



Protected Areas and Sustainable Rural Development

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ANP 2006:711

© Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen 2005

ISBN 92-893-1288-2

This publication can be ordered on www.norden.org/order. Other Nordic publications are available at www.norden.org/publications

Printed in Denmark

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Preface

In Europe, many rural regions still include areas that evolved as a result of low intensity farming and grazing. Due to the abandonment of agricultural land many of these areas now face an increasing risk of landscape deterioration and loss of biodiversity. The future funding provisions of the agriculture and rural development programmes of the European Union will have a considerable impact on the development of rural areas, of which some today constitute a part of the Natura 2000 network. Recently, the role of protected areas and the potential of these areas to contribute to the wellbeing of rural communities have been highlighted. For instance, the possibility of allocating EU funds to the management of Natura 2000 sites has been on the agenda for some time.

Tourism is often seen as a major opportunity for economic growth in rural areas. Protected areas usually include a wide array of natural and cultural assets, and many of these areas have also been utilised for tourism activities. However, there is a need to further explore tools that could be used in order to ensure that these activities are sustainable.

All of the Nordic and Baltic countries have extensive systems of protected areas. National parks are the backbones of these systems. In the Nordic countries, national parks have often been established in areas with limited influence by man, whereas the national parks of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania often are characterised by a long history of land use. There is a need to provide authorities and other key stakeholders with an insight into and better understanding of how local communities can benefit from protected areas, and also help to find means to promote the sustainable development of rural areas.

On September 7-9, 2005, a seminar was organised in Lahemaa National Park, Estonia. The seminar focused on two main themes; it introduced the participants to the recent development within the European Union with regard to the new funding period (2007-2013), and it provided a forum to discuss how protected areas can contribute to the development of rural areas, including the promotion of sustainable tourism and local products. The seminar gathered 30 participants from 10 European countries.

Summary

An international seminar focusing on the theme Protected Areas and Sustainable Rural Development was arranged in Lahemaa National Park, Estonia, in September 2005. The seminar was attended by representatives of protected area administrations, ministries for agriculture, regional development agencies as well as NGOs. In total, the seminar gathered 30 participants from 10 European countries. The seminar was arranged within the framework of a Nordic-Baltic network of protected area managers – the EUROPARC Nordic-Baltic Section. One of the primary aims was to inform the participants of the ongoing programming processes as regards the next funding period of the EU and specifically the foreseen provisions of the Rural Development Funds and its implications for protected areas. The seminar also provided the participants a forum for discussions and exchange of experience about the potential of protected areas in promoting rural development.

The seminar recommended protected area administrations to involve actively in the national programming processes of the future use of EU Rural Development Funds. In addition, the participants were reminded about the need for further exchange of information and experiences related to the role of protected areas in developing rural communities.

1. Introduction

The seminar *Protected Areas and Sustainable Rural Development; parks, people and products* was arranged in Lahemaa National Park, Estonia, on September 7-9, 2005. Funding was provided by the Nordic Council of Ministers and its Working Group for Environment, Agriculture and Forestry (MJS). The seminar gathered 30 participants from all the Nordic countries and Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany and Belgium.

The event was prepared and carried out within the framework of a Nordic-Baltic network for protected area managers established in 2003 (www.metsa.fi/europarc). During the last two years, the network has arranged open-ended workshops and seminars related to its mid-term work programme. Sustainable rural development is one of the topics given priority by the network. In addition to protected area managers, the seminar was attended by representatives of ministries for agriculture, regional development organisations as well as NGOs.

The seminar report provides a summary of the event (chapter 2), summaries of the presentations (chapter 3), and some conclusions including recommendations for further activities. The seminar programme and list of participants are attached as appendices.

2. The seminar

The seminar was held in Palmse at the Visitor Centre of Lahemaa National Park. A field trip to the national park and its surroundings was included in the programme. The first day of the seminar focused on a discussion about the EU funds foreseen in the period 2007-2013, as well as presentations of a couple of projects dealing with protected areas and rural development. Promotion of sustainable tourism in protected areas was the main theme of the second day.

Thursday September 8

Welcome words by Teet Koitjärv (Lahemaa National park) and Rauno Väisänen (Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus, Finland).

Mr. Koitjärv opened the seminar by welcoming all the participants to Lahemaa National Park, and pointed out the importance of the topic of this seminar to protected area managers working in different parts of Europe. He also stressed that the seminar gives a good chance to change views between different regions and stakeholders.

In his welcome speech, Mr. Väisänen mentioned that the topic of the seminar is quite new as regards protected areas in northern countries, which is opposite to the situation in southern countries. He also stressed that more intense cooperation is needed with local actors. As the EU is about to make new decisions about the next funding period 2007-2013, the timing of the seminar is good. There is a lot that can be done with the help of the EU and the seminar is a good forum to present new ideas and have discussions on how to promote a sustainable rural development.

The EU perspective; proposed regulations with regard to rural development and protected areas. Thomas Nielsen (WWF European Policy Office, Brussels)

Mr. Nielsen informed that WWF is working for people and nature and is active in more than 100 countries worldwide. The European Policy Office in Brussels is working with issues such as agriculture and rural development, toxics, freshwater, biodiversity, international development and neighbourhood policy.

With regard to the question of how protected areas can contribute to rural development, Mr. Nielsen presented the three main EU funding lines as foreseen in the next funding period 2007-2013;1) The Rural De-

velopment Funds 2) The Structural Funds 3) LIFE+ (funding for the environment). These funding lines are focused on EU priorities and complementing each other. More specifically, the Rural Development Funds regulation is based on 4 axes:

Axis 1: Improving competitiveness of farming and forestry

Axis 2: Environment and countryside

Axis 3: Improving quality of life and diversification of the rural economy

Axis 4: The LEADER approach; cooperation with local actors

The Rural Development Programmes are partly funded by EU funds and partly by national/regional funds (approx. 50%). The Rural Development Funds have great potential to integrate environment, competitiveness and diversification of the rural economy; from 25% up to 75% of the budget can be used for the axis 2 and even higher amounts by integrating the different axes of regulation. Mr. Nielsen pointed out that a lot depends on the overall funds allocated in the EU funds and also on good applications from the member states, as well as the national programming of the rural development funds.

Mr. Nielsen further informed that the biggest single funding line is the Structural Funds, which also finances “environment and risk prevention”, mainly in the least-developed regions. LIFE+ is the financial instrument for the environment and it will focus on for instance better implementation, biodiversity and nature, and communication.

All of the 3 funding lines and regulations are currently being decided on and the programming period is 2007-2013. National Regional Development Programmes should be finalised by autumn 2006.

WWF has recently published two manuals on funding and the environment. These are available at the website of WWF (www.panda.org/epo). The manual “EU Funding for Environment” (Rural, Structural and Fisheries Funds) also contains some examples of good practice. The manual “Rural Development Environmental Programming Guidelines” will be available by mid-October.

Comments from the Nordic and Baltic countries. Kirsten Nielsen (Outdoor Council, Denmark) and Matti Määttä (Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus, Finland)

Ms. Nielsen introduced a pilot project in Denmark, in which the aim is to create a model for Danish national parks. Seven areas have been pointed out by the project. The aim of the project is to create National Parks that have elements of nature, but also elements of culture and local people using the area for tourism.

Ms. Nielsen informed that the Ministry of Environment is supporting the pilot project. She also stressed the importance of cooperation with

different organizations to get ideas about how to establish national parks in Denmark. Through this pilot project there is a wish to create better possibilities for recreation and also for business, farming and rural lifestyle.

Mr. Määttä gave an overview of the Finnish conservation programmes. He informed that the LIFE programme has been most important in Finland as regards EU funding of protected areas and specifically the management of these areas. Also normal budget funds can be used as co-funding in LIFE-projects. INTERREG funds have also been helpful in developing cross-border cooperation with Russia. With the help of TACIS-projects, INTERREG funds have had a big importance for instance in developing the Fennoscandian Green Belt.

Mr. Määttä further informed that funding has mainly been directed to wilderness areas and that the role of protected areas in promoting rural development only recently has been recognised. Mr. Määttä stressed that it is very important to know how to apply for funds and to be innovative in the application process. You also need to be successful in the projects in order to get funding in the future. In Mr. Määttä's opinion the Finnish projects have in general been successful.

The topic of EU funding raised some discussion about the national/regional money that is needed as a part of the total budget. Getting the national funds may be problematic in many areas. Mr. Thomas Nielsen was asked what is most problematic in his point of view. Mr. Nielsen replied that more money from the market oriented budget lines should be directed to the Rural Development Funds, since the money is best spent in this process.

INTERREG IIIB project: BIRD – Wetlands, nature reserves and cultural landscapes for rural development. Jan Lundegren (County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland, Sweden)

Mr. Lundegren gave an overview of the INTERREG project which takes place in the Baltic Sea Region and involves six countries (Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden) and altogether 35 partners (municipalities, universities, environment managers etc.) from these countries.

Mr. Lundegren informed that the problem in the project area is that the rural way of life is declining. As a consequence also the service and for example education possibilities are reduced in rural areas, as well as investments and maintenance of infrastructure. The main aims of the project pointed out by Mr. Lundegren are increased rural employment and promotion of ecotourism, and improved cross-sectorial cooperation and management of protected areas.

There are four work packages in the project: 1) Management, 2) Spatial planning with a cross-sectorial approach, 3) Accessibility, informati-

on and marketing, 4) Education. The project produces several visible results, such as bird towers, information points, walking paths, bird hides and information literature. Also a Wetland Information Centre will be designed and a Virtual Tourist Office developed. Besides the visible results, Mr. Lundegren stressed the importance of the invisible outcomes of the project which include for instance valuable experiences of transnational and cross-sectorial cooperation.

Case Siikalahti bird area, FIN. Matti Määttä (Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus, Finland)

As a part of the BIRD project Mr. Määttä introduced the Case Siikalahti bird area. The project area includes many protection areas in Eastern Finland. The actions that take place in the project include for example management planning and restoration. Closely related to all of the actions is improving the cooperation in the project area.

Mr. Määttä informed that Siikalahti is “an agricultural product” and that the surroundings of Siikalahti are crucial for a sustainable development of the area. Further Mr. Määttä pointed out especially the cooperation with the farmers to be a key issue in sustainable use of the area.

Mr. Määttä also presented a list of different EU-projects that started from the Siikalahti LIFE-project in 2001-2003. The projects have all affected the development of the area.

INTERREG IIIB project: NEST – Northern Environment for Sustainable Tourism; case Koli National Park, FIN. Lasse Lovén (Koli National Park, Finland)

Mr. Lovén introduced the NEST-Koli project and brought up four objectives for the project:

- 1) The conservation of the bedrock – soil formations and the lake landscape
- 2) Conservation of the local heritage
- 3) Transfer the scientific Koli-information for the benefit of education and tourism
- 4) Developing the motivation of actors to conserve the basic values of Koli Resort.

Mr. Lovén further informed that there are four themes to carry out in the project in order to reach the objectives. The first theme is about networking, which includes for example open internet network and local cooperation. The second theme concentrates on park-related business and the actions include for instance workshops, monitoring customer satisfaction, models for organizing business oriented services and also an international

competition on “park products”. Mr. Lovén pointed out that there are many actors in the area that are associated to the National Park. The third theme is about quality in development, which as an important part of the theme includes social benefits gained through the process. Mr. Lovén also informed that Koli National Park is interested in applying the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. The fourth theme concentrates on environmental education; a new educational trail will be built in the park and also educational pages will be developed in internet. Mr. Lovén also pointed out the area’s rich geological history, which gives some extra values to the Koli area.

Field trip in the national park and its surroundings

In the afternoon of September 8, the participants visited a riding farm on the southern border of the park, a sheep farm in the western part of the national park, and two villages on the coast of the Baltic Sea. The aim of the field visit was to demonstrate some of the challenges rural communities are facing as regards rural development, and the possibilities protec

Friday September 9

Tourism and protected areas including the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. Richard Blackman (EUROPARC Federation, Germany).

Mr Blackman gave a short introduction to the theme Tourism and protected areas. In his presentation, Mr Blackman focused on the initiative European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas or *The European Charter* developed by EUROPARC Federation. The aim of the Charter is to promote sustainable tourism in protected areas, particularly in nature and national parks. Tourism in these areas should be both nature and landscape friendly, meet the needs of visitors and the local population, and contribute to the economic development of the region. In order to join the Charter process and receive the Charter award as recognition of successful work, each park should carry out an analysis of the current situation in all fields relating to tourism, elaborate a strategy and formulate an action plan for the forthcoming five years. Above all, the Charter is a tool for strengthening relationships and creating partnerships, and thus also promoting the sustainable development of protected areas and their surroundings.

Experiences from Lahemaa National Park: tourism and local communities. Mart Reimann (Department of Recreation Management, Tallinn University / Institute of Geography, University of Tartu, Estonia)

Mr Reimann presented a survey that was carried out in order to find out the opinions of local inhabitants towards development of tourism services in Lahemaa national park. The survey was focused on people that are active and informed about the local community and have key positions such as teachers, village elders, entrepreneurs and farmers. In total, 72 people were interviewed. According to a majority of the respondents, the number of tourists in the national park does not disturb the privacy of local people, except for some more popular visiting areas. The majority of the respondents thought that the life quality of local people would improve/improves as a result of the development of tourism. The development of tourism is hindered by financing difficulties, seasonality and the lack of appropriate training and skills. The restrictions in the National Park do not disturb the activities of the local people in general. However, the respondents were not enough informed about the activities of the Lahemaa National Park.

Syöte National Park – Experiences of and expectations on the European Charter. Teija Turunen (Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus, Syöte National Park).

Ms Teija Turunen presented some basic facts about Syöte National Park in Finland. The park was established in 2000 and covers about 30 000 hectares. The most important habitats in the area are old boreal forests and aapa mires. In addition, the cultural heritage of the park is of considerable importance. Reindeer herding is a traditional livelihood which is still practised in the park and its surroundings. In October 2004 Syöte National Park signed the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

The local society including tourism entrepreneurs feels that the Charter membership offers possibilities to get more publicity for the Syöte area. It is also experienced as an achievement to be proud of. On the other hand, questions on the real advantages of the membership have been addressed. In the future, the park authorities expect that the Charter membership will bring more national and international publicity for the area and its efforts in developing sustainable tourism. It is also expected to promote more intense cooperation with the tourism enterprises in developing new nature tourism products.

Naturpark Maribosøerne: To be or not to be sustainable? Jan Woollhead (Naturpark Maribosøerne, Denmark)

Mr Woollhead introduced the characteristics of Naturepark Maribosøerne; it comprises four lakes in the hart of the Island of Lolland in Southeastern Denmark, and was established in 1994. The area is 5 000 hectares of which one fourth is made up of lake habitats. During the migration and winter period ten thousands of ducks and geese, and many raptors stay in the area. Maribosøerne is one of the Ramsar sites of Denmark. During recent years, considerable efforts have been made in managing visitors, and several infrastructure projects have been carried out in order to secure the natural and recreational values of the area. Some minor forest areas have been closed to the public in order to safeguard the breeding site of the White-tailed Eagle. The park is considering joining the European Charter process, but external funding has to be secured for this purpose.

Kuršių Nerija National Park – European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas? (Lina Diksaite, Kuršių Nerija National Park, Lithuania)

Ms Lina Diksaite described the characteristics of Kuršių Nerija and the challenges the area is facing as regards tourism development. Kuršių Nerija was known as an important resort place already in the 19th century. The National Park was founded in 1991 and in 2000, the World Heritage Committee inscribed the Curonian spit on the World Heritage List.

The residents of the parks would like to see a further increase in tourist development of the area, while the national park administration is not in favour of such an increase. Instead, a more diversified service structure would be beneficial for the communities. In any case, the future development has to be discussed in a dialogue with the local communities.

3. Summaries of presentations

3.1. The EU perspective; proposed regulations with regards to rural development and protected areas

Thomas Nielsen, WWF European Policy Office, Brussels

The main EU funding lines for the environment in 2007-2013 are:

LIFE+	€2,1 billion
The Rural Development Funds	€88,75 billion
The Structural Funds	€336 billion

They all have dedicated amounts for the environment/sustainable development.

The *Rural Development Funds* have great potential to integrate environment / competitiveness / diversification of the rural economy. From 25%-75% can be used for the environment / land management and by integrating the different “axes” of the regulation, even higher amounts can be used for the environment/protected areas. The responsibility is at the Member State level to make rural development plans that live up to the strategic guidelines from the European Commission. This includes responsibility to live up to the Göteborg targets about sustainable development, the Kyoto Protocol, and the EU’s commitment to halt biodiversity loss by 2010.

As regards to protected areas, The Rural Development funds specifically supports:

- *Natura 2000* areas, including coverage of costs incurred and income foregone resulting from disadvantages related to the implementation of *Natura 2000* (Birds and Habitat Directives), infrastructure, information and promotion, management (management plans etc)
- Agri- and forest-environment
- *Lesser Favoured Areas* (e.g. mountain areas, remote areas, areas affected “specific handicaps”).

A major change from the earlier regulation is that forestry is now eligible for support from the RD funds.

Bottom-line is that there is a lot of potential in the Rural Development Funds to support protected areas and sustainable development, but Member States are responsible for a good implementation in the end.

LIFE+ funds are very limited compared to Rural Development and Structural Funds, but they are ear-marked for the environment. For the financing of Natura 2000, LIFE+ is likely to play a significant role and fill the gaps that Rural Development and Structural Funds are not covering. The European Parliament suggests a LIFE+ budget that is 4 times higher than the proposed budget by the Commission, in order to finance Natura 2000.

The European Council suggests that a pillar for nature and biodiversity is added to LIFE+, one of the objectives being: “to facilitate the implementation of Community nature and biodiversity policy, with a particular emphasis on implementation at local and regional level.” The Council emphasises that funding from the LIFE+ funds could be provided to:

“- the NATURA 2000 network (complementary to but not overlapping with rural development and cohesion policy instruments) such as innovative approaches to site management and planning and management costs for certain sites, including new sites or those not covered by either structural or rural development fund provisions.”

Thus complementing RD funds and Structural Funds and “filling the gaps”.

The cost of Natura 2000 is estimated to be €21 billion/year. The European Parliament proposes that it is financed equally by the Rural Development Funds, The Structural Funds and LIFE+. A solution that WWF supports.

The Structural Funds finances “environment and risk prevention”, mainly in the least-developed regions (Convergence Areas/Objective 1 areas which include all new Member States). Included is biodiversity and Natura 2000, water management, integrated resource management, management and protection of rivers, coastal zones or protected areas.

All funds support training, capacity building and networks. The rural development regulation even has a separate “LEADER”-axis, to encourage “bottom-up” management.

All the mentioned funding lines/regulations are currently being decided and the next programming period runs from 2007-2013.

As a new initiative, both the Rural Development Regulation and the Structural Funds Regulations will be accompanied by Strategic Guidelines set out by the European Commission. The Guidelines will set the EU priorities and must be followed by the Member States. Priorities for the Rural Development Funds include sustainable development (Göteborg agenda), fighting climate change (Kyoto Protocol) and halting biodiversity loss by 2010.

3.2. INTERREG IIIB project; BIRD – Wetlands, nature reserves and cultural landscapes for rural development

Jan Lundegren, County Administration Board of Västra Götaland, Sweden

Baltic Sea Region offers a broad spectrum of wetlands, nature reserves and cultural landscapes, very well suited for a growing ecotourism and a rural development.

Many attractive landscapes are situated in rural areas where the population is decreasing due to modern technologies in agriculture and forestry. An increasing ecotourism can become a base for increased employment and entrepreneurship in these rural regions. Then a professional and sustainable care of valuable landscapes will be essential to create good facilities and nice events for the visitors.

The main objective of the project BIRD is to develop good links between high landscape values on one hand and rural development on the other hand. A successful and sustainable development of ecotourism raise some fundamental questions:

- Which are the best ways of caring and managing sensitive rich landscapes?
- How do landowners, entrepreneurs, organizations, authorities and expertise cooperate in spatial planning to reach the best mutual result?
- How to increase the accessibility and how to market interesting places in order to achieve an increased focus on valuable rural areas?
- What education and information do different target groups need to turn the project recommendations and possibilities into reality?

The European Union has established an Interreg fund for regional development in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) www.bsrinterreg.net. One priority of the fund is to "Enhance good management of cultural and natural heritage, valuable landscapes and natural resources".

In 2003, contacts were established with Baltic countries and a transnational co-operation within the theme of rural development was agreed upon. The common idea for involved partners was the fact that all partners could determine high natural and cultural values in landscapes where rural development was desired. In February 2004 the following six countries decided to go for an Interreg application under the name BIRD:

- Estonia (5 partners)
- Finland (5 partners)
- Germany (1 partner)
- Latvia (2 partners)

- Lithuania (9 partners)
- Sweden (13 partners).

Altogether the partnership consists of 35 partners. The County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland, Sweden is the Lead Partner. In all partner areas there are municipalities and regions with bird rich wetlands, nature reserves and cultural surroundings very well suited for creating ecotourism and rural development.

On February 27, 2004, an application was submitted to the BSR Secretariat in Rostock, Germany. The application covered a budget of nearly 4 million Euro including all partner's national co-financing. The project will be carried out through three years from August 2004. A positive approval on the application was decided on June 4. On the 4th of October 2004 a Subsidy Contract was signed between Interreg and the Lead Partner. This was the main starting signal for the BIRD project.

Four separate Work Packages are carefully described in the project, each of them corresponding to the four crucial questions, mentioned earlier.

1. Management. Strengthen experience among managers and experts about sustainable management and maintenance of wetlands and cultural landscapes.
2. Spatial planning in a cross-sectorial approach. Promoting action oriented initiatives. Relevant vertical authorities, land owners and Non Government Organizations will be involved in the process.
3. Accessibility, information and marketing. Involvement of existing tourism infrastructure. Spreading information and promoting ecotourism and cultural tourism. Special focus on disabled.
4. Education. Education programmes produced for essential target groups, such as landowners, local entrepreneurs, schools and local population through a collaboration programme between stakeholders.

All partners have valuable experiences from different parts of the project objectives. With a transnational and cross-sectorial approach we all expect the project to be an important factor in the sustainable development of ecotourism and in rural development. The project outcome will play an important role in partner areas and is similar areas around the Baltic Sea Region.

Within the project a stable basis will be established for future international information and marketing of Baltic Sea Region rich cultural landscapes and nature resources. A Wetland Information Centre will be designed and will serve as a resource centre for future research, education and ecotourism. A Virtual Tourist Office with a broad programme of ecotourism objects and facilities will be developed and introduced to the international market.

In a more regional and local perspective many partners will have the possibility of developing managing methods, accessibility investments and local marketing by collecting trans-national experiences from joining partners in the project.

The transnational and cross-sectorial approach will be promoted in all project activities. A coordinator has been appointed for each work package. Within each work package seminars and meetings will be carried out in different partner countries. A combination of field studies and evaluation of documented experiences will be a basis for best practices in the efforts to create a sustainable rural development around different project areas. Demonstration areas and small investments within the project will be carried out to illustrate good experiences.

Three BIRD-conferences will be carried out during project period in Sweden, Estonia and Finland respectively. Please, look at BIRD project web site www.eurowetlands.org. Do not hesitate to address questions or points of view to the following country contacts.

Estonia, Kärt Leppik	kart@ctc.ee
Finland, Tiina Niikkonen	tiina.niikkonen@metsa.fi
Germany, Sönke Beckman	sbeckman@lanu.landsh.de
Latvia, Ligita Laipeniece	ligitalrp@inbox.lv
Lithuania, Argaudas Stoskus	argaudas.stoskus@gamta.lt
Sweden, Johan Jannert	johan.jannert@o.lst.se

3.3. INTERREG IIIB project; NEST – Northern Environment for Sustainable Tourism: case Koli National Park, Finland

Lasse Lovén, Koli National Park, Finland

Koli National Park together with the Koli Resort is the main nature and tourism development centre in North Karelia Region and in the municipality of Lieksa, Finland. For the future the critical issues to be solved in a development strategy are as follows:

- conservation of the bedrock - soil formations and the lake in landscape
- conservation of the local heritage in swidden agriculture and small scale handicrafts
- transfer the scientific Koli-information for the benefit of education and tourism
- to develop the motivation of actors to conserve the basic values of Koli Resort

- to assure the visitors and customers about the sustainable development of tourism in Koli Resort
- to activate the private investors to create quality oriented services for tourism customers

The NEST-projects strengthens the activities and networks of a potential new type of rural developing centres, like visitor and education centres, in or near-by the national parks and other protected areas. In details the NEST-Koli-project sets objectives to create a better environment and more sustainable cultural heritage, more jobs and more economical activities to remote rural areas with very limited development strategies until now.

In Europe as well as in other countries well studied development programs for tourism development are highly appreciated but rare. In the four NEST-partner countries there are no other equally comprehensive cases until now on the issues combining sustainable development in the context of national parks and other protected areas and the development centres of rural networks. The results and the products of the NEST-projects produce a pilot model for the partner states for further sustainable nature tourism development.

METLA-Koli NP develops sustainable tourism potential, including sustainable management for attractions and resources, and sustainable nature tourism supply and demand, through all the four themes in the INTERREGIIB project entity.

NEST -project aims to produce in Koli NP and Koli Resort benefits as follows:

- Better status in park management and in tourism marketing with the EUROPARC Charterpark label for sustainable development in nature and cultural heritage on the Koli NP and Resort
- Work and incomes created for the local society (more than 50 enterprises have activation of marketing and selling) through the development of a new type of development centres in NP and Resort
- Social capital is gained through the new networks uniting the park and the local society
- More satisfied and educated visitors and customers when the quality of leisure environment and content of the information services are better than earlier and the skills of tourism actors are more quality oriented
- Education oriented study reports (3) and the summary book of project proceedings serve other parks and resorts.
- Thoroughly tested pilot model for new type of sustainable development for nature tourism resort for the benefit of other similar centres.

- The core group for International “Grouse Park” -network is created under the Northern Periphery label for continuing development.

3.4. The Väinameri Project, Estonia

Toomas Kokovkin, Research Centre Arhipelaag, Estonia

The Väinameri project encompasses the areas of Matsalu bay, Vormsi island and south-east part of Hiiumaa island in Estonia, in the area of the enclosed coastal sea called Väinameri or ‘the Sea of Straits’. These areas are extremely valuable due to high biodiversity of both terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and the long history of man-changed seminatural ecosystems. The Väinameri project is aimed at restoration and conservation of seminatural coastal ecosystems through assisting the local people in developing small-scale economies. Main areas of the project applications are in farming, handicrafts and ecotourism. Also, awareness building and ecological education are of high priority in the project.

The aim of the Väinameri project is to preserve or reconstruct coastal semi-natural plant associations. It is impossible to solve this problem alone in single action, for no single source would have enough means for the maintenance of such wide areas. Consequently we must create a system that would maintain itself and involve local actors, and should be economically profitable. Farmers’ increasing interest in breeding beef cattle and the necessity to find a niche in market of agriculture products has helped to expand extensive natural grazing. Here a new duty has arisen in nature protection – to stimulate marketing of high quality meat bred in clean nature as a single article, to help consumer interested in local production. Handicrafts and local small industries manufacturing from local raw materials too are areas that will be connected with balanced nature exploitation arrangement.

The idea of the project is to some extent similar to the food chain concept in ecology. Local inhabitants, through their economic activities, use various resources of the coastal area, thus changing the landscape into more diverse state. Sustainable character of the human activity would keep the agroenvironmental system in equilibrium. Through assisting wise practices in the coastal area, the Väinameri project would support restoration of valuable areas, and as a parallel process, lead to improvement of social aspects.

The goals of the project are;

- A sustainable use of natural resources
- Conservation of biological diversity

- Increased knowledge, participation and involvement of the local residents towards the sustainable development of the area

The expected results are;

- Maintained and restored biodiversity
- Increased income from local production
- Increased number of nature tourism visitors
- Shifts in the approaches to balanced ecosystem management, agricultural and regional development policies
- Increased awareness in Estonia and neighbouring countries
- Creation of complete production chains (meat, handicraft, tourism) including international links, capacity building of local authorities for enterprise support and thus giving the project a "market"-oriented base.

Activities and Initiatives

1. The Landscape / Grassland management.

Increased using of naturally unfertilised grasslands is a necessity to maintain the area's biological values. Results:

- a) Model pastures/meadows
- b) Establishment of high-quality beef cattle herds
- c) Education
- d) Study visits
- e) Elaboration and marketing of "green" meat brand.
- f) Self-sustained beef cattle production grazing semi-natural grasslands

2. Handicrafts

Handicraft production makes use of the area's natural resources, which are obtained when maintaining the landscape and ensure long-term subsistence for the local residents. Results:

- a) Promotion of handicrafts based on coastal grassland management
- b) Establishment of new marketing solutions (Christmas fairs, market days)
- c) Education
- d) Information leaflets and booklets
- e) Study visits
- f) Labelling (Väinameri brand)
- g) International contacts
- h) Improvement of wool quality – sheep breeding.

3. Nature Tourism

Increase the area's attractiveness for small-scale nature tourism, which adds to the local resident's earning potentials:

- a) Four Tourism packages for nature- and quality tourism (bird watching, orchid visits, handicraft tourism and family at a farm)
- b) Seven nature trails, information leaflets and maps
- c) Study visits
- d) Development of network including international nodes
- e) Education

4. Awareness & Outreach

Outreach of information, experiences and result to general public, media and authorities. Results:

- a) The website in Estonian and English, with possibilities for downloading materials.
- b) Study visits to the Väinameri area from Estonian rural areas, Latvia, and Russia (Olonets project), c) Three video films translated in Estonian, English, and Russian, as well as numerous brochures, radio and TV programmes, lectures.

SIDA, WWF SWEDEN, the Estonian governmental sources, non-governmental organisations and private input finance the Väinameri project. Principal partner in Estonia is ELF (the Estonian Fund for Nature). The immediate project management in the Väinameri area is conducted by an NGO Arhipelaag in co-operation with Läänerannik (NGO from Vormsi island), and the Matsalu national park.

The main lessons learned from the project so far are:

- In peripheral areas such as coasts and islands, agriculture may contribute to the nature conservation activities;
- Modern socio-economic system in such areas would benefit from the improved environmental and landscape-related aspects;

Co-operation with local actors and networking are key issues of reconciling rural development with nature conservation.

The main message from the project is that biodiversity can be an important factor for rural development.

The Väinameri project has, via a regional project executant and local co-ordinators, managed to mobilise a broad variety of local stakeholders in the project area. This has caused many unforeseen but positive side effects – several local NGO's have been established, jobs have been created and the project has affected Estonian practices and served as a model for other areas.

The possibilities for future continuation of the project are numerous. The Väinameri project is a part of the WWF's One Europe More Nature process. Also, the Väinameri project serves as a case in the Interreg IIIB project COASTSUST (see www.coastsust.net) An excellent opportunity

for continued cooperation is the biosphere reserve programme of UNESCO, namely within the West Estonian Archipelago biosphere reserve. The Väänameri project gave a strong core, enabling to extend the cooperation fishermen, foresters, businessmen, and others.

3.5. Tourism and protected areas including the European Charter

Richard Blackman, EUROPARC Federation, Germany

The European Charter is a contribution to Agenda 21, the sustainable development programme of the United Nations agreed at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Its aim is the promotion of sustainable tourism in protected areas, particularly in nature and national parks. Tourism in these areas should be both nature and landscape friendly, meet the needs of visitors and the local population, and contribute to the economic development of the region. The European Charter attaches particular importance to the continuing integration of all players concerned with tourism in the drafting and implementation of tourism policy.

The relationship between tourism and protected areas has been the subject of numerous reports, governmental discussions and eminent study groups, not to forget countless dissertations. This reflects its importance. However the concepts of sustainable development and sustainable tourism are – surprisingly – relatively new.

As stated above, the Charter is a contribution to Agenda 21, which emanated from the United Nation's Earth Summit of 1992. It was here for the first time that the link between conservation and development was placed on the agenda, discussed and accepted on a world scale. The Rio Summit gave birth to the idea of Agenda 21, the global programme of action for sustainable development, and also the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

This is the background in which the idea of the European Charter came into being, from both the EUROPARC publication 'Loving them to Death?' and the IUCN's 'Parks for Life' report. Today the Charter is making an active and practical contribution to sustainable development. It has also come to be regarded as a tool for implementation of the CBD guidelines on biodiversity and tourism.

What about Europe? Why is it specifically a *European* Charter? Although the European Union has no direct competence in tourism, its cross-cutting nature and (economic) importance ensure that tourism is a policy area which impacts in at least 13 DGs of the European Commission, as well as other EU institutions. DG Enterprise set up a Tourism Sustainability Group in 2005, in which EUROPARC is represented.

The EU has made its own commitment on sustainable development in the form of the 2002 Gothenburg Declaration. The Charter itself is the product of a LIFE project funded by DG Environment in the 1990s, managed by the Federation of Regional Nature Parks of France on behalf of the EUROPARC Federation with input from parks across the then 12-member EU.

Since 2001, 23 protected areas in eight European countries have been awarded the Charter. Further parks will be granted Charter status in 2005, and there are several candidate Charter parks. The 'Class of 2001' will be re-evaluated in 2006.

The 'Charter Park' makes a commitment to following the principles of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and to the implementation of the agreed strategy and action plan. In return EUROPARC recognises that the Park fulfils the requirements for adherence to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. The award is valid for five years.

What does the Charter offer to protected areas? And what does the Charter mean for rural development?

The Charter offers a basis for strengthening relationships and creating partnerships. It is a tool that involves all those with a stake in the development and management of tourism in and around a protected area.

- Influences positively tourism development in and around the Charter Park.
- Helpful internal and external assessment through the evaluation process. This aspect of the Charter should not be underestimated.
- Raises the profile of the parks and sustainable tourism and brings local, national, and international awareness. Influence on funding bodies
- Access to the network of Charter parks

Europe's protected areas need special care. Through its participative approach the European Charter contributes to building support for sustainable tourism within a park region. Combined with the increasing recognition of the socio-economic role and significance of protected areas to regional development, this can create conditions conducive to the designation of more protected areas.

3.6. Experiences from Lahemaa National Park; tourism and local communities

Mart Reimann, Department of Recreation Management, Tallinn University / Institute of Geography, University of Tartu

Liina Allikas, Institute of Geography, University of Tartu, Estonia

Lahemaa is one of the most marketed and well-known nature tourism destinations in Estonia. The reason for this is that Lahemaa is the oldest park in Estonia and the closest large natural area to Tallinn. Estonian national parks are different from most of the national parks in the world because all our national parks are populated. There are many villages and settlements in Lahemaa which makes general management and also tourism management of the National Park complicated. A previous research that was carried out investigated the involvement and opinions of local communities about tourism.⁷² local people were investigated. The sample was completed considering people who are active and informed about local community and have key positions in the community (teachers, village elders, entrepreneurs, farmers).

Despite the fact that Lahemaa is one of the most visited protected areas in Estonia, the majority of the respondents thought that the number of tourists in the national park is sufficient and the visitors do not disturb the privacy of local people, except for some more popular visiting areas. As to the negative aspects accompanying tourism, trash in the forests, sea shores and parking lots was mentioned as a result of the visitors and the fact that cars are taken too close to the water bodies.

The majority of the respondents thought that the life quality of local people would improve/improves as a result of the development of tourism. Dealing with tourism would enable the residents in the National Park to work at home (in a tourism farm) or nearby home. The respondents thought that there are not enough enterprises dealing with tourism in the National Park. The development of tourism is hindered by financing difficulties, seasonality and the lack of appropriate training and skills. The restrictions in the National Park do not disturb the activities of the local people in general.

Respondents were not enough informed about the activities of the Lahemaa National Park. Information about the national park is mainly obtained from local newspapers or other residents of the National Park Lahemaa National Park and local authorities have little cooperation with local people in development of tourism. This is also related to modest activeness of local people of the National Park area. Respondents thought that activeness could be raised if communities would have more entrepreneurial and enthusiastic key persons. In general, the majority of the respondents were positive towards tourists and tourism development in the National Park.

3.7 Syöte National Park – experiences of and expectations on the European Charter

Teija Turunen, Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus, Finland

Syöte National Park was established in 2000. The park consists of four separate areas, which together cover about 30 000 hectares. These areas also belong to the Natura 2000 Network. The land of the Syöte National Park is state-owned and the park is managed by Metsähallitus (Finnish Forest and Park Service). On 2.10.2004 Syöte National Park signed the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

Syöte National Park has a beautiful and highly diverse natural environment. The park features a diverse spread of biotopes, which makes it a valuable nature protection area. The most important and extensive biotopes in the area are old boreal forests and aapa mires. The cultural heritage of the park is also very rich. There are an abundance of remains from prehistoric times in the park, as well as marks of some of the important livelihoods in the past, such as slash and burn cultivation and meadow cultivation. Reindeer herding is a traditional livelihood which is still practised in the area today.

The number of visits in Syöte National Park has been growing during the last few years. In 2004, there were about 34 000 visits in the park. In Iso-Syöte National Hiking Area, which is close to the National Park, the number of visits was 24 000. The National Park's service facilities include 80 kilometres of marked hiking trails, 34 kilometres skiing trails, 4 special nature trails, 12 wilderness huts and 6 lean-to shelters. There is also a Visitor Centre close to the main entrance of the park.

The Syöte Tourism Centre contains two hotels and other accommodation services, mostly cabins. Annual visitor number in the centre is over 300 000. The most popular activities in Syöte region are cross country skiing and slalom or snowboarding. The area also offers possibilities for for example snowshoe-walking, reindeer and dogsledding safaris, hiking, canoeing, riding and fishing. Driving snowmobiles and quad motorcycles is possible in certain routes. In the National Park any motor vehicle-based activities are not allowed.

During the last ten years, many steps have been taken forward in developing sustainable nature tourism in the Syöte area. Already before Syöte National Park was established, cooperation with the other local actors started when setting up local regulations for the national park. During the Syöte Life-project (1999-2002) permanent cooperation with the local tourism entrepreneurs started and a lot of public events concerning sustainable tourism were held. In New Syöte Program Agreement (2002) all the central actors of the area agreed that the most important values in Syöte area are nature and sustainable development. Service facilities were created in the park (2000-2003) and Syöte Visitor Centre was built

(2003). The Syöte Area Nature Tourism Plan was published in 2001. In addition, the Syöte Nature Guide Booklet (2002) was published to serve as a tool for tourism entrepreneurs. All of these actions served as a background in the process of applying the European Charter.

Syöte National Park has now almost one year experience of the Charter. According to the park authorities the strongest advantage of the Charter is its usefulness as a tool in their work. The sustainable tourism strategy and action plan accepted in the EUROPARC set clear frames for the actions that need to be taken and there is an international evaluation on the implementation of the actions. Still it is felt that there is not too much bureaucracy in the Charter process, which would make the work complicated.

The local society including tourism entrepreneurs feels that the Charter membership offers possibilities to get more publicity for the Syöte area. It is also experienced as an achievement to be proud of. On the other hand, it evokes questions on the real advantages of the membership.

In the future, the park authorities expect that the Charter membership will bring more national and international publicity for the area and its efforts in developing sustainable tourism. It is also expected to help in creating more intense cooperation with the tourism enterprises in developing new nature tourism products. Networking with the other Charter Parks is assumed to be useful and a clear concept for the Charter Part 2 dealing with the certification of the tourism enterprises is expected.

The local tourism entrepreneurs are looking forward to get true benefit in marketing through the Charter process. More visibility in international markets is expected and as a consequence of that, more customers for the enterprises. Many of the entrepreneurs feel that developing new nature tourism products can help in bringing the area more visitors outside the best tourist season. Altogether the expectation is: more income and more employment possibilities.

3.8. Naturpark Maribosøerne: To be or not to be sustainable?

Jan Woollhead, Nature Park Maribosøerne, Denmark

The Nature Park comprises four lakes in the heart of the Island of Lolland in South-eastern Denmark, and was established in 1994. It covers an area of 50 km² of which one fourth is lake habitat. The rest is marshes, forests and agricultural land. It is the only lake system in Denmark on the Ramsar Convention list of wetlands of world importance for wildlife. This is especially with relation to birdlife. Each year breeds high numbers of waterbirds. For example: Bittern (45 pairs), Greylag Geese (350), Pochard (150), Marsh Harrier (40), Common Tern (55). During the migrati-

on and winter period ten thousands of ducks and geese, and many raptors stay in the area.

One secret behind the very high numbers of birds is the many island and bays meaning a very long shoreline (approx. 50 km) combined with an average depth between 1 and 2 meters. This creates a highly productive environment with many possibilities for birds to feed and hide nests. In most recent years the environment has improved with the visibility in the water increasing from 30-40 cm to more than one meter in the summer period. This implies a very high production of submersed water plants, including invertebrates living in them. Furthermore waterfowls, especially geese, can feed on the connected habitats, especially the marshes and fields.

Another secret is relating to how we handle visitor management, and how the visitors behave. In 1990 an agreement was made between the different sailing organisations, and the green organisations: Bird Life-Denmark, and the Danish Nature Protection Society. This agreement included where to sail or not, and at which speed and period of the year. The agreement became later a state regulation due to the establishment of a wildlife reserve. In some areas only the tour boat is allowed to sail – and not in the breeding season. Windsurfing is forbidden. We have no renting out of canoes, kayaks, rowing boats, sailing boats, etc. So normally it is only boats from the clubs sailing in the lake.

In 1994 when we founded the Nature Park, we also produced a management plan. In this plan was included a lot of suggestions for outdoor recreation. A main thing was to improve public access. The lakes were difficult to overview, why we cleared trees at some view points, and made bird towers and hides. This was connected with lots of small picnic areas (also with roofs), a cycle route around the lakes, and a tour boat for up to 70 people. So the infrastructure came in place, in such a way that it not meant an increased pressure on wildlife.

In 1997, when the White-tailed Eagle began to breed again a forest covering 100 ha was closed for public access year round. The closed area was later reduced to half the forest: first outside the breeding season, and later for the whole year. Our experience has been that the visitors do respect signs informing about the forest is closed. We inform also why it is closed, and where to go if you want to have a good chance to see the birds, and we have guided tours. The visitors then act in a responsible way.

This year we made an updated plan on recreation and public access in the Nature Park. We involved all the different NGOs, landowners, authorities, etc. in what to be included or not. The plan has five categories of access: 1) Full access. 2) Only access on roads and paths. 3) Only access together with a guide. 4) Only access outside the breeding season. 5) No access. At the same time we have begun to monitor the visitors: where they go and when. We have automatic counters at bird towers, and on a

nature path. We also count the numbers of folders taken at different places in the park. This is done every week in the peak season, and every second week rest of the year. Furthermore we have the number of people on guided tours, and people sailing with the tour boat or being members of organisations for outdoor recreation. By doing this, we hope that we can improve our understanding of how visitors use the park.

We are just beginning to think about local products and cooperation with business, so we do not have much experience within this field. We have some local meet production which could be labelled with our logo, but it could also be many other products. We are interested in being certified under the Charter, if we can find enough funding for this. One possibility is through cooperating with our friendship park: Naturpark Holsteinische Schweiz, situated 100 kilometres south of us, north of Lübeck. This could be with EU funding: Interreg IIIA or LEADER+.

3.9. Kuršių Nerija National park – European charter for sustainable tourism in protected areas?

Lina Diksaite, Kuršių Nerija National Park, Lithuania

Kuršių nerija is one of the most important tourism destinations in Lithuania. As a resort place it is known from middle of the 19th century. Even during the Soviet period, government understood and appreciated the uniqueness of this land. The necessity of preserving the Curonian spit appeared in the late sixties with the growing number of visitors and the approaching threat to nature values. In 1960, a Curonian spit landscape reserve was established. Kuršių nerija national park was founded in 1991. In 2000 the World Heritage Committee inscribed the Curonian spit on the World Heritage List as cultural landscape.

The area of the national Park is 26 464 ha: 9 764 ha land surface, 16 700 ha waters (the Baltic sea – 12500 ha, the Curonian Lagoon – 4200 ha). The park is administrated by two municipalities: Neringa municipality (8,98 th. ha) and Klaipėda city municipality (0,794 th. ha). There are 5 functional zones in the park: conservation: strict nature reserves, Protection, recreation, economic, residential. Every year more than 1 million people visit the spit.

The Curonian spit is important NATURA 2000 site. There are 11 habitats of European importance:

- Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time
- Coastal lagoons
- Embryonic shifting dunes
- White dunes

- Grey dunes
- Decalcified fixed dunes with *Empetrum nigrum*
- Dunes with *Salix repens* ssp. *Argentea*
- Dry sand heaths with *Calluna* and *Empetrum nigrum*
- Wooded dunes of the Atlantic, Continental and Boreal region
- Humid dune slacks
- Western taiga

This area is also important for birds: The Curonian Spit is important for big concentration of migrating passerines and birds of prey. The Baltic Sea along the coast of the Curonian Spit is important for migratory and wintering water birds, and the northern part of the Curonian Lagoon is important for migratory and wintering water birds.

There are 5 settlements and 2 834 residents in Kursiu nerija national park (2004). The increase of population is 195 residents in one year and thank to new comers (+268). These people are temporary residents that have summer cottages and arrive to the spit only for some weeks. The main activities of local residents (sources of revenue) are tourism (hotels and restaurants), state institutions (municipality, schools, kindergartens, hospital, etc.), fishing, and retail. Perquisite: flats and rooms rent.

At this time there are some problems such as seasonality, decrease of local residents, more temporary inhabitants, local community becomes older, unemployment in off-season time, low quality and lack of service (medical service), very expensive living-space, services and goods.

There are two outlooks on the sustainable development and sustainable tourism in the Curonian spit. For local residents it is extensive development of the tourism industry. They are interesting in how to increase the number of hotels, rest houses and etc. This means bigger number of visitors and more incomes. No restriction. For protected area the present numbers of visitors are enough. It is very important to increase service quality (more and various services).

What can be done to change the situation? The most important thing is teamwork: local municipality, community, national park administration, tourism industry representatives. All sides will have common vision and goals. It is essential to talk and work with local community that they will change their approach into positive: the national park status for the Curonian spit isn't disadvantage. It is a tool to safeguard natural and cultural value and its protection. European charter for sustainable tourism in protected areas is a good possibility for conservationists and local community to start to work together.

4. Conclusions

The rural communities of Europe are facing many social and economic challenges. One of the underlying goals for many actions undertaken by the EU, such as those funded through the Structural Funds, is the desire of promoting the social welfare of rural communities. The relations between this wish for development, the incentives at place for enhancing it, the effects of the actions undertaken, and the driving forces in general are quite complicated. However, in regions inside and around protected areas it is clear that there are expectations on protected areas to contribute to the economic and social development of the communities concerned.

At the same time, there is a need for protected area managers to find new ways of communication with a broad range of stakeholders. There is, in particular, a need to highlight the potential of protected areas to the socio-economic development of rural communities, and to raise awareness of the role of protected areas in general. An enhanced cooperation between authorities involved in management of protected areas and various stakeholders working for rural development would bring mutual benefits to all partners.

Natura 2000, the ecological network of protected areas across Europe, is one of the corner stones of the European nature conservation policy. In spite of some delays in the establishment of the Natura 2000 network, the Member States of the European Union have put forward their proposals for areas to be included in the network. Building on the commitments from the Gothenburg Summit in 2001 to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010, increased efforts are needed to promote the awareness and understanding of Natura 2000. Partnerships involving a broad range of stakeholders in the conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites are needed. Support for exchange of experience and good practices in managing the network is considered as an essential effort to be undertaken. In addition, the needs of Natura 2000 should be effectively implemented in other Community policies.

In recent year, tourism has been regarded as a major opportunity for economic growth in rural areas. National parks are commonly perceived as a “brand” for unspoilt nature providing high quality outdoor recreation opportunities. Local tourist enterprises have benefited from the establishment of protected areas. However, the tourism activities have to be managed in a sustainable way in order to provide for long term benefits for the local communities. One key challenge of protected areas is to improve the management of visitors and to reduce unfavourable impacts on the environment. Enhanced visitor management also contributes to an

increased understanding and appreciation of the site among both visitors and residents.

Across Europe, there are several initiatives devoted to the development of sustainable tourism. Some of the initiatives are specifically focusing on the role and potential of protected areas. The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is developed, promoted and administrated by the EUROPARC Federation. Protected areas signing the Charter commit themselves to the principles of sustainable tourism, and they are obliged to define a strategy and action plan in pursuing these principles. Providers of tourism services are essential partners in the process.

The seminar “Protected Areas and Sustainable Rural Development; parks, people and products” clearly demonstrated the challenges protected areas are facing in the years to come as regards further involvement in the development of rural communities. The seminar found that

- There is a need for protected areas to further involve with other stakeholders in the development of rural communities. Various types of partnerships between protected areas and their surroundings should be highlighted. The European Charter developed by EUROPARC Federation is an appropriate tool when promoting sustainable tourism in protected areas. However, a wide array of other initiatives and actions are needed. Emphasis should, for instance, be put on technical exchange of experiences with regard to different tools and methods for involving stakeholders in various settings, as well as means for reducing negative impact of large numbers of visitors.
- Protected areas administrations/managers have the potential of acting as driving forces when policy decisions that influence management of protected areas are prepared. The national programming processes of the EU funds to be available in the period 2007-2013 are at the moment running in the Member States. *The seminar recommended protected areas and their administrations to take a proactive approach and get involved in the national programming processes of the future use of EU Rural Development Funds.*

Svensk sammanfattning

Ett internationellt seminarium med temat Protected Areas and Sustainable Rural Development (*Skyddade områden och hållbar landsbygdsutveckling*) ordnades i Lahemaa nationalpark, Estland, i september 2005. I seminariet deltog ett trettiotal representanter för skyddade områden, jordbruksministerier, regionala utvecklingsorganisationer samt företrädare för NGOs (non-governmental organisations). Deltagarna representerade alla nordiska länder och Estland, Lettland, Litauen, Tyskland och Belgien. Seminariet ordnades av det nordisk-baltiska nätverket för skyddade områden - EUROPARC Nordic-Baltic Section. Ett viktigt syfte var att informera deltagarna om den pågående utformningen av Europeiska Unionens finansieringsinstrument för perioden 2007-2013 med särskild inriktning på temat landsbygdsutveckling och skyddade områden. Därtill erbjöd seminariet ett forum för diskussion och utbyte av erfarenheter gällande de skyddade områdenas potential att bidra till en hållbar landsbygdsutveckling.

Seminariet rekommenderade skyddade områden inkl. nationella myndigheter ansvariga för dessa att aktivt delta i den nationella utformningen av EU:s finansieringsinstrument för inkommande finansieringsperiod. Deltagarna gjordes också uppmärksamma på behovet av fortsatt fördjupat utbyte av information och erfarenheter om skyddade områdets roll i utvecklandet av lokala och/eller agrara samhällen.

Appendices

Seminar programme

Thursday September 8

08.30	Welcome words	- Teet Koitjärvi, Lahemaa National Park - Rauno Väisänen, Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus, Finland
08:45	The EU perspective; proposed regulations with regard to rural development and protected areas	Thomas Nielsen, WWF European Policy Office, Brussels
09:30	Comments from the Nordic and Baltic countries	Kirsten Nielsen, Outdoor Council, Denmark, Matti Määttä, Metsähallitus, Finland
10:00	Discussion	
10:15	Coffee break	
10:45	<i>Presentations of projects on rural development</i>	
	INTERREG IIIB project: BIRD – Wetlands, nature reserves and cultural landscapes for rural development Case Siikalahahti bird area, FIN	-Jan Lundegren, County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland, Sweden -Matti Määttä, Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus, Finland
	INTERREG IIIB project: NEST – Northern Environment for Sustainable Tourism; case Koli National Park, FIN	Lasse Lovén, Koli National Park, Finland
12:00	Lunch	
13:00	Field trip in the national park and its surroundings	
18:30	Dinner	
	Sauna	

Friday September 9, 2005

09:00	Introduction to the theme <i>Tourism and protected areas</i> including the "European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas"	Richard Blackman, EUROPARC Federation, Germany
09:20	Experiences from Lahemaa National Park; tourism and local communities	Mart Reimann, Estonia
	<i>Experiences of and expectations on the European Charter</i>	
09:50	Syöte National Park	Teija Turunen, Finland
10:10	Nature Park Maribosøerne	Jan Woolthead, Denmark
10:30	Kursiu Nerija National Park	Lina Diksaite, Lithuania
10:45	Coffee break	
11.15	Introduction to group discussions - recommendations for further networking activities	Bo Storränk EUROPARC Nordic-Baltic Section
11.30	Group discussions	
12.15	Lunch	
13.00	Group discussions	
14.00	Presentation of group discussions	
14.30	Closing of the seminar	

List of participants

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