for the local sustainable social, cultural and economic development of their communities.
- The well preserved natural and landscape values might not only be a source of pride, and the indicator of a higher quality of life (compared to e.g. urban or industrial environments), but also constitute an unique asset, which distinguishes their 'little homeland' from thousands of other municipalities in their country, and provides competitive advantages, e.g. for sustainable tourism development.
- Use the 'language of benefits' easy to understand and appealing to the target audience's, and focus on promoting the 'win-win' solutions, and benefits that can be achieved in cooperation between PAs and their local communities, related to sustainability and profitability of the local economic development in the longer run.
- Their involvement and support for the operations of 'their locally own' PAs can be of key importance for ensuring prosperity and better local employment opportunities for their children, making them stay/return to, live and work in their home region.

! Worth remembering

Give constant information addressed to the inhabitants of PAs about the species inhabiting the area, habitats, values.

What to communicate - key information:

1. 'Scope of duties' of the PA manager, his/her tasks, which he/she is obliged to carry out as part of his/her duties - information that will help the local community understand what function he/she performs in the area.
2. Binding laws and responsibilities of inhabitants of PAs.
3. Changes in fauna and flora in the PA.
4. Changes in applicable law.
5. Conducted public consultations on environmental protection, in which the local residents can participate.
6. Events, meetings, conferences, local festivals, celebrations in which PA manager intends to participate or which he organizes himself (e.g. Bat Day) and in which the residents can participate.
7. Conducted educational activities (e.g. science education at school, lectures, etc.).

Part3. How to communicate – basics of communication

'In the beginning was the word – then came misunderstanding' (M. Twain)

3.1. Introduction - Effective communication

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, communication is the process of sharing information, especially when this increases understanding between people or groups.

To be effective in communication means that a message given and received has the desired or intended result (according to Janice Burley, *Natura 2000 Communication Training Manual for Natura 2000 managers in Europe)*.

> ### ! Worth remembering
>
> To be successful in our communication we need to think in a strategic manner and:
> - understand the **process**/schema of communication (section 3.2.)
> - make choice on proper communication **techniques** (section 3.3.)
> - use '**One way**' communication – interpretation, campaigning (section 3.4.)
> - use '**Two way**' communication - to know what (inter)personal skills we need to have/train in order to communicate properly (section 3.5.)
> - know how to deal with **conflicts** (section 3.6.)

3.2. Communication process

Communication process is the transmission of message from the sender through a selected channel. This is a circular process - it begins from the sender and ends with the sender in the form of feedback. To be efficient in the communication process the analysis of key components of communication is necessary in order to choose the most suitable communication techniques.

Sender and his objective
The sender initiates the communication, defines the objective and conceptualizes the idea which is intended to be conveyed to the others. The objective of the communication is what we want/need to achieve with the receiver, e.g. inform, educate, inspire, empower, change behaviour, consult, solve conflicts, find solutions.

Encoding
The sender carries out the encoding process wherein uses certain words or non-verbal methods such as symbols, signs, body gestures, etc. to translate the information into a message. The sender's knowledge, skills, perception, background, competencies, etc. have a great impact on the success of the message (more in Part3.).

Message

Once the encoding is finished, the sender gets the message which is intended to be conveyed. The message can be written, oral, symbolic or non-verbal such as body gestures, silence, sights, sounds, etc. or any other signal that triggers the response of a receiver (for more information see Part2. What to communicate? Key messages).

Communication Channel

The sender chooses the medium through which he/she wants to convey message to the receiver (for more information see Part4.How to bring the message to stakeholder).

Receiver

The receiver is the person for whom the message is intended or targeted. Knowing the receivers, their interests, and competences is crucial for later decision on the selection of appropriate tactics, and channels (for more information see Part 1.Who should be involved?).

Decoding

Here, the receiver interprets the sender's message and tries to understand it in the best possible manner. An effective communication occurs only if the receiver understands the message in exactly the same way as it was intended by the sender (more in Part 3.)
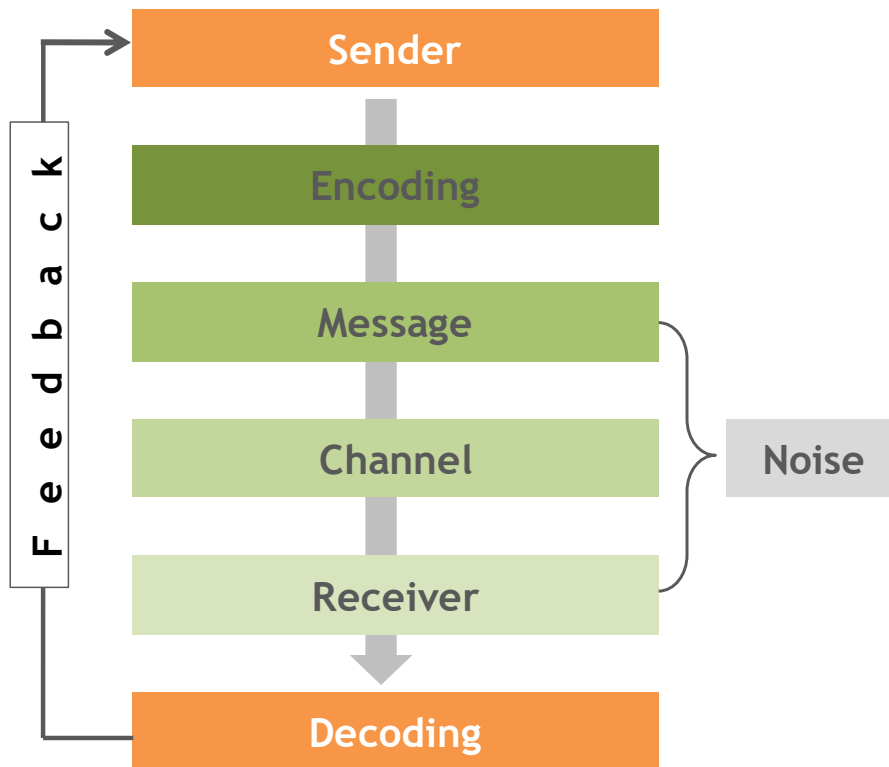
Feedback

The feedback is the final step of the process that ensures that the receiver has received the message and interpreted it correctly as it was intended by the sender. It increases the effectiveness of the communication as it permits the sender to know the efficacy of the message. The response of the receiver can be verbal or non-verbal (more in Part 3.).

Timing

The message should be communicated in each phase of project cycle. A common mistake is neglecting the communication of the message of the project in an early/planning phase of the project cycle (e.g. changing borders of the national park). Such mistakes can cost the senders their reputation, and years of work on building relations with local communities can thus be wasted. Strategic approach in communication is inevitable, including logical time planning (for more information see Part 6. How to write a communication plan).

Graph 2. Example of communication scheme: Objective-receiver-message.

Graph 3. Example of communication scheme Objective-direct and indirect communication.

Objective: Change the approach of the forestry management through diversification from wood production to non-wood segments		
Direct communication	**Indirect communication**	
Receiver 1. Forest company **Message 1.** Substitution of wood production with non-wood production is more sustainable and economically efficient	**Receiver 2.** Regional tourism destination management organization **Message 2.** Diversified activities of the forest company broaden and improve the tourism offer in the region	**Receiver 3.** Local community **Message 3.** Sustainable use of forests will improve the landscape view and diversification of forest activities enable to create new job opportunities for local people

Source: own study.

3.3. Communication techniques

After having understood the communication process we could define why, whom, what and when we want to communicate. Now it turns from the desktop work in the peace of our office to practical implementation, and sometimes tough field work. We need to reach our objective and manage **how to communicate** and how to bring messages to receivers properly, with desired effect.

Analysis of receiver

The key factor in choosing proper communication technique is at least a basic **analysis o the receiver**. We should at least analyse how strongly the message is related for the receiver and how the message is in line with the receiver's goals.

Degree of the involvement

We should think about the objective position of the receiver (receiver organization) – the mission, the competences, and the goals of the receiver. These will determine **the degree of involvement of/impact on the receiver**(e.g. are you merely informing a local community of some news related to the existing Natura 2000 site or is this a participatory consultation in order to decide on a management action?).

Coincidence in the use of values

In general, there are two main types of situations in the communication with the local communities that influence our strategy in communication between the sender and the receiver. The critical feature is how the sender and receiver think about **the use of values.**
Situation 1 – same/similar ideas/interests of the use of values
Situation 2 – different/conflict ideas/interests of the use of values

Objective vs. subjective

It often happens that seemingly objective facts are perceived differently by each stakeholder. It is therefore important to identify those differences – e.g. goals – can sound identical on paper in different organizations, however can be different in understanding of other stakeholders – e.g. conservation manager and forester – both claim their goal is 'forest protection' however both have completely different idea how the final shape of protected forest should look like and what should be the process to reach it.

An insufficient knowledge of the receiver's perception of the situation might cause unexpected conflicts.

Tips

External expert opinion – e.g. invite some independent experts to the meeting.

Personality

Another important factor in case of personal communication is whether we know the other party personally, and whether we choose proper methods of interpersonal communication skills (Part 3.4 – Communication skills).
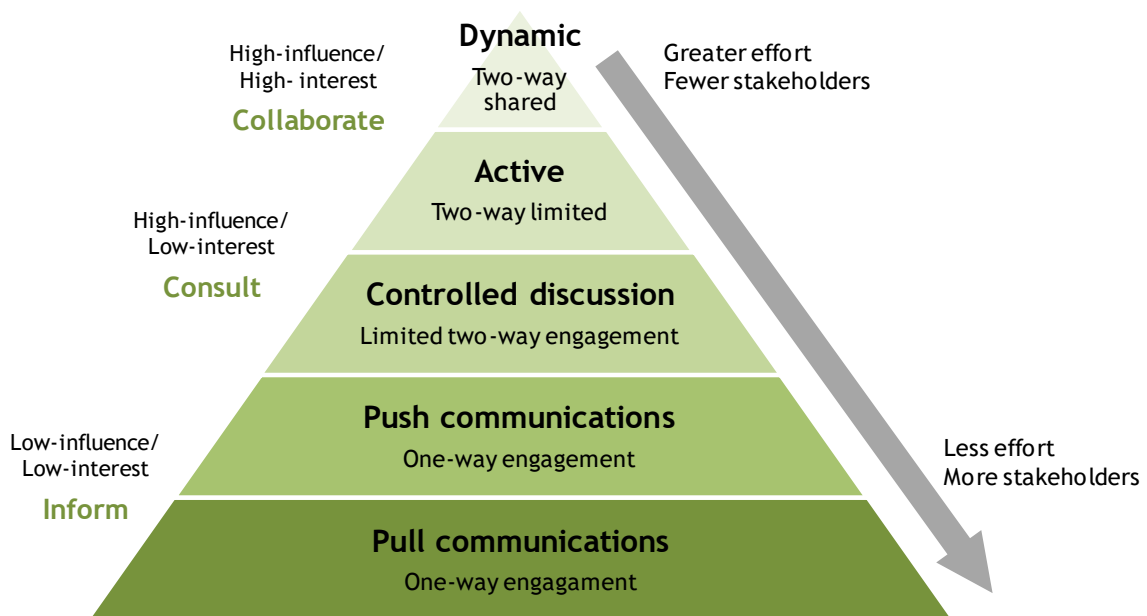
> 💡 **Tips**
>
> In case of expecting problematic personalities at the receiver side - invite an independent mediator.

Finally, the consideration of all the above features will lead to the choice of the proper communication technique. The following figure illustrates how the interest and influence of stakeholders have impact on the required intensity of the communication process and selection of proper communication techniques and respectively efficient communication channels.

Graph 4. Stakeholder management

High-influence/ High- interest
Collaborate

High-influence/ Low-interest
Consult

Low-influence/ Low-interest
Inform

Dynamic
Two-way shared

Greater effort
Fewer stakeholders

Active
Two-way limited

Controlled discussion
Limited two-way engagement

Push communications
One-way engagement

Less effort
More stakeholders

Pull communications
One-way engagament

Source:https://www.tractivity.co.uk/blog/stakeholder-management-how-to-work-with/stakeholder-pyramid

3.4. One way communication

Permanent promotional and information activities carried out in PAs should include ongoing information about the area's resources, habitat status, activities, planned documents etc.

3.4.1. Interpretation

'Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection' (Freeman Tilden).

Communication of goals of PAs to local communities has a strong tradition in educating and informing while using diverse one–way communication tools such as newspaper, educational trails etc.

We live in the information era and daily we are overwhelmed with a number of new information even without any active search. However, without correct interpretation, the information is not only useless but sometimes even misleading. In contrary – correctly interpreted information (perceived in the big picture and in relation to the receiver) is very valuable and has potential to activate the receiver in desired way.

> ### ! Worth remembering
>
> Freeman Tilden – the pioneer in the interpretation of the heritage – formulated six basic principles of good interpretation[5]:
>
> 1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
> 2. Information, as such, is not Interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
> 3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.
> 4. The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
> 5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
> 6. Interpretation addressed to children (say up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

The interpretation of natural and cultural values is mainly directed at the general public, main target groups for interpretation of natural and cultural heritage are visitors, local inhabitants and young people. Understanding of the visitor's perspective, driving forces and experiences helps to make interpretation more efficient.

---

[5] Freeeman Tilden, *Interpretating Our Heritage*, 1967

3.4.2. Campaigning

Campaigning maximises the motivation of the audience, not their knowledge. Try using education to campaign, and you will end up circling and exploring your issue, but not changing it.

Of course all campaigns have some 'educational' effect but it is education by doing, through experience, not through being given information. Moreover, information is not power until it leads to mobilisation. If information truly were power, the world would be run by librarians.

Example box

Man and Biosphere (MAB)[6] – communication strategy

From Broadcast → Conversation: **Less talking to, more talking with**

From Explain → Inspire: **Less words and justification, more inspiration and images**

From Place → People: **Less geography, more human**

From Facts → Stories: **Less data sharing, more storytelling**

From Regulation → Opportunity: **Less about things people cannot do, more about what they can**

3.5. Two way communication

Modern approaches to the management of PAs are based on the involvement of stakeholders. Stakeholders need to be informed and involved in processes. The communication with them on a daily basis has become a constant part of the agenda of PAs. The communication mostly runs in personal meetings and can be performed by PA managers or by external professional organizations, or combination of both. Professionals are often of big help in some critical situations when an independent person (facilitator) is a key to an efficient communication on the way to desired results.

3.5.1. Consultation and participation
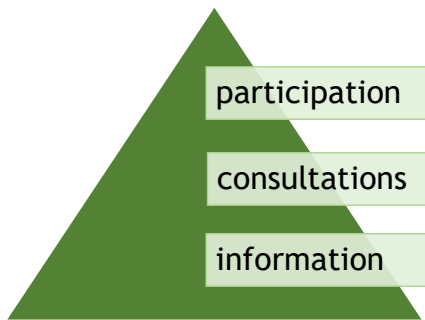
If we are going to consult with the local community, the most important is well prepared information as a base and information policy of the PA.

Graph 5. Components of effective communication

---

[6] UNESCO MAB - Global Communication Strategy and Action Plan.
http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/images/SC-18_CONF_210_12_MAB_Comm_Strategy-ANNEX_1-EN.pdf

Source: own study.

Always arrange consultations before making a decision and after defining the problem. Never call consultation meetings during which you inform about already adopted solutions.

The first and most important element is informing about the state of the case, which will be decided in the future. Information should reach the widest audience (almost everyone). Random participants will take part in the consultations, e.g. they will come to the meeting only because a neighbor is coming. But what is important, the participant by the way will express their own opinion and share observations. However, the narrowest group of people - the most involved - will participate in the whole process (in all planned meetings, problem-focused workshops). It is important to maintain the diversity of the group of people involved so that they are among the representatives of various local groups and residents of different ages.

The PA manager who wants to consult has the task of carrying out the process which includes the following steps:

The following stages of public consultation should be preceded by an open meeting with the local community, which will be an information meeting on upcoming activities.
How to inform about launching process and the meeting itself has been described above.
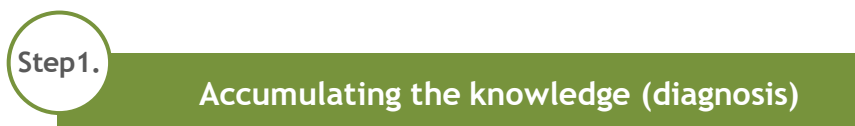
Local community knows best what functions does the space fulfill, what the everyday functioning of the local community located in PAs or in their immediate vicinity is. They know about the needs of direct and downstream users, what are their subjective opinions. Gathering information about the subjective picture of the functioning of the PA

is an important element of gathering knowledge that should be included in the process of planning changes.

The diagnosis stage, which allows gathering information about the PA (e.g. management plan) and about the needs of stakeholders, is necessary to jointly develop solutions at further stages of the consultation process.

Information tools can be used to collect information, such as: a survey, consultation point, research walk, questionnaires, interviews (these tools are described in Part 4.).

Step 2. Sharing knowledge

Sharing acquired knowledge with stakeholders is the next step in the consultation process. At this stage, the information gathered should be summarized, and lessons drawn from it. To this end, it is worth planning an open meeting, public debate during which a wide group of stakeholders will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the results of previous work.

It is also the best time to inform and invite participants to the next stages, i.e. working together on solutions.

In addition to meetings with stakeholders, it is worth summarizing the collected results in a report and publishing such in available media, e.g. on the websites of the area management, the commune office, non-governmental organizations, commune agricultural support centers, etc. and in the local press - in the form of a press article encouraging for further participation in public consultations. You can also organize a press conference.

Step 3. Developing solutions

This stage is based on various types of workshop work aimed at developing solutions with the participation of representatives of all groups participating in consultations. The aim of the workshop is to develop solutions for diagnosed key problems related to functioning in the PA, conducting active and passive protection of protected species and the scope of planning documents (e.g. plan of conservation tasks).

It is important to use the knowledge acquired, deepen and supplement it during the workshop, but avoid new problem areas (e.g. write them down as issues for the future, to be deepened in another process). The search for solutions based on the acquired information as well as experience and knowledge of the participants should be supported.

In addition to workshop work, you can plan involving participants in field trips and study visits.

Step 4.

Making a decision

When making a decision in a participatory way, i.e. together with stakeholders, you can use the aforementioned diagnostic tools to find out which decision is closed to them. This can be done through a survey or mobile consultation points or various forms of voting.

Decisive decisions on previously discussed issues can also be made in consultation with the planner or representatives of local authorities. An expert or civic panel can be a support.

It is very important to build social commitment and trust by including postulates and conclusions from the consultations carried out in the decision made. It is important to reach out with information about the decision that was made, in particular when decisions are made after the stage of sharing knowledge and developing solutions, but not in a participatory way - i.e. without the participation of the local community.

! Worth remembering

In the participatory process of creating documents, it is important to ensure a balance between the wide involvement of the local community and the preservation of the power to make final decisions on the side of the PA managers, because they are ultimately responsible for the decisions taken, and results thereof. Participation is an instrument supporting the planning process.

Interreg
CENTRAL EUROPE
European Union
European Regional
Development Fund
Centralparks

Example box

Describe your communication activity/practice:

The new management model was established by the initiative of the administration of the Poľana Protected Landscape Area and Biosphere Reserve (BR). It is based on participatory principles and promotes community-based sustainable use of natural resources. Coordination Board of the BR consists of local stakeholders across different sectors and representatives of communities.

Coordination Boards or similar stakeholder engagement mechanisms are in place in each Biosphere Reserve, and provide opportunity to different stakeholders to have their say on management of the area. These are flexible structures that are open to possible participation of other stakeholders not yet represented in the respective Boards.

The role of the Coordination Board is to contribute to a coherent development of the area of the Biosphere Reserve, to contribute to solution of problems in fields of nature protection, forestry, agriculture, tourism and other sectors.

The Coordination Board meets on a regular basis, establishes thematic working groups (e.g. large carnivores, tourism), develops, adopts and implements strategic materials and action plans. Multi-stakeholder Coordination Boards and stakeholders' meetings are examples of local alliances that exist in all four Slovak BRs and address biodiversity conservation and regional development for the benefit of local communities. They meet regularly. In addition, there are also other ad-hoc, temporary alliances existing, for instance, on project basis.

Michel Batisse Award for Biosphere Reserve Management is given for excellent management of the biosphere reserves in line with the recommendations of the Seville Strategy. The 2017 Michel Batisse Award was given to Vladimíra Fabriciusová (Slovakia), coordinator of the Poľana Biosphere Reserve for her case study 'Biosphere Reserve: an opportunity for humans and nature'.

Related PA: Protected Landscape Area/Biosphere Reserve Poľana

Target group: local authorities ☑ farmers ☑ land owners ☑ land users ☑ Local Action Groups ☑ NGOs ☑ tourists ☑ local residents ☑ national park staff and experts ☑ entrepreneur

Focus topic(s) of the communication activity: landscape beauty ☐ species values ☐ activity(s) of Protected Areas management ☑ unique habitat ☐ habitat degradation ☐ threats to ecosystems ☐ ecosystem services ☐ restoration ☐ human- wildlife issue ☑ Natura 2000 network ☐ species loss ☐ invasion ☐ ecoturism ☑ landraces ☐ conservation planning and policy ☑ other

Things we can learn (5-6 sentences):

1. There is inspiration at the beginning of any changes. Convincing stakeholders about their key role has a positive influence on maintaining a healthy landscape and improving the quality of life.

2. Solutions and positive results are a reflection of our personal setting and beliefs.

3. The effect of the achieved goal can be obtained only if we can dedicate our time and interest to people and situations that need it at the moment.

4. Jointly planned projects help to create the conditions for good cooperation and ensure the sustainable development of the landscape

5. Respect for the target group depends on your strength to create favourable conditions for building positive relationships.

6. Building mutual respect takes time. The result is a shared vision created by the intersection of different interests.

7. Every correct communication requires active listening and correctly set rules.

8. Finding a regional identity means identifying with the landscape and taking responsibility for its future.

9. Achieving a common vision requires an objective and impartial approach that respects the interests of stakeholders.

10. When setting up communication, a natural authority is respected, respected by key personalities living in the area of interest.

11. Accepting constructive criticism of the 'voice from the bottom' helps to increase the quality and impact of the goals achieved.

12. Optimal solutions and compromises are the result of mutual respect and the will to help each other, knowing that action will have an impact on our future.

13. Goal setting should bring stakeholders together and create partners from rivals.

14. People are more determined to be informed, inspired and have the tools to make a difference.

Webpage:
chkopolana.sopsr.sk, worldprotectedareas.sopsr.sk

Pictures
Picture: Open day of the BR Poľana, author: Administration of the PLA Poľana

3.5.2. Interpersonal communication skills

PA managers are rarely professionally trained in communication. Communicating more clearly and effectively requires learning some important skills, some expertise can be gained by adoption of few rules and habits.

Effective communication skill 1: Pay attention to nonverbal signals

According to the Albert Mehrabian rule (the '7%-38%-55% Rule') only 7% of meaning is in the words spoken, 38% of meaning is paralinguistic (the way that the words are said) and 55% is in facial expression.

The way you look, listen, move, and react to another person tells them more about how you are feeling than words alone ever can. Nonverbal communication, or body language, includes facial expressions, body movement and gestures, eye contact, posture, the tone of your voice, and even your muscle tension and breathing.

Developing the ability to understand and use nonverbal communication can help you connect with others, express what you really mean, navigate challenging situations.

✓ **Improve how you read nonverbal communication**

Look at nonverbal communication signals as a group. Do not read too much into a single gesture or nonverbal cue. Consider all of the nonverbal signals you receive, from eye contact to tone of voice to body language. Anyone can slip up occasionally and let eye contact go, for example, or briefly cross their arms without meaning to. Consider the signals as a whole to get a better 'read' on a person.

✓ **Improve how you deliver nonverbal communication**

Use nonverbal signals that match up with your words rather than contradict them. If you say one thing, but your body language says something else, your listener will feel confused or suspect that you are being dishonest. For example, sitting with your arms crossed and shaking your head does not match words telling the other person that you agree with what they are saying.

Adjust your nonverbal signals according to the context. The tone of your voice, for example, should be different when you are addressing a child than when you are addressing a group of adults. Similarly, take into account the emotional state and cultural background of the person you are interacting with.

✓ **Avoid negative body language.**

Instead, use body language to convey positive feelings, even when you are not actually experiencing them. You can signal confidence, even though you are not feeling it. Instead of tentatively entering a room with your head down, eyes averted, and sliding into a chair, try standing tall with your shoulders back, smiling and maintaining eye contact, and delivering a firm handshake. It will make you feel more self-confident and help to put the other person at ease.

Nonverbal communication has, due to its high weight in the framework communication performed by an individual, a particularly important role. Nonverbal language can support, contradict or substitute verbal communication. The nonverbal message is the closest to the reality of the sender and is the one to which the interlocutor pays the most attention.

✓ **Facial expressions**

Facial expression are the easiest to control. These should be read in relation to both spoken words and other body movements

Graph. 6. Different types of languages with behaviour examples.

Positive nonverbal language	Negative nonverbal language	Aggressive language
☺ Assertive, cooperative	☹ Trembling voice	Strong voice
☺ Smile	☹ Rarely spoken	Speak quickly
☺ Open position	☹ Expression of concern	Expression of anger
☺ Interested face	☹ Evasive gaze	Permanent eye contact
☺ Moderate eye contact	☹ Defensive arms	
☺ Arms support	☹ Hand covered mouth	
☺ Sufficient voice volume	☹ Excessively large distance	

Source: Georgiana Andrei, Laura Istrate, Alina Alexa, PROPARK - FOUNDATION FOR PROTECTED AREAS.

Effective communication skill 2: Become an engaged listener

When communicating with others, we often focus on what we should say. However, effective communication is less about talking and more about listening. Listening well means not just understanding the words or the information being communicated, but also understanding the emotions the speaker is trying to convey.

There is a big difference between engaged listening and simply hearing. When you really listen—when you are engaged with what is being said—you will hear the subtle intonations in someone's voice that tell you how that person is feeling and the emotions they are trying to communicate. When you are an engaged listener, not only will you better understand the other person, you will also make that person feel heard and understood, which can help build a stronger, deeper connection between you.

Tips
How to become an engaged listener

Focus fully on the speaker. You cannot listen in an engaged way if you are constantly checking your phone or thinking about something else. You need to stay focused on the moment-to-moment experience in order to pick up the subtle nuances and important nonverbal cues in a conversation. If you find it hard to concentrate on some speakers, try repeating their words over in your head—it will reinforce their message and help you stay focused.

Avoid interrupting or trying to redirect the conversation to your concerns. By saying something like, *If you think that's bad, let me tell you what happened to me.* Listening is not the same as waiting for your turn to talk. You cannot concentrate on what someone's saying if you are forming what you are going to say next. Often, the speaker can read your facial expressions and know that your mind's elsewhere.

Show your interest in what is being said. Nod occasionally, smile at the person, and make sure your posture is open and inviting. Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like *yes* or *uh huh*.

Try to set aside judgment. In order to communicate effectively with someone, you do not have to like them or agree with their ideas, values, or opinions. However, you do need to set aside your judgment and withhold blame and criticism in order to fully understand them. The most difficult communication, when successfully executed, can often lead to an unlikely connection with someone.

Provide feedback. If there seems to be a disconnect, reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. *What I'm hearing is*, or *Sounds like you are saying*, are great ways to reflect back. Do not simply repeat what the speaker has said verbatim, you will sound insincere or unintelligent. Instead, express what the speaker's words mean to you. Ask questions to clarify certain points: *What do you mean when you say…* or *Is this what you mean?*

Hear the emotion behind the words. It is the higher frequencies of human speech that impart emotion. You can become more attuned to these frequencies—and thus better able to understand what others are really saying—by exercising the tiny muscles of your middle ear (the smallest in the body).

Effective communication skill 3: Fostering dialogue

Dialogue means a verbal conversation between two or more people. Basically the dialogue is an exchange of questions and feedbacks. Asking and encouraging constructive questions and providing and inviting helpful feedback pave the way to finding a common speech and real mutual understanding.

✓ **Questioning Skills**
Whether obtaining information, maintaining control of the conversation, clarifying a point, encouraging further thoughts it is worth to think about what type of question is used, is the question appropriate to the person/group, is the right time to put the question, how do I expect the respondent will reply? To put correct understandable and well-structured questions in the right time is half of the success in getting fitting and clear answer

✓ **Feedback Skills - providing feedback**
It is important to know how to provide feedback to others, effectively and constructively without causing offence.

✓ **Feedback Skills - Receiving feedback**

Receiving feedback is not easy, especially if it is negative. It helps to be open to feedback, listen to what is said and observe the body language of the person giving you the feedback. Use effective listening tools, by questioning, and clarifying what you have been told. Your emotional intelligence will help you to manage your own response.

Tips

How to give effective feedback

1. Feedback should be about behaviour not personality

The first, and probably the most important rule of feedback is to remember that you are making no comment on what type of person they are, or what they believe or value. You are only commenting on how they behaved. Do not be tempted to discuss aspects of personality, intelligence or anything else. Only behaviour.

2. Feedback should describe the effect of the person's behaviour on you

After all, you do not know the effect on anyone or anything else. You only know how it made **you** feel or what **you** thought. Presenting feedback as your opinion makes it much easier for the recipient to hear and accept it, even if you are giving negative feedback. After all, they have no control over how you felt, any more than you have any control over their intention. This approach is a blame-free one, which is therefore much more acceptable

3. Feedback should be as specific as possible

Especially when things are not going well, we all know that it is tempting to start from the point of view of 'everything you do is rubbish', but do not. Think about specific occasions, and specific behaviour, and point to exactly what the person did, and exactly how it made you feel. The more specific the better, as it is much easier to hear about a specific occasion than about 'all the time'!

4. Feedback should be timely

It is no good telling someone about something that offended or pleased you six months later. Feedback needs to be timely, which means while everyone can still remember what happened. If you have feedback to give, then just get on and give it. That does not mean without thought. You still need to think about what you are going to say and how.

5. Pick your moment

There are times when people are feeling open to feedback and times when they are not. Have a look at our page on emotional awareness and work on your social awareness, to help you develop your awareness of the emotions and feelings of others. This will help you to pick a suitable moment. For example, an angry person will not want to accept feedback, even if given skilfully. Wait until they have calmed down a bit.

✓ **Dialogue Skills**

Dialogue is a form of conversation where people genuinely try to access different perspectives to enable a new understanding to emerge. Unlike debate, dialogue seeks to discover a new meaning that was not previously held by any of the participants in the dialogue. Debaters seek to win. Dialoguers seek to learn how the other person thinks and feels. They do not see the other person as an opponent, but rather as someone they can collaborate with for a mutual gain.

Tips

How to improve dialogue skills

Stay in between aggression and avoidance - Do not seek to win or beat up on the other person. And do not avoid conflict so much that you end up withdrawing Competent communication interaction often occurs as dialogue.

Use Paraphrasing -it is a crucial skill for dialoguing. Use it in the form of a question, not an assertion. Paraphrasing leads to clarification. Paraphrasing the content and if convenient, paraphrase also feelings and values of the speaker using your emotional intelligence. It includes the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes and guess their feelings and values.
When you express them well with a question at the end, you are perceived as having empathy. The speaker will feel that you are in tune with them. Empathy is a hallmark of emotional intelligence.

Patience and tolerance - giving people time to contemplate, speak, and respond. Respect pauses as time for speakers to think, rather than as opportunities to reply. Be patient.

Effective communication skill 4: Keep stress in check

How many times have you felt stressed during a disagreement with your spouse, kids, boss, friends, or co-workers and then said or done something you later regretted? If you can quickly relieve stress and return to a calm state, you will not only avoid such regrets, but in many cases you'll also help to calm the other person as well. It is only when you are in a calm, relaxed state that you will be able to know whether the situation requires a response, or whether the other person's signals indicate it would be better to remain silent.

Tips

How to stay calm under pressure

Use stalling tactics to give yourself time to think. Ask for a question to be repeated or for clarification of a statement before you respond.

Pause to collect your thoughts. Silence is not necessarily a bad thing — pausing can make you seem more in control than rushing your response.

Make one point and provide an example or supporting piece of information. If your response is too long or you waffle about a number of points, you risk losing the listener's interest. Follow one point with an example and then gauge the listener's reaction to tell if you should make a second point.

Deliver your words clearly. In many cases, how you say something can be as important as what you say. Speak clearly, maintain an even tone, and make eye contact. Keep your body language relaxed and open.

Wrap up with a summary and then stop. Summarize your response and then stop talking, even if it leaves a silence in the room. You do not have to fill the silence by continuing to talk.

! **Worth remembering**

Quick stress relief for an effective communication

When a conversation starts to get heated, you need something quick and immediate to bring down the emotional intensity. By learning to quickly reduce stress in the moment, you can safely take stock of any strong emotions you are experiencing, regulate your feelings, and behave appropriately.

➤ **Recognize when you are becoming stressed**- your body will let you know if you are stressed as you communicate. Are your muscles or stomach tight? Are your hands clenched? Is your breath shallow? Are you 'forgetting' to breathe?

➤ **Take a moment to calm down** before deciding to continue a conversation or postpone it.

➤ **Bring your senses to the rescue** - the best way to rapidly and reliably relieve stress is through the senses—sight, sound, touch, taste, smell—or movement. For example, you could pop a peppermint in your mouth, squeeze a stress ball in your pocket, take a few deep breaths, clench and relax your muscles, or simply recall a soothing, sensory-rich image. Each person responds differently to sensory input, so you need to find a coping mechanism that is soothing to you.

➤ **Look for humour in the situation** - when used appropriately, humour is a great way to relieve stress when communicating. When you or those around you start taking things too seriously, find a way to lighten the mood by sharing a joke or an amusing story.

➤ **Be willing to compromise** - Sometimes, if you can both bend a little, you will be able to find a happy middle ground that reduces the stress levels for everyone concerned. If you

realize that the other person cares much more about an issue than you do, compromise may be easier for you and a good investment for the future of the relationship.

➢ **Agree to disagree** - if necessary, and take time away from the situation so everyone can calm down. Go for a stroll outside if possible, or spend a few minutes meditating. Physical movement or finding a quiet place to regain your balance can quickly reduce stress.

Effective communication skill 5: Assert yourself

Direct, assertive expression makes for clear communication and can help boost your self-esteem and decision-making skills. Being assertive means expressing your thoughts, feelings, and needs in an open and honest way, while standing up for yourself and respecting others. It does NOT mean being hostile, aggressive, or demanding. Effective communication is always about understanding the other person, not about winning an argument or forcing your opinions on others.

Tips

How to improve your assertiveness

Value yourself and your options- they are as important as anyone else's.

Know your needs and wants - learn to express them without infringing on the rights of others.

Express negative thoughts in a positive way. It is OK to be angry, but you must remain respectful as well.

Receive feedback positively - accept compliments graciously, learn from your mistakes, ask for help when needed.

Learn to say 'no' - know your limits and do not let others take advantage of you. Look for alternatives so everyone feels good about the outcome.

3.5.3 External services – professional/external facilitator

In many types of group situation, and particularly in complex discussions or those where people have different views and interests, good facilitation can make the difference between success and failure. Often it is also not only question of views and interest but also question of various characters and tempers of people involved in the consultation process. The role of a facilitator is to react.

Facilitating is a dynamic, structured, interactive process where an impartial third party assists disputing parties in resolving conflict through the use of specialized communication and negotiation techniques. The facilitator uses a wide variety of techniques to guide the process in a constructive direction and to help the parties find their optimal

implementable solution. In the facilitation process the interaction between parties is managed and leads to an open communication.

! Worth remembering

It was Dale Carnegie who stated, in *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, that 90% of all management problems are caused by miscommunication. Here are some of the ways the best leaders avoid miscommunication:

✓ **They listen to understand** - people want to know they are being heard. The best leaders take care to listen to what the other person is saying instead of thinking about their own response. They are constantly asking for clarification to avoid misunderstandings. Taking the trouble to build understanding lets the person you are speaking with know that you are taking them seriously.

✓ **They think before they speak** - the best leaders are good at pausing before they speak instead of saying the first thing that comes to mind. They take a moment to think things through, paying close attention to what they say and how they say it. If you adopt only one habit to improve your communication skills, this is the one to choose.

✓ **They know their audience** - to communicate effectively, it is important to know firstly whom it is you are speaking. The best leaders understand that each listener is different—whether it is an individual or a group - and make sure to consider their background, expectations and cultural norms before they speak. Even difficult messages are better received when they are delivered in a way that is focused on the recipient.

✓ **They treat everyone equally** - the best leaders never talk down to anyone but treat everyone with the same respect. No one will want to hear from you if you seem to be holding yourself above, but communication opens up when you treat everyone as equals.

✓ **They manage their tone -**communication is far more difficult if you let your emotions go unchecked. The best leaders know how to manage their emotions in times of anger, sorrow, fear and joy. They may express emotion in their words and nonverbally, but they do so appropriately, maintaining a tone of confidence and calmness.

✓ **They are attentive -**much of the power of communication lies not with what we say but with how we say it. The best leaders adopt the practice of listening more than they speak, and they are attentive to the person who is in front of them. Your full presence is among the most important gifts you can give. In addition, the more attuned you are to what others are saying, the more precise you can be in your response.

✓ **They maintain a positive attitude -**the best leaders make a concerted effort to have always a positive attitude. When you communicate with positivity, people will generally respond in the same way. Whatever you send out as a leader is usually returned to you, so own the power of contagious positivity.

✓ **Communicating effectively** is a skill you can practice and develop once you have learned the basic techniques. If you want to be your best as a leader, learn to be your best as a communicator.

✓ **Lead from within** the best leaders grow by constantly practicing their communication skills, because communication make us who we are.

Part 4.How to bring the message to stakeholders

4.1. Channels and tools that 'speak' to the target audience

To increase the impact on strengthening, or even transforming the mindset of local communities on sustainable way of living is necessary to communicate in a balanced way. Sending the message about **benefits and barriers** associated with the protection and care of the region's natural and cultural-historical heritage ought to stay side by side with conventional providing information on individual natural or cultural-historical phenomena.

What channels to use

Each of the following channels and tools has its own pros and cons. When choosing among them, consider the following:
- How much information can the medium/channel carry?
- How targeted the medium is?

Different media serve different purposes in your outreach. Using a combination of channels, tools and materials makes communication usually more effective; always keep the target audience in mind to choose the most appropriate way to forward the message.

Distinction could be made between those channels used for one-way and two-way exchanges with target audiences. One-way communication channels usually push out information. Two-way communication channels have a mechanism to collect feedbacks.

Using existing communication channels, already connected to the relevant stakeholder communities, could be the most efficient and effective. The use of existing communication infrastructure not only saves time and resources, but also increases openness and avoids redundancy. Usually these channels are open for external contributors, and providing valuable and relevant content for existing established channels (e.g. blogs, newsletter) also increases the quality and impact potential of communication activities.

The extended and effective communication approaches allow wide collaboration and engagement and create a multi-directional and multi-level information flow, which allow both communicators and audiences to learn from each other.

Depending on the scale of dissemination the channels and tools could be based on personal and 'remote' contact with audience. Larger scale communication usually occur in the wider digital sphere.

To facilitate the decision which channel should be selected, in appendix 2. you can find a guide, which shows possible communication methods with their advantages and limitations.

4.2. Overview of channels and tools

4.2.1. Channels and tools based on a personal contact:

✓ Effective communication and dialogue

Main target groups: Residents, local landowners, farmers, and local entrepreneurs, local interest groups including NGOs.

Regular meetings with city mayors, explaining your attitudes to meetings of councils and local associations are essential prerequisites for successful communication of your goals. Personal communication and actions cannot be replaced by other forms of communication.

✓ Awareness-raising, educational and experiential events and programs

Main target groups: in a suitable form it is well usable for all target groups.

Organizing activities by PA manager, but also facilitating presentations/ exhibitions/ markets of environmental-friendly local products and services of local entrepreneurs.

Tips

Make your program interactive, engaging more senses, and encouraging answers that will help to deepen the place identity of target groups to build their relationship to the conservationists and to understand the importance of protection the local environment for its natural and cultural-historical resources. Focus on the events, which have mostly regional character supporting local traditions.

✓ Visitor infrastructure

Main target groups: PA visitors and inhabitants loving nature.

The main field communication tools include nature trails, information and interpretation panels and accompanying infrastructure (e.g. observatories, rest areas), visitor centres, Houses of Nature (see below Example box for details).

Example box

Houses of Nature - visitor and information centres in protected landscape areas in the Czech Republic

'Sandstone rock towns, mountain ranges and meadows, karst underground and karst landscape, wetlands, fishponds, orchards, variegated meadows, pastures, forests and picturesque villages – all of this can be seen in our protected landscape areas (PLA).

Come and see our diverse nature, discover stories of rare plant and animal species and the activities of man which influenced our landscape for both good and bad. You can explore interactive exhibitions, watch 3-D films, gather information and find tips for your trips in the Houses of Nature. They will offer you guided tours, events and special interpretation programmes'.

The House of Nature programme is developed in cooperation with boroughs, businesses, non-profit organisations, owners and other local partners. Their construction and operation are co-financed from the European Fund for Regional Development – Operational Programme Environment, State Environmental Fund of the Czech Republic and the national programme of the Ministry of the Environment.

✓ Guided tours

Main target groups: youth (schools), residents, PA visitors and inhabitants loving nature.

A way to present the beauties of PA and the activities of its management.

4.2.2. **Channels and tools based on a remote contact:**

✓ Publishing activity

Main target groups: youth (schools), residents, representatives of higher education, PA visitors and inhabitants loving nature.

The main printed materials include leaflets, brochures, magazines, popularization books, scientific papers etc.

Tips

Develop and implement your unique visual identity to all printed materials, but use different language for particular target groups.

✓ Webpages

Main target groups: in a suitable form it is well usable for all target groups.

Principally, website is the main source of information about PA and lead medium for communication with the public.

Tips

Adapt a web presentation to reach each target group to simply got information they need.

✓ Mass media

Main target groups: all target groups.

Mass media - print, broadcast and digital - are important for informing the majority of the public and for stimulating it to discuss an issue in society. In most European countries, where there is a range of options to acquire information, the mass media no longer has a major role in driving public opinion or changing behaviour.

✓ Local Media

Main target groups: all target groups.

Local media are suitable to address geographically delimited communities with well-written or well-spoken story.

Tips

Tell a good story! Rather than sending out a press release, take some time to work with your local media staff to shape and develop a story that is relevant to their readers and makes the key points that you want to convey. One well-written story that addresses your activities in the right context and describes its benefits has a bigger impact than several announcements in local papers.

Such dissemination can be free, or you can purchase media spots. Placement can also be customized to reach specific audiences.

✓ **Social media**

Main target groups: in a suitable form it is well usable for all target groups.

This channel has the advantage of offering a quick and open way to draw attention to the full variety of activities and values. It is a useful way to keep your community connected and keep an attention on your issue. It offers the opportunity for immediate, ongoing communication, provoking to action, inviting to events etc. Blog posts, events could be announced and subsequently serviced and reports, other references can be linked by using social media. However, be aware of the fact that social media are not a very targeted medium. Social media can contain blogs, social networks and platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube/Vimeo channels, Instagram, Linked-In), online gaming, and sites that support collaboration and information sharing.

Social media could be a core element of the evaluation since it is a relevant source of data for assessing communication performance and compiling traces of possible impact generation.

Tips

Use visually rich information. Quick and real-time communication with the target audience. On social media, videos and pictures speak a lot louder than words. Keep your message short.

✓ Email newsletter/campaigns

Main target groups: in a suitable form it is well usable for all target groups.

Keep the local communities engaged by letting them subscribe to your newsletter to receive regular updates on your activities. The newsletters based on a detailed stakeholder contact list that is regularly updated. It could be released on a quarterly or a monthly basis and it features the latest updates. However, compliance with General Data Protection Regulation(GDPR) rules is an important requirement for maintaining an email newsletter. It is important to have a comprehensive privacy policy in place if personal data are collected.

Tips

Keep your message simple and regular and focus on the benefits rather than the details. Use automatic newsletter application.

4.2.3. Innovative tools

You are encouraged to be opened to adopting new channels and tools of communication. While communication should not be technology driven, new technologies can often be suitable for certain population groups and contexts. When adopting different communication channels – including high tech, low-tech and no-tech options – you will improve accessibility and attractiveness for a wider range of local communities. While a large portion of these innovative tools such as virtual guides using mobile apps, QR codes, NFC tags used for interpretation trails, kinds of geocaching/quests based on gamification concept are focused primarily on visitors and inhabitants loving nature, other tools can support engaging a wider audience.

✓ **Citizen Science**

Main target groups: the public engaged in nature protection, PA visitors and inhabitants loving nature.

While conventional tools mentioned above are widely adopted among PA managers, the innovative tools stay behind yet. Citizen science (CS) is an emerging topic that has become a powerful tool to stimulate public input and engagement in natural resource, environmental management and policy making. Up to now range of systematic CS initiatives (e.g. MyNatura2000 /EU/, Biolog /CZ/, OpenBiomaps /HU/, Mapujzieloną infrastructure /PL/, Biomonitoring.sk /SK/, CREDO) have been already released and/or implemented within Carpathian region and have provided both relevant data for conservation and effective engagement of local communities.

When you adopt such tools and will properly communicate the purpose, aims and methods of monitoring, you have a high chance to increase the motivation of local inhabitants to contribute to monitoring necessary for e.g. conservation planning, and better spatial/physical planning for sustainable local development. Moreover by using citizen science you can deepen mutual understanding and respect among PA management and inhabitants.

To adopt citizen science techniques and apps you can organize regular BioBlitz. These events focus on finding and identifying (particular) species in a specific area over a short period of time, when scientists, families, teachers and other community members work together to get a snapshot of an area's biodiversity.

For more info about citizen science you can visit the website of European Citizen Science Association - https://ecsa.citizen-science.net/.

✓ **Gamification and serious games (SGs) tools for conservation**

Location-based games (geogames) following mainly a 'seek-and-find' and challenging approach have been used on nature trails, encouraging people to take a picture (Fajbook in Hungary https://fajbook.hu) and visitors to visualise their routes and collect stamps/badges

at certain locations or engage in treasure hunts. ICT-enhanced storytelling technique can be used (e.g. 'Fragments of Laura' experience in the UNESCO-listed Laurisilva Forest on Madeira Island) to raise people awareness and engage them in understanding the benefits of ecosystems and their underlying biodiversity. Games for players to help with analysing large amounts of research data (e.g. Zooniverse) can also be applied in biodiversity communication.

4.3. Target the audience

When you use more focus channels to reach particular local communities, whom you really need, the overall return of your investment is higher. Moreover, when you use targeted channels, the stakeholders know that you are treating them personally and want to hear their voice. By selecting the channels and groups you will be able to attract and engage the people who are willing to take actions that will help you achieve your conservation goals.

However, selecting the channels and tailoring the messages to a particular group can sometimes be difficult and not rarely we end up developing materials for audience whom we talk most frequently – so called insiders – i.e. people who are already informed about the issue. Therefore, we need to target specific audience segment to bring new people. **So do not try to address the needs of all groups in one message / set of materials.** Sometimes, such message / materials send mixed information, addressing one audience's needs in one sentence and saying the opposite to another audience in the next.

When you choose a target group, it will allow you to focus on their needs more effectively and to send messages that resonate with them.

Example box

Describe your communication activity/practice: *Hol a virág – Hóvirág?- Where are the flower? 'Snowdrops!'*

Residents are asked to collect data on the occurrence of the eastern snowdrop (*Galanthusnivalis* L.). Data can be collected by participants using the "Where are the flower? 'Snowdrops!' app. Furthermore, the data collectors were able to participate in a game between 02/07/2020 and 14/04/2020, where they also received prizes. Joining the data collection is voluntary, anyone is free to join, no personal data or training is required.

Related PA: Duna-Dráva National Park

Target group: local authorities ☐ farmers ☐ land owners ☐ land users ☐ Local Action Groups ☑ NGOs ☑ tourists ☑ local residents ☑ national park staff and experts ☑ entrepreneur ☐

Focus topic(s) of the communication activity: landscape beauty ☐ species values ☑ activity(s) of Protected Areas management ☑ unique habitat ☐ habitat degradation ☐ threats to ecosystems ☐ ecosystem services ☐ restoration ☐ human- wildlife issue ☐ Natura 2000 network ☐ species loss ☑ invasion ☐ ecoturism ☐ landraces ☐ conservation planning and policy ☐ other

Things we can learn (5-6 sentences):

This citizen science program focuses primarily on PR and educational goals. Introducing the National Park's activities in a new and surprising way. The data are not used for species monitoring and therefore no validation is done, nor has attention been paid to the pretraining of data collectors.

The creation of the program did not require much effort from the National Park, as the background data infrastructure (e.g. OpenBioMaps) are easily accessible and customizable.

A difficult task is to reach the data collectors with the right messages and motivate them to collect data. A prerequisite for the success of the program is organizing a focused communication campaign. This program requires a very focused campaign since the data collection could only take place for a short time (a couple of weeks).

Message

Rather, it would be the right behaviour to see and admire the flower, not to pick it up, take it home, or squeeze it. Let's take home a picture of the flower on our cell phone and store it among our memories.

We have little knowledge about the effectiveness of the program, as the campaign took place at the time of the COVID-19 restrictions. Typically, few data collectors joined, however, each user collected a lot of data. The program is prepared to launch additional data collection campaigns in the coming years.

Part 5. Risks and assumptions

5.1. Miscommunication

Being able to communicate effectively is perhaps the most important of all leadership skills. It is what enables us to pass information to other people and to understand what is being said to us, the foundation of productivity and strong relationships.

5.2. Conflict background

Each conflict has actually two dimensions: following **own aim** and meeting **needs of others**. The intensity how both factors influence the approach to conflict solution.

Graph. 7. Own aim and needs of others matrix
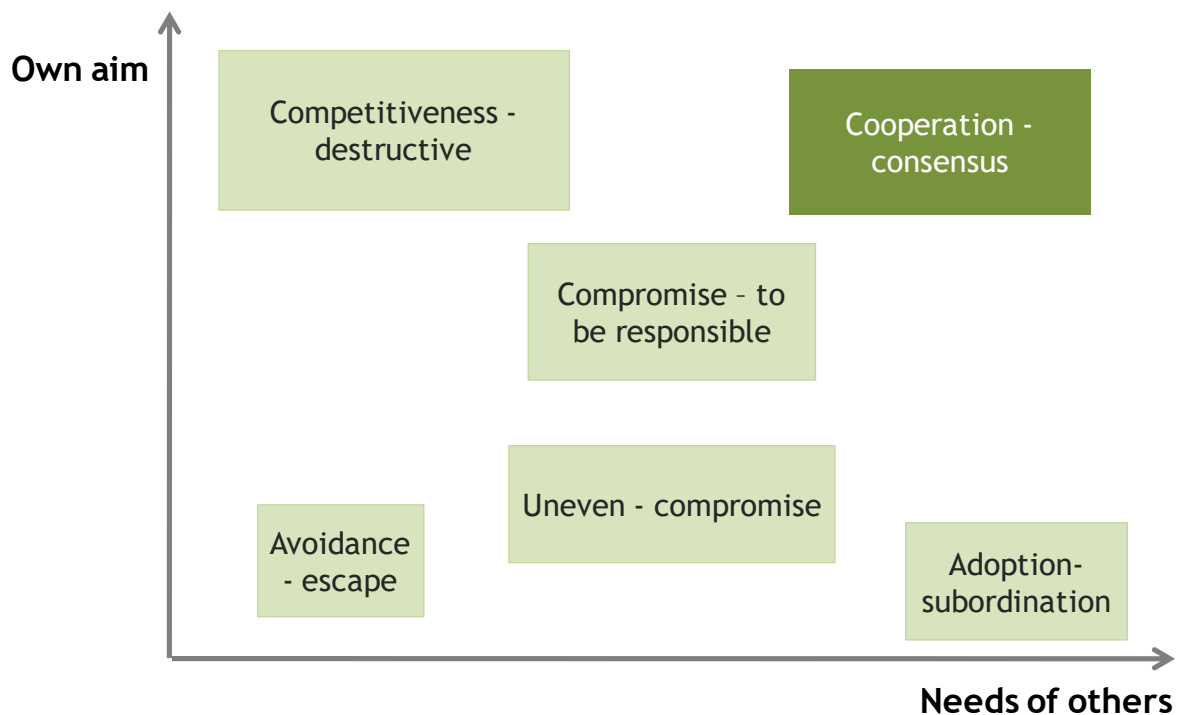
Source: Own study.

Each factor can mean:
- ➢ **Avoidance** – few energy, no solution
- ➢ **Adoption** – solution unfavourable for me
- ➢ **Competitiveness** – problems of others are neglected, my interests are asserted, possible fear of others, loss of contacts, own destruction
- ➢ **Compromise** – partially win, both sides abandon part of own needs, the most often solution model, easier than cooperation
- ➢ **Uneven compromise** – loss or win in insufficient relation
- ➢ **Cooperation** – win-win situation.

5.3. Conflict Resolution

Conflict occurs in all societies and human relationships. Learning to resolve conflicts effectively, without increasing your stress levels, is important for everyone. Particular parties deal with conflict in various ways, therefore you need to adopt different conflict resolution strategies. Acquiring such skills, you can help your organisation to work more effectively.

Conflict resolution is a way for two or more parties to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement among them. The disagreement may be personal, financial, political, or emotional.

5.4. Why - When – How

WHY:
The main goal of negotiation with your opposition is to come to an agreement that benefits all parties.
▪ To produce a solution that all parties can agree to
▪ To work as quickly as possible to find this solution
▪ To improve, not hurt, the relationship between the groups in conflict.

WHEN:
Conflict resolution is appropriate for almost any disagreement. Our daily lives offer plenty of opportunities for negotiation - between parents and children, co-workers, friends, etc. However, for more serious conflicts, and conflicts among groups rather than individuals, you may need some additional communication skills. PA managers regularly meet with issues which can escalate conflicts in local community. When conflict appears, it is time to deal with that, not to put it off until tomorrow.

HOW:
There are seven steps to successfully negotiating the resolution of a conflict.

1 Understand the conflict (diagnosis)	2 Communicate with the opposition - negotiations	3 Use a third party - mediation	4 Reveal needs and interests of opposite parties
5 Brainstorm possible resolutions	6 Choose the best resolutions and explore alternatives	7 Consider what to communicate about the resolutions	

Coping with stressful situations and pressure tactics is always present during a conflict. However, you need to be prepared to negotiate with all kinds of opposite parties, both reasonable and unreasonable. What if your opponent is more powerful and influential than you are? What if they refuse to meet or talk with you?

All of these situations are stressful, and intended to put extra pressure on you to make a quick decision in the opposition's favor. When a situation like this takes place, stay calm and go slow. Do not get angry or make a rushed decision. Instead, talk about the pressure tactic without judging.

Step1. **Understand the conflict (diagnosis)**

To understand conflict is quite difficult task to do, but very important to make later strategy for conflict managing. To make it easier you can use the tool which is called circle of conflict by Christopher W. Moore. It shows us what kind of conflict we are dealing with.

Graph.8. Types of conflicts
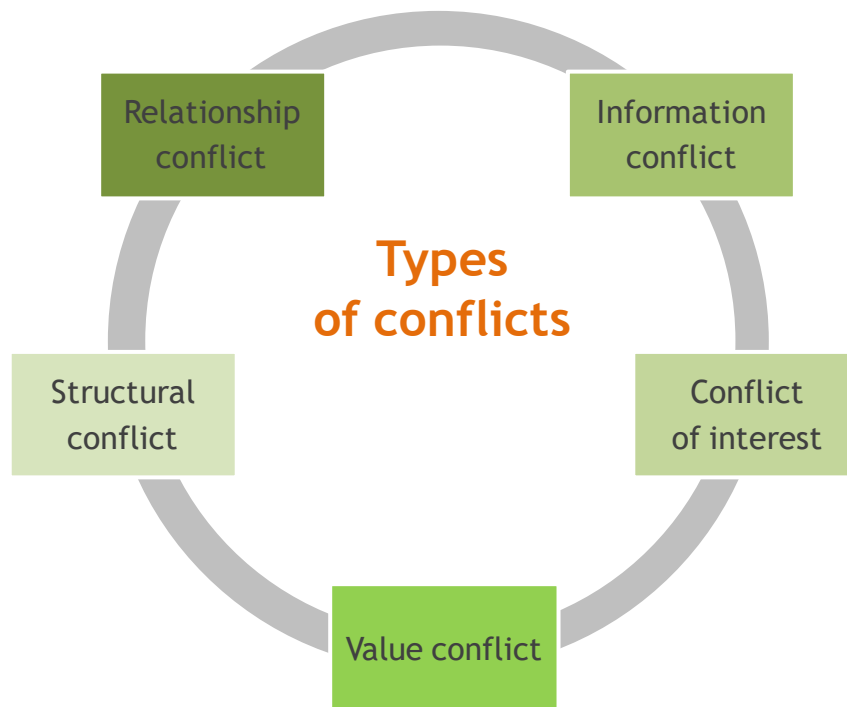
Source: Christopher W. Moore, The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict: 2nd edition, 1996.

When does it turn out to be a relationship conflict?

When it is obvious that there is a high level of party emotions. Wrong perception of the other party to the conflict and attributing negative features to it will be common here. People involved in relationship conflict – means conflict of mutual cooperation, are characterized by hostile and erroneous communication and repeated negative behavior.

When do we deal with Information conflict?

When it turns out that information is lacking or incorrect information circulates in the local community. Also when different views dominate over what is important and when there are different interpretations of the same information.

Maybe it is conflict of interests

Conflicts regarding contradictory interests are caused by alleged or actual competition for material or information needs. They are also caused by failure to meet procedural interests (e.g. omission of certain groups in the procedure) or psychological interests (e.g. insecurity).

Whether we are dealing with a structure conflict?

Structural conflicts are caused by unequal distribution of power and power as well as unequal control, unequal ownership or distribution of resources. Structural conflicts may result from destructive behavioral patterns or interactions arising from imbalance of forces. It can also be caused by geographical, physical or environmental factors hindering cooperation, as well as time limits.

Maybe it is a value conflict

Conflicts reflecting differences in values are caused by different lifestyles, ideologies or religions. The parties' acceptance of various criteria for assessing ideas or behavior results from strong beliefs or lifestyle.

Prepare a map of conflict

When preparing the conflict map, include all sides. If you miss one, the entire conflict resolution process may be annulled due to the lack of consideration of the needs of this one - the missing party. Write down all issues to be negotiated or mediated. Find allies and issues they support each other. Consider history of conflict, consequences of conflict and options for solutions if it is possible. Creating a conflict map will help you understand and diagnose the conflict, designate the most important issues and solve them later.

Step 2. **Communicate with the opposition - negotiations**

Conflicts arise for a variety of different reasons. It is important for you to define clearly your own position and interests in the conflict, and to understand those of your opponent. Here are some questions to ask yourself so that you can better define the conflict.

Interests:
- What are my interests?
- What do I really care about in this conflict?
- What do I want?
- What do I need?
- What are my concerns, hopes, fears?

Possible Outcomes:
- What kinds of agreements might we reach?

Legitimacy:

- What third party, outside of the conflict, might convince one or both of us that a proposed agreement is a fair one?
- What objective standard might convince us that an agreement is fair? E.g. a law, an expert opinion.
- Is there a precedent that would convince us that an agreement is fair?

Interests of opposite parties

- What are the interests of my opposition?
- If I were in their shoes, what would I really care about in this conflict?
- What do they want?
- What do they need?
- What are their concerns, hopes, fears?

Interests play an important role in better understanding conflict. Often, groups waste time 'bargaining over positions'. Instead of explaining what the interests of their position are, they argue about their 'bottom line'. This is not a useful way **to negotiate**, because it forces groups to stick to one narrow position. Once they are entrenched in a particular position, it will be embarrassing for them to abandon it. They may spend more effort on 'saving face' than on actually finding a suitable resolution. It is usually more helpful to explore the group's interests, and then see what positions suit such interests.

Find a way to make their decision easy. Try to find a way for them to take your position without looking weak, but do not call it a way for them to 'save face'. Egos are important in negotiations!

Tips

How to talk productively:

✓ **Be an active listener**
Their opinions are important to you, because their opinions are the source of your conflict and you need to recognize this. Recognizing does not mean agreeing, of course! You can still be firm when you are listening. Rephrase what you are hearing as a question: *Let me see if I'm following you. You are saying that… have I got that right*?

✓ **Let everyone participate who want to**
People who participate will have a stake in a resolution. They will to find a good compromise.

✓ **Talk about your string emotions**
Let the other side let off steam.

✓ **Do not react to emotional outbursts!**
Try an apology instead of yelling back.

Interreg
CENTRAL EUROPE
European Union
European Regional
Development Fund
Centralparks

✓ **Speak about yourself, not the other party**

In the textbook example, you might say, *I feel angry to know that my children are reading this old-fashioned textbook*, rather than, *How could you choose such a racist book*?

✓ **Be concrete, but flexible**

Speak about you interest, not about your position.

✓ **Avoid early judgments**

Keep asking questions and gathering information.

✓ **Do not tell opposition**

It's up to you to solve your problems. Work to find a solution for everyone.

Step 3. **Use a third party - mediation**

When negotiations have not been successful and you are still looking for a good solution, you may want to use a third party, mediator. This is a person who is not from your group or your opponent's group, is neutral. Your mediator can help both sides agree upon a standard by which you will judge your resolution. Standards are a way to measure your agreement. They include expert opinions, law, precedent (the way things have been done in the past), and accepted principles.

What role can a mediator play?
➢ Running your brainstorming session
➢ Creating an appropriate setting for meetings
➢ Setting ground rules for you and your opponent to agree upon (for example, you might both agree not to publicly discuss the dispute)
➢ Empowering to cooperation
➢ Being an 'ear' for both side's anger and fear
➢ Finding the interests behind each side's positions explaining them to one another
➢ Looking for win-win alternatives
➢ Keeping both parties focused, reasonable, and respectful
➢ Preventing any party from feeling that it is 'losing face'
➢ Writing the draft of your agreement with the opposition

Possible interventions in relationship conflict
➢ Control the expression of emotions using procedures, adopting rules, individual meetings
➢ Support the expression of emotions by creating appropriate opportunities to express them and help in naming them

- ➢ Increase the amount and quality of communication
- ➢ Block repetitive negative behaviors by changing policies, procedures - encourage positive attitudes towards conflict resolution.

Possible interventions in information conflict
- ➢ Agree on which information is relevant
- ➢ Ask and communicate on how to collect information
- ➢ Set general criteria for interpreting information
- ➢ Use independent experts to get opinions from outside, and then use them to break the deadlock.

Possible interventions in conflict of interests
- ➢ Focus on interests (needs), not positions
- ➢ Introduce objective ways of creating solutions (e.g. workshop work, brainstorming, meetings with subgroups)
- ➢ Support to create solutions that take into account the needs of all parties
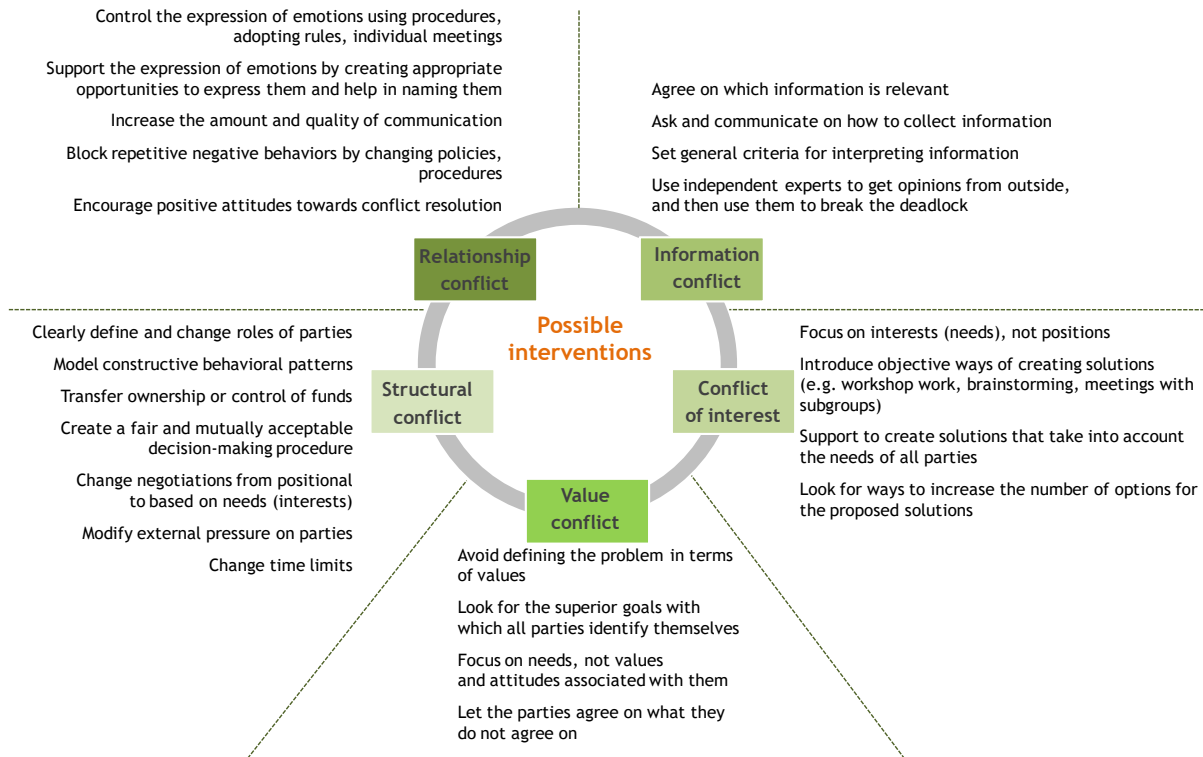- ➢ Look for ways to increase the number of options for the proposed solutions.

Possible interventions in structure conflict
- ➢ Clearly define and change roles of parties
- ➢ Model constructive behavioral patterns
- ➢ Transfer ownership or control of funds
- ➢ Create a fair and mutually acceptable decision-making procedure
- ➢ Change negotiations from positional to base on needs (interests)
- ➢ Modify external pressure on parties
- ➢ Change time limits.

Possible interventions in value conflict
- ➢ Avoid defining the problem in terms of values
- ➢ Look for the superior goals with which all parties identify themselves
- ➢ Focus on needs, not values and attitudes associated with them
- ➢ Let the parties agree on what they do not agree on.

Graph. 9. Possible interventions in different types of conflicts.

Control the expression of emotions using procedures, adopting rules, individual meetings

Support the expression of emotions by creating appropriate opportunities to express them and help in naming them

Increase the amount and quality of communication

Block repetitive negative behaviors by changing policies, procedures

Encourage positive attitudes towards conflict resolution

Agree on which information is relevant

Ask and communicate on how to collect information

Set general criteria for interpreting information

Use independent experts to get opinions from outside, and then use them to break the deadlock

Relationship conflict

Information conflict

Possible interventions

Clearly define and change roles of parties

Model constructive behavioral patterns

Transfer ownership or control of funds

Create a fair and mutually acceptable decision-making procedure

Change negotiations from positional to based on needs (interests)

Modify external pressure on parties

Change time limits

Structural conflict

Conflict of interest

Focus on interests (needs), not positions

Introduce objective ways of creating solutions (e.g. workshop work, brainstorming, meetings with subgroups)

Support to create solutions that take into account the needs of all parties

Look for ways to increase the number of options for the proposed solutions

Value conflict

Avoid defining the problem in terms of values

Look for the superior goals with which all parties identify themselves

Focus on needs, not values and attitudes associated with them

Let the parties agree on what they do not agree on

Source: Christopher W. Moore, The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict: 2nd edition, 1996.

Step 4. | **Reveal needs and interests of opposite parties**

Conducting a dialogue with opposite parties, the most important thing is to reach out to the real needs and interests of each party. Than try to work based on needs and look for the best way for solving conflict.

How to ask?

1) In-depth questions

A request for more information related to what has been said.

Example box

| We are interested in active protection, but we do not know exactly what it involves. | | **Mediator:** Can you tell me more about what interests you? |

2) Active listening

Exact reference or paraphrase of what has just been said. Repetition often focuses on the emotional content of the message and is rather an answer than a question.

> **Example box**
>
> I am very dissatisfied with the condition of the access road and what they have done with it. | | **Mediator:** Are you very annoyed that they destroyed this road?

3) Direct explanatory questions

Direct request for information to clarify unclear or ambiguous situations.

> **Example box**
>
> We don't want to be in the vicinity of Natura 2000. It will make farming more difficult. | | **Mediator:** Is what you don't like the idea of creating a PA, or the restrictions associated with it?

4) Concluding clarification questions

Providing explanations or information that was included in the previous answer.

> **Example box**
>
> The meeting was held at the Municipal Office. | | **Mediator:** In the mayor's office?

5) Summary question

A question that summarizes previously provided information, in the expectation that the respondent will verify it.

Example box

We came to meet with the intention to communicate and cooperate, and everything what happens has become that we have more restrictions and obligations.

Mediator: Did you hope that cooperation could bring good results, but in the meantime you feel that it limits you?

---

6) Confrontation question

A question that indicates a discrepancy in the content presented by the respondent, the question should be used with caution, as it may generate resistance.

Example box

Because of these restrictions I will have losses of 3 000 EUR.

Mediator: You say your losses are at 3 000 EUR, and you mentioned earlier that you are able to organize mowing meadows in such a way that it will cost 100 EUR. What are the costs actually?

---

7) Question repeated

Exact repetition of the previous question.

Example box

Mediator: How much will drought mitigation cost?

Oh, I don't know what are the prices of grain, water supply, re-preparation …

Mediator: So, how much will drought mitigation cost?

Step 5.
Brainstorm possible resolutions

Now that you know what the interests of both parties are, and how to communicate better with the opposition, you can start thinking about solutions. Look at all of the interests you have listed, for you and for your opponents, and look for common interests. Often both parties share many interests - for example, both groups may want a stability and public respect.

Before you hold a brainstorming meeting, think carefully about how you will set up the meeting. Write a clear purpose statement for the meeting. Try to choose a small group of 5-8 people in total. Hold the meeting in a different environment from your usual setting. Make sure the setting is an informal one where people feel comfortable and safe. Find an unbiased mediator, someone who can structure the meeting without sharing his or her own feelings about the conflict.

To begin brainstorming, decide whether you want to brainstorm with your opposition, or with only your group. In either case, you will want to establish some ground rules:
- Work on coming up with as many ideas as possible. Do not judge or criticize the ideas yet - that might prevent people from thinking creatively.
- Try to maximize (not minimize) your options
- Look for win-win solutions, or compromises, in which both parties get something they want
- Find a way to make their decision easy.

During the meeting, seat people side by side, facing the 'problem' – visualized on a blank chalkboard or a flipchart, where the mediator will write down all ideas and key notes. The mediator will remind the people of the purpose of the meeting, review the ground rules, and ask participants to agree to those rules.

Step 6. **Choose the best resolutions and explore alternatives**

The goal here is to use opposite parties' skills and resources to get the best result for everyone. It is the right time to motivate parties to look for alternatives and to choose the best one after considerations all of them. The resolution, which gives all groups the *most,* is probably the best one. Moreover consideration of alternatives gives a sense of influence for decision and satisfaction from making a good decision.

Step 7. **Consider what to communicate about the resolutions**

During the meeting devoted to conflict solutions, it is important to discuss with all opposite parties what message will they send to the community about the solutions. To avoid misinformation, it should be unified and equal for each party.

5.5. Sample mediation plan

For mediation or finding conflict solution actions is highly recommended to arrange four to six meetings – two/three meetings devoted to debates and two/three on workshop with subgroups.

The important issue is to well inform and invite the representatives of local communities (Part 1. Who should be involved?) to the solution finding process while using appropriate communication channels (Part 4. How to bring the message to stakeholders). Then follow the instruction how to inform local community showed in Part 6. How to write a communication plan. It is worth to invite to the process every stakeholder in local community.

Steps

1) First open meeting – launching the process and showing the purpose.
2) Gathering knowledge about issues.
3) Second open meeting - sharing knowledge including first workshop work on the results with subgroups.
4) Second workshop work with subgroups – working on solutions.
5) Third workshop work with subgroups – unifying results of common work.
6) Last open meeting – showing solutions.

Worth remembering

- **Create good atmosphere** at the beginning
- **Separate persons and problems** – work with positive attitudes (polite to person)
- **Conflict analysis** – step by step revealing the needs
- **Take your time** – mutual understanding needs time, too fast can mean too superficial and leads 'only' to compromise instead of cooperation
- **Alternative solutions** and **common decision** which one is the best
- **Clear deal** at the end with win – win situation.

Example box

Describe your communication activity/practice:

Natura 2000

We have been told that the local community, especially farmers and landowners do not want to talk and cooperate with local environmental authorities of Natura 2000 network. There were 5 meeting organized by authorities but each finished with slamming the door by local farmer's leader. We as mediators have been asked to help. We prepared the first meeting with special invitations for the local leaders but did not forget about every party (other stakeholders). During the first one, we were open to listen and write down complains, fears, doubts. Next meeting was about the ecosystem and habitats and also about looking for the solution. The last one was finalization under the guidance of environmental neutral expert and with he moderation of mediator – local community together with local authorities tried to prepare the 'annual plan for protective tasks'.

They wrote it at once – on the meeting – there was a computer displayed on the wall and the expert was writing a common proposal for a description of tasks – meaning future law.

Related PA: Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection

Target group: Local authorities, farmers, land owners, land users, local residents

Focus topic(s) of the communication activity:

Special values, activity of PA managers, unique habitat, habitat degradation, ecosystem service, ecosystem restoration, Natura 2000 network, conservation planning and policy

Things we can learn:
- To find a space for fears and doubts (emotions)
- Be open for cooperation as a partner
- Engage a mediator.

Part 6. How to write a communication plan

6.1. Importance of the Communication plan

The nature protection organization throughout the Carpathians differ in their capacities on the communication, some have special departments dedicated to communication issues, some have trained staff and in some organizations the communication agenda is neglected and performed in a very unprofessional way. This part aims to help the organizations and PA managers understand that communication is a complex topic/system that composes of different components which are interlinked and influence/impact each other and thus should be systematically approached (planned, implemented in logical steps, reviewed etc.).

If the organization wants to communicate on a professional level, it is necessary that communication activities are coordinated. Even if the organization does not have a communication department in its organizational structure, there are tools that can help the organization to be consistent and efficient in communication with stakeholders.

One of the tools how to manage the inner and outer communication of the organization is the communication plan. This part describes how to write a communication plan, what to take into consideration to make from the document a supportive tool for managers in each situation that they can tackle during their professional life.

The complexity and systematics of the communication process means that does not matter what issue PA managers need to communicate – if small issue or big campaign, they always can take the communication plan of the organization which helps him/her to be oriented in the communication process of the organization and helps him/her to undertake correct steps (to imply appropriate techniques, to choose proper channels etc.) on the way to a long-term understanding with stakeholders.

6.2. Structure/logic of the communication plan

The followed structure is one of possible option; the structure can vary according to the specific conditions of the organization. The structure reflects logics of communication process described in detail in previous Part 5. Risk and assumptions.

The communication plan should be helpful on the one hand in providing general information regarding organization and communication aspects which can be adopted to different communication situations and on the other hand the communication plan should provide information and instructions for creation of tailor-made solutions on very specific communication situations, mostly resulted in a communication action plan. Therefore it makes sense to split communication plan of an organization into two sections:

Section I. - provides information related to the organization and communication in general

Section II. -provides specific action plans.

Section 1. General part of the communication plan

The first section of the Communication plan creates basic source of knowledge for further planning of communication actions. It composes more general information related to your organizations or discusses communication aspects which might be relevant for your organization.

I.1. Background, mission, vision, objectives of the organization

To be clear with the background, mission, vision and objectives of the organization is very helpful because even if you will communicate some small action (e.g. mowing of the meadow) at very concrete place you always need to be sure about the 'higher aims' to be able to justify your action for stakeholders who can think that this particular action has no sense.

! Worth remembering

Please keep in mind background, mission, vision and objectives of the organization that this can be very useful and will help you organize your arguments and provide more complex justification of partial actions.

For defining the overall mission, vision, identity of your organization, i.e. overarching background take into consideration Statutory Code, or paragraph in the respective law e.g. to protect Natura2000 habitats, or prevent the spread of invasive species etc.

If the organization does not have formulated objectives, you can do it in reflection to the overall mission and vision e.g. motivate foresters not to make clear-cuts, or educate local people not to seed invasive plants into their gardens).

I.2. Target groups

It makes sense to make a database of your stakeholders with contact and update the database on a regular basis.

Be careful that good knowledge of the target group is crucial for selection of appropriate communication techniques and channels.

Tips

When thinking about your target groups you can:
- ✓ Differentiate your stakeholders according sector
- ✓ Make a hierarchy according to the importance
- ✓ Define a leading person of the stakeholders group
- ✓ Define an 'opinion maker' (not necessarily the boss of the stakeholder organization).

For further information see Part 1. Who should be involved?

I.3. Obstacle and emergencies

In this part you can define and/or analyse various obstacles and emergencies that the organization has been facing in the past or identify new potential conflicts that might have impact on overall development, or influence the management of the PA.

Obstacles can be based on objective basis (e.g. legal imperfections) or in contrary can originate from very personal subjective conflicts (e.g. between the key hunter association and PA managers from miscommunication regarding the large carnivores importance).

When preparing the communication plan for particular actions you should always check this part for avoiding or mitigating conflicts. It can help e.g. in decision if the presence of a mediator at some meetings would be helpful.
For further information see Part 5. Risk and assumptions.

I.4. Communication techniques

Here you can list communication techniques which are relevant for your organization in respect to organization experience, organizational external and internal environment, target groups etc.

This part can also be a set of tips and recommendations for your PA managers how to improve their communication skills.

For further information see Part3. How to communicate? Basics of the communication.

I.5. Communication channels

Here you can list communication channels/media which are relevant for your organization in respect to organization experience, target groups etc. It is recommended to create simple matrix on relevance of particular channel in respect of a desired outreach to the target group. It makes sense to keep overview on prices of different communication channels. Finally it help you to prepare an efficient mix of communication channels.

For further information see Part 4. How to bring the message to stakeholders.

Section II. Action plan of the communication plan

Action plan represents a 'task related' programme taking into consideration specific concrete conditions of the 'project' i.e. what is the message we need to communicate, who is our target group (concrete organizations/persons), what are risks of the action and how to eliminate them, available personal and financial resources and available time scope. After having analysed all these aspects you can create a communication channel mix and start with the implementation of the communication plan. Last but not least, do not forget to monitor your job and check benchmarks and to take care of the feedback which can help you permanently to improve your communication activities.

II.1. Communication message

Identify the purpose of your communication – plan and design your message - find tips in Part 5. What to communicate? Key messages.

II.2. Target audience

Identify your specific target audience for the communication action. Before contacting stakeholders personally, check carefully your stakeholders database in respect of correctness of information from available sources, however do not forget to respect the GDPR rules.

II.3. Resources

Analyse capacities dedicated to the particular communication action. How much from the organization staff can be assigned to the task, what personal and expert skills are expected from the staff. The analysis of available financial funds needs a support from the economic department and also searching for synergies with other internal or external communication actions is often very efficient.

Correct analysis of personal capacities and funds can lead to decision of hiring external experts.

Personal contacts with media helps to create long-term relations with media.

Make a plan for training of staff in communication.

II.4. Timetable

Prepare feasible time schedule in respect to communicated message, available resources and overall interlinked partial organization tasks.

Split tasks into smaller intermediate benchmarks to keep control of the action, motivation of the staff and 'small success' arguments.

II.5. Risks

First check the Section I. General part of the Communication plan if any of general 'obstacles and emergencies' relate to your communication action. Do not underestimate any sign of potential conflicts. Gather as much information as possible to be able to eliminate problems. Agree with your team on scenario how to handle risks. Identify from your previous experience problematic people and e.g. include some additional 'lobbying' activity into your plan.

II.6. Communication channels

Based on message and analysis of target groups, resources and risks you can create communication channels mix.

Strategize how you will connect with the media and others who can help you spread your message.

II.7. Monitoring

Set up monitoring indicators (quantitative, qualitative) and check benchmarks achievements in terms of quality, quantity and deadlines. Be consequent in getting fair feedbacks and adapt your actions accordingly.
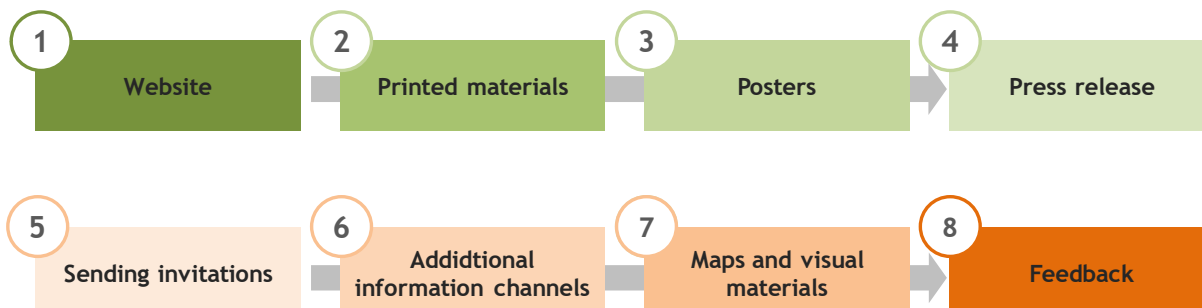
Example box

Communication action plan NP 'Carpathians' 2021					
Message	The area of the protection zone of the national park will be increased by 10% (from 35% to 45%) to 2022				
Target audience	Local authorities, forest companies (see internal stakeholder list, category 'LA - local authorities' and 'FC – forest companies'				
Channels	**Action**	**Responsible**	**Target value**	**Costs (EUR/year)**	**Deadline**
Website information	Ongoing information on values of the NP	Jana S.	12 contributions	200 EUR– labour costs internal	1 per month
Printed materials	Postcards with flagship species	Jana S., c Pavel B.	Set of 12 postcards, in total 1 200 pcs	50 EUR labour costs internal, 500 EUR design and print external cost	May 2021
Printed materials	Leaflets with information on planned process	Peter K.,	3 000 pcs	100 EUR labour costs internal, 500 EUR design and print external costs	April 2021
Posters	Big format poster transportable	Jana S.	2 pcs	100 EUR labour costs internal, 100 EUR print	April 2021
Press release	Information on purpose and planned process	Jana S.	5 media	50 EUR labour costs internal	February 2021
Personal meetings	Individual meetings with local stakeholders according to the stakeholder list	Director of the NP, 3 expert employees (zoologist, botanists, forester)	10 LA 3 FC	1000 EUR labour costs internal	June – October 2021
Public meetings	Meeting for target audience – presentation of plans	Director of the NP, 3 expert employees (zoologist, botanists, forester)	1 event	400 EUR labour costs internal, 1 000 EUR external mediator	November 2021

6.3. Planning of the use of communication channels

To be in touch with local community constantly or if you want to communicate or promote an event whether launching a process you should consider to take next 8 steps:

1 Website	2 Printed materials	3 Posters	4 Press release

5 Sending invitations	6 Addidtional information channels	7 Maps and visual materials	8 Feedback

Step 1. Provide a website

It is a key place where all information about the PA - biological resources and human role is located. There is also all information regarding meetings and activities carried out in this area and about consultations.

There should be a contact on the website to the responsible person (PA manager) who can answer the questions. All research and analysis results, meeting invitations and reports from previous meetings should appear on an ongoing basis.

Tips

It is possible to publish information about launching a process or invite for a meeting in section 'news' or prepare special bookmark on the website.

Step 2. Consider using printed materials

Brochures and periodicals containing important information about the area should be distributed at solemn meetings, dance parties, organized bicycle rallies, field visits, festivals and other local events. It is important that printed materials containing promotional information about the area or about a planned event or process reach people without access to internet or its hardly users. In printed materials it is worth providing a contact to the person who could answer all questions and clarify doubts.

Interreg
CENTRAL EUROPE
European Union
European Regional
Development Fund
Centralparks

> **Tips**
>
> Printed materials distributed at schools and kindergartens are the way to reach young audiences, but also their parents or even grandparents.

Step3. **Use posters**

Without forgetting who the recipient of the poster is, you should formulate a simple and specific message, and the placement of information on the poster should remain legible. Avoid difficult words and long sentences, at the same time indicate the place where the recipient of information can read more, giving the website address. Posters should be hung in popular places and necessarily in a PA and in its vicinity. Posters can be displayed during local events, on information boards, in offices and institutions.

> **Tips**
>
> Poster can be A4 piece of paper printed at your office – it is not necessary to involve professional graphic designer but it is nice to make it colorful.

Step 4. **Prepare press release**

It is important to prepare clear and legible press releases and send them to local media and information portals. The subject of press information may be permanent information about the value of the PA, the results of analyzes, studies, meetings with residents and representatives of local organizations and authorities, public consultations and subsequent stages as well as about curiosities and events.

> **Tips**
>
> It is a good practice to invite journalists to meetings and events related to the consultation process with the local community, especially at the initial and final stages.

Step 5. **Send invitations**

All potentially interested institutions, organizations and local associations, informal groups of residents, councils, representatives of local authorities, councilors and officials are worth inviting to discussions, events and meetings. Creating a map of stakeholders (see Part 1.) will help to identify all groups. It is worth sending invitations to specified recipients directly by e-mail and traditional mail.

Tips

It is worth reinforcing the email or traditional invitation by phone. You can also send an SMS reminding about the event.

Step 6. **Strengthen by additional promotion and information channels**

Communication and promotion channels are described in Part3. It is worth recognizing, identifying and using the many forms available, remembering to adapt them to the specifics of the local community and specific audience.

You can use the favour of priests in parishes, try promotional activities directly in rural and urban space, or buy advertising locally on TV, radio or the press. It is worth getting involved in the process of informing senior councils, youth councils of village housewives, hunting clubs, etc., local organizations and informal groups. It is important to remember about different forms of promotion and information, especially when the group of recipients is diverse.

Tips

It is worth using the potential of the internet by posting information on social media and online forum.

Step 7. **Don't forget about maps and visual materials**

The most important in communication is readability and the ability to understand the information provided. The most difficult issues may be poorly accepted by the local community due to misunderstanding of the message, as a result of illegible information and incomprehensible presentation. Maps, plans and other materials should ensure

readability and comfort of work. The displayed power point or so presentations should be legible and not overloaded with content, and the maps placed in them should be simplified and easy to read.

Tips

When using maps, it is worth using clear symbols and marking landmarks known to residents.

Step 8.

Take care of feedback

In communication, we also include feedback from people receiving messages. It is worth appointing a person (indicated on the above-mentioned website) who will answer questions on a regular basis or direct them to appropriate places where an answer can be obtained (e.g. website address, report, study, contact the appropriate official or expert, the next meeting open, research walk, etc.).

It is important to adopt the principle of **being open** to residents and **being present** in the area. Presence by providing permanent information about the PA, including in consultation or educational processes, such as conducting lessons and nature workshops, will be good practice. Being open to questions and doubts, explaining individual information or processes on a regular basis makes it easier to prevent conflict in the area.

Information on the results of these activities plays an equally important role as information about launch. Stakeholders involved in the process must be able to **familiarize themselves with the results of each stage** of the activities carried out and the results of the overall process, summarized e.g. in the form of a report after protective activities or public consultations. It is also worth presenting the **results of joint work** (workshops, field visits), especially if this work concerned important issues that arouse particular public interest. You can also organize an exhibition presenting the results of ongoing activities or consultations in the area to summarize and end the process.

Part 7. Evaluation: indicators of achievement

7.1. Introduction

Evaluation is not only formal process of audience-focused communication, but is about improving the work we do.

Evaluation of the communication is very important step. It is focused on the results, outcomes and impacts of communication (e.g. consequences or changes of target group). Mostly evaluation is undertaken at the end of the whole process (after preparation, updating and implementation) by external evaluator. However continuous monitoring of feedback is critical for effectiveness of used approaches.

Evaluation has several purposes. First of all, it helps to justify communication efforts for the organisation and stakeholders. Secondly, it can be used to learn which methods are most effective and most efficient for future application. Thirdly, by evaluation we can learn how to organise and manage the communication process more effectively in the future. And finally, we can define future steps after considering the results achieved.

Here we introduce several basic steps in evaluation process that will help you get insight from your audience for better decision-making. For in-depth information follow the recommended literature.

7.2. Define your goals

Goals are typically long term – once you clearly define the goal of your communication initiative, it will help you determine your evaluation approach.

The question we should ask for any communication evaluation: what support for our goals do we expect to gain from the communication effort, and how can we recognize whether we are making progress? Such goals may include e.g. raising awareness, public/ municipalities will, social norms etc.

7.3. State your objective

To be able later evaluate gains in knowledge, attitudes or practices we need include this assessment in the beginning of the communication planning (appropriate communication indicators must be identified and the communication objectives formulated). Objectives are more specific and have typically shorter time range than goals. Few intermediate objectives will progressively lead to your goal. If communication´s objectives are clear and quantified, then it is easier to measure them and assess the result. In most cases, communication is about changing people´s level of awareness, knowledge, understanding and attitudes to conservation. So rather than evaluating outputs (products – e.g. number of printed leaflets), it is preferable to express outcome of the communication (indicators measuring the progress towards impact). Objectives of the evaluation can be expressed in quantitative (results in numbers), qualitative way or combination of both.

> ### 💬 Worth remembering
>
> **Is my Objective SMART?**
>
> A good objective should be SMART:
>
> - ✓ **S**pecific (simple, significant)
> - ✓ **M**easurable (meaningful, motivating)
> - ✓ **A**chievable (agreed, attainable)
> - ✓ **R**elevant (result-focused, reasonable, realistic)
> - ✓ **T**ime-specific.
>
> Every time coming up with new objective ask yourself:
>
> 'Does this fulfil at least four of the five SMART criteria?'.
>
> **No?** Maybe it is time to revise your objective.

7.4. Identify your audience

Which audience you should include in the evaluation will depend on your goal and objectives - for overview of target audiences see Part 1. Be as much specific as you can when identifying your audience, your evaluation will be more effective. Targeting the audience will also help you with selecting appropriate communication channels and tools (see Part 4.). With the growth of social media, influencers are more powerful than institutions or editorial media can be in passing the information. Discover social norms and relevant behaviours among your target audience.

7.5. Formulate your evaluation questions

Try to pick questions whose answers will help you recognize whether you are on the right track in achieving your objective and long-term goal. Be concise, more questions you ask, more effort you have to put to your evaluation. Some answers, e.g. controversial, can be more difficult to obtain than others. This can be addressed for instance by anonymous online survey or by assuring the respondents that their answers will be confidential. To get the feedback to your question, you probably will need to use different sources of information or using various evaluation techniques.

7.6. Metrics and Indicators

Both quantitative and qualitative performance and evaluation research indicators can be used to evaluate the communication activities. Data collection for communication evaluation metrics mostly should be 'in real time'. Once an activity has already been implemented it is too late to collect data to feed indicators.

Most communication activities can be measured using a range of indicators. You should always chose the indicators what is right for your activity.

Here are some examples of indicators:

Channels	Indicator
APPs	✓ Number of downloads on iTunes store/google play/windows phone store, and ratings of application
Web platform	✓ Website views ✓ Number of users and their profile of the web platform ✓ The number watching any videos or embedded content on your site
Events	✓ Number of stakeholders participating in collating, disseminating and receiving information (via newsletters, twitter and other means ✓ The number of people attending the event ✓ No. or percentage of participants providing feedback/engaged in dialogue
Social media	✓ Number of posts, re-posts ✓ Number of followers, number of tweets, re-tweet reach, 'likes' /favourites per item, comments per item
Scientific publication	✓ Number of scientific publications produced ✓ Number of conference presentations
Policy briefs	✓ Number of policy briefs developed
Campaign	✓ The number of people actually reached by a campaign ✓ The number of Facebook users who 'liked' the campaign ✓ The number of times the target audience has an opportunity to see the campaign

7.7. Select your evaluation techniques

There are many tools to evaluate the process and impact of communication. Depending on objectives (data collection, program quality, participant reaction, media impact, quality of material) we can use attendance lists, observation, comment cards, visits, readability etc. According our needs and financial/time/personnel possibilities, we can use:

✓ **thorough** - e.g. instance, telephone interviews of a large sample of the target groups to determine if the message has been detected, understood and effective, focus group

✓ **simple evaluation**- e.g. interviewing a few opinion leaders and key persons about their perception of communication efforts and the way the communication was organised.

Spectrum of evaluation methods is broad and should be matching with outcomes (e.g. for media coverage we are using media tracking and issue trend analysis, for behaviour change public or target-audience polling before, during and after communication).

Assessing the effectiveness of communication effects is complicated because communication is not an isolated event and it is hard to attribute an effect from the communication. Most target groups are influenced constantly with messages from a large number of senders. A well-known saying of marketer John Wanamaker is: *Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is, I don't know which half*.

Frequently made mistakes in communication planning is absent performance indicators and no time or budget for evaluation. So proper evaluation indicators should be defined when communication objectives are set. Evaluation must be accommodated as part of the normal project activities with a separate budget and adequate time. Without well planned evaluation there can be no real feedback and learning from experiences.

> ## ⧉ Worth remembering
>
> Last but not least, **communicate your findings!** You are encouraged to share what you have learned with others. To report evaluation results to partners you can consider using webinar form. Inspire your partners to reflect on this information.

CHAPTER 4. RESOURCES – RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

Part 1.

1. Alexander, M., (2008) Management Planning for Nature Conservation – A Theoretical Basis and Practical Guide.

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Authors notes

Ján Kadlečík

Background	Biologist, coordinator for international treaties, focal point for the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (member of the CNPA Steering Committee) for Slovakia, coordinator of the Carpathian Wetland Initiative, former specialist and director of VeľkáFatra National Park Administration, former Director General of Division of Nature and Landscape Protection of the Slovak Ministry of Environment.
Place of work	State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic in Banská Bystrica (SK), Department for International Cooperation.
What he loves in Carpathians	It is history already… Working 20 years with motivated and enthusiastic Carpathian experts and exploring new beautiful and hidden sites in the mountains is always inspirational.

Adam Matyáš

Background	Ecologist focusing his research on the biodiversity monitoring using new technologies and having skills in communication in conservation campaign.
Place of work	Faculty of Logistics and Crisis Management, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Czech Republic.
What he loves in Carpathians	Peace, beautiful landscape and unique atmosphere.

Zbigniew Niewiadomski

Background	Economist, working on transnational cooperation in the Carpathians (since 1992) and on the development and implementation of the Carpathian Convention (since 1999), with the focus on nature conservation, sustainable tourism, and cultural heritage.
	United Nations expert on biodiversity conservation, protected areas, and transboundary cooperation, working mostly in Europe and Central Asia; founder of several NGOs.

Work experience includes national park management (15 years), public service in Lutowiska Community Council(PL) and in the UNESCO International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves.

Place of work	Ekopsychology Association (Centralparks PP4 - WPT1 leader).
What he loves in Carpathians	Dark starry nights, wolves howling and red deer roaring around the house.

MonikaOchwat-Marcinkiewicz

Background	Psychologist, working on public participation and social communication. Coordinator and trainer.
	Implemented 24 projects in Carpathian (focused on tourism, biodiversity, education, social communication, public participation). Originator and coordinator of the Coalition for the implementation of the Carpathian Convention in Poland - the Carpathian Agreement 'Karpaty Naszym Domem' associating over 70 institutions.
Place of work	Ekopsychology Association (Centralparks PP4 - WPT1 leader), Social Cooperative 'Serce Pogórza', Poland.
What she loves in Carpathians	Carpathian People, landscape, contact with nature, the necessity to cooperate for the common good, uncompromising attitude, lack of mediocrity.

Zuzana Okániková

Background	Graduated in international business, fascinatedby nature, always wondering how both the economy and ecology interact and influence each other and the society.
	Founder of the PRONATUR NGO aiming at the support of nature conservation and sustainable tourism development. Trying to find a positive way of making things work and people to cooperate with a credo 'Let's not lose a big friendship for a small misunderstanding'.
Place of work	NGO Pronatur, BanskáBystrica, Slovakia.
What she loves in Carpathians	What I like about the Carpathians (in Slovakia) - evening golden hours in the mountains and morning smell of mushrooms in the foggy forests.

Małgorzata Ratajczyk-Dobrowolska

Background

Graduated in pedagogic, psychology and mediation.

Mediator for 15 years. Interested in solving difficulties through dialogue. Passionate about solving many-sided conflicts in nature protection.

Place of work

Foundation of Good Dialogue, mediator in Social Welfare Center in Warsaw, Poland.

What she loves in Carpathians

Loves autumn when the leaves are full of colour.

Borbála Szabó-Major

Background

Nature conservationist, project manager working on species conservation, nature conservation management planning, and international cooperation. Former contributor of the CEEweb for Biodiversity Natura 2000 working group.

Place of work

Danube-Ipoly National Park Directorate, Hungary.

What she loves in Carpathians

Juraj Švajda

Background

Ecologist and university assistant focusing on protected species and areas management, the impact of tourism, the human dimension of natural resources management and ecosystem services.

Place of work

NGO Pronatur + Faculty of Natural Sciences, Matej Bel University, BanskáBystrica, Slovakia.

What he loves in Carpathians

It is one of the wildest and least known parts of Europe.

Florea Trifoi

Background

Forester, solid experience in assessing, promoting, implementing of Natural Parks in Romania based in directing projects financed by the World Bank and dealing with Natural Parks developing, solid knowledge and experience in forest conservation, forest certification and forest policy.

Knowledge of the forest sector and nature conservation situation in South-Eastern Europe, in the last 5 years work in the region. Solid knowledge and expertise in training, procurement, consultation projects development and project management.

Place of work

Retezat National Park, Romania.

What he loves in Carpathians

Appendix 1. Tool for identifying stakeholder potential

	Needs/ beliefs/ attitudes/ influences/ behaviours	Audience considerations	Potential delivery\ channel	Role
Government or public sector				
Members of Parliament				
Government				
Ministers, Vice-Ministers and Directors of Ministries (various sectors)				
Governmental agencies				
Members of Advisory Councils for each PA				
Regional governments				
Municipal Presidents				
Forestry sector representatives				
Regional development agencies				
Local neighbouring communities and cities				
Local public agencies/ services				
Decision makers in local government				
Civil society				
Staff members of NGOs				
Leaders of opinion				
Social groups				
Media, journalists				
NGOs involved in social issues (not only environmental)				
University and High-school students				

	Needs/ beliefs/ attitudes/ influences/ behaviours	Audience considerations	Potential delivery\ channel	Role
Researchers				
Churches				
Local radio and newspaper journalists				
Research institutions				
Local forums				
Local business associations				
Local community organisations				
Staff members of institutions related to the PAs				
Private sector				
Land users or property owners				
Business leaders				
Tourism providers				
Travel agencies				
Transport operators/providers				
Tourist sector representatives				
International/national business				
Regional/ local business				
Investors				
Training institutions				
Utility services (e.g. electricity, telecom)				
Agriculture sector representatives				
Engineers/contractors				
Consultants				
Experts				

	Needs/ beliefs/ attitudes/ influences/ behaviours	Audience considerations	Potential delivery\ channel	Role
Spatial planners				
Transport planners				
General Public				
Youth groups				
National and international PA visitors				
Community leaders (elders, formal and informal authorities, religious and traditional leaders, social grassroots organizations, business leaders, etc.)				
School children				
Teachers				
Communities living in and around PAs				
Urban neighbouring population (University students, social groups, business leaders, media class)				
Media experts from other regions				
Local authorities				
Local inhabitants				

Appendix 2. Guide to Common Stakeholder Participation Techniques

Method	Advantages	Limitations
Advisory group/ task force	- provides for interaction between agency and full spectrum of community opinion - creates forum for interaction between groups themselves - good forum for creating consensus - group member become knowledgeable and make informed recommendation	- selections for group members must be credible to public - group activity must be linked to real decisions - requires much staff time and support - public does not automatically accept group recommendation as representative of larger public - disputes over group's mandate can develop
Charrette	- solves problem or create product within specific time frame - public typically has visuals alternatives on which to provide input - repetitive exercises during course of charrette help to build consensus	- requires a great deal of planning - requires a highly skilled and unbiased design team - time commitment calls for highly motivated and interested participants
Field trip	- often allows for personal interaction and team-building - helps participants gain better understanding of resources and issues	- size of participant group is typically limited - may be difficult to systematically collect participant input
Focus group	- helpful in assessing emotional and other qualitative factors - cheaper and yields greater depth data than surveys	- no claims can be made about statistical accuracy - public may have false perceptions about how focus group data are used - cannot substitute for more visible forms of participation
Hotline	- ensures that callers reach a knowledgeable person and get good information - can be used for coordination purposes	- effectiveness depends on person answering phone - staff must be thoroughly prepared to provide information quickly
Internet	- allows widespread access to resources on issues - allows for participation from geographically broad audience	- not everyone has access to the Internet - training may be required to use some technologies - technology may be unreliable - technology is still developing

Method	Advantages	Limitations
Interview	• can provide more in-depth information than any other method • people provide more information in private than they will in public	• time-consuming • the number of interviews possible is usually limited by time • skilled interviewers are required • interview responses are not visible to the rest of the public
Large group/ small group meeting	• provides interaction despite large group size • participants can solve problems or complete tasks • produces greater enthusiasm than other large meetings	• group may resist breaking into smaller groups • logistics of smaller groups can be cumbersome • organized groups may dominate some small groups
Open house	• allows on-on-one interaction between stakeholder and agency • can be designed so that participants can provide written comments • event design is highly flexible and can be made formal or informal	• participants may not hear the views and opinions of others • may be difficult to systematically collect participant input • does not give stakeholder groups and audience to address
Poll or survey	• helps to assess opinions do broader public • results can be described and presented quantitatively	• requires trained staff to conduct process • faulty methods can yield misleading results • only provides results for a particular moment in time – results may change in near future • potentially high costs
Public hearing	• all participants can have their comments recorded verbatim • highly transparent; all participants can hear what others say	• may result in speeches rather than discussion of issues • does not provide for interaction • can be manipulated or controlled by organized groups
Public meeting	• can be less formal than a public hearing • participants can have their comments recorded (usually not verbatim) • typically more interactive than public hearing • highly transparent; all participants can hear what others say	• may result in speeches rather than discussion of issues • may contribute to polarization of parties • can be manipulated or controlled by organized groups
Referendum	• widely accepted as legitimate expression of public sentiment • allows for inclusion of all stakeholders	• voter may be swayed by emotional appeals • may not be legally binding in some communities until changes in law are made
Retreat	• useful in building relationship between individuals • could help break impasse	• potentially expensive • participants must have significant time to commit

Method	Advantages	Limitations
	▪ effective for consensus-building	▪ public may criticize use of taxpayer funds for a retreat
Town meeting	▪ greater interaction and less formality than public hearing ▪ provides for much interaction	▪ may contribute to exaggerated or fixed positions ▪ may not provide venue for problem solving
Workshop	▪ effective for problem solving or completing a task ▪ highly interactive ▪ useful for producing agreement	▪ limits number of participants that can be involved ▪ those with fixed positions may resent workshop process

Source: Creighton James L., The Public Participation Handbook: Making Better Decision trough Citizen Involvement. Jossey-Bass., San Francisco, CA., 2005.