

Transboundary Ecotourism Guidelines for the Sava River Basin

One River, Four Countries, Unlimited Possibilities



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Preface

Ecotourism has been variously defined and implemented as a tool for resource conservation, arguably with different degrees of success. Generally, ecotourism is accepted as an alternative to traditional tourism. Ecotourism is perceived as a responsible approach to tourism intended to expose visitors to a nature-based experience while simultaneously sustaining or improving the ecology of an area, as well as enhancing the quality of life for peripheral communities. Ecotourism is dependent on the success of nature conservation. Ecotourism facilities are expected to operate in harmony with the ecology of the area, and remain consistent with the culture and social expectations of the people living within the affected communities.

Ecotourism is growing in popularity and many places across the globe look to develop ecotourism as a way to promote economic growth. While ecotourism lends itself well to market-driven conservation, it can fail to support conservation for the sake of conservation. This can result in protection of only those resources perceived as providing direct monetary value to humans, which can lead to long-term management problems and an overall decline in biodiversity. For this reason, guidelines are needed to facilitate ecotourism development and aid in maintaining a regional understanding of expectations for managing ecosystems.

These guidelines were developed in collaboration with international, regional, and local stakeholders and incorporate three considerations for ecotourism development: 1) a shared goal for protecting the environment and encouraging sustainable development, 2) a desire to create a green economy offering green jobs to generate economic growth, and 3) transboundary cooperation. It is the supposition that transboundary cooperation and collaboration under the heading of ecotourism will generate additional tourist visits, encourage longer stays, and promote local environmental resource protection.

These guidelines seek to promote a balance between wetland protection and ecotourism and posit that this region can develop into a model for the protection of ecosystem services, particularly those associated with Ramsar Wetlands of International importance. These guidelines present a foundation upon which to conserve natural resources and cultural heritage while simultaneously developing “green” economies in the region. This collaborative effort draws from the understanding that biological conservation is at the core of ecotourism. Without it, the system fails. These guidelines are intended for use by policy makers at national and local level, park managers, researchers, communities, tourism operators and investors. These guidelines will create a foundation for moving forward; implementing ecologically and culturally sound, long-lasting ecotourism projects within the Sava River Basin.

Acknowledgements

These guidelines were developed by the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) in collaboration with various stakeholders including U.S. Embassy Zagreb, Croatian Regional Environmental Center (REC), University of South Florida, regional park managers, proponents of Ramsar Site protection, and various tourism experts and stakeholders from the Sava River Basin.

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Transboundary Ecotourism Guidelines

1 Introduction

Tourism, in all forms, is of crucial importance to the economic, social and environmental development of the countries. Among different kinds of tourism, ecotourism is focused on visiting fragile, pristine and undisturbed natural areas. It combines a socially responsible travel and environmental sustainability.

Overall, ecotourism within the Sava River Basin is limited by the lack of organized tourist destinations. However, at the local level, tourism pockets continue to develop and expand. Today, these tourism pockets are focused on localized points of interest even though the ecotourist may desire multiple, interconnected attractions at regional destinations of ecological and cultural significance. Notably, the tourism sector is not organized to market itself as a regional destination and ecotourism is currently not a primary focus.

The Transboundary Ecotourism Guidelines are designed to serve as a strategic documents for ecotourism development in protected areas (Ramsar Sites, in particular), buffer zones and tourism corridors. They intend to provide basic principles for development of a Master plan for ecotourism development in the Sava River Basin as well. The Guidelines are dedicated to national, regional and local policy makers responsible for tourism development, managers of protected areas and tourist organizations. They provide description of sustainable management and policy considerations at different policy levels, description of technical measures, means of stakeholder involvement and determinations of funding possibilities.

1.1 Definitions

Buffer Zone	An area surrounding a Core Protection Zone with defined protection guidelines. The purpose of the Buffer Zone is to prevent damage to the Core Protection Zone.
Core Protection Zone	Zone of critical ecological significance found within a Ramsar Sites or other natural area where human activity is either limited, prevented or controlled.
Ecotourism:	A form of responsible tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine and relatively undisturbed natural areas

The World Tourism Organization's definition of ecotourism

Ecotourism is used to mean forms of tourism which have the following characteristics:

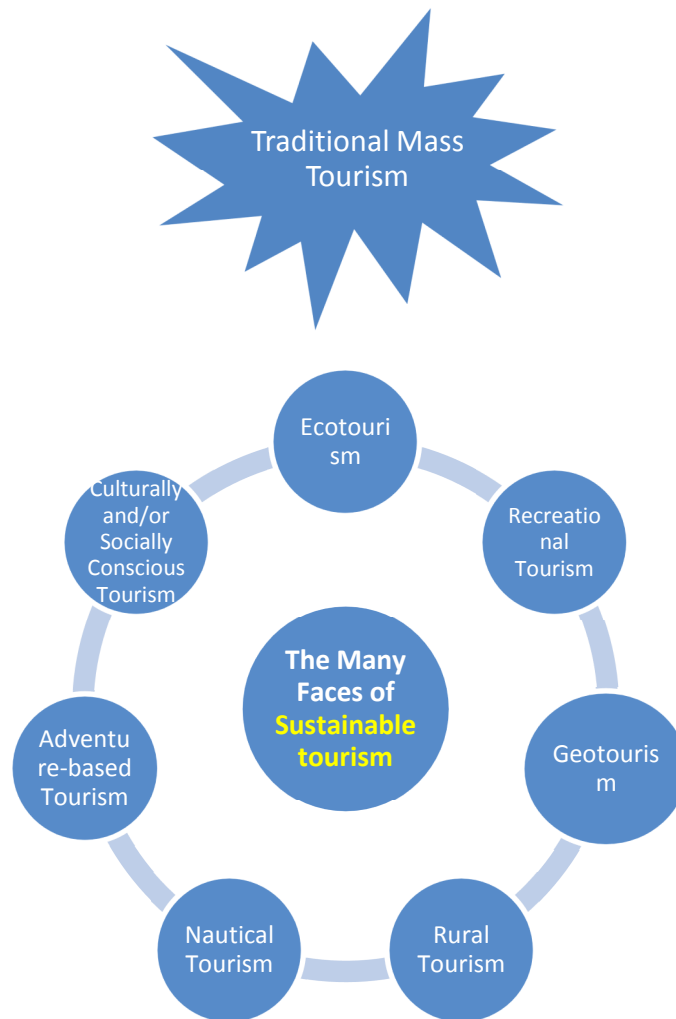
- All nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas.
- It contains educational and interpretation features.
- It is generally but not exclusively organised by special tour operators for small groups. Service provider partners at the destinations tend to be small, locally owned businesses
- It minimises negative impacts upon the natural and socio-cultural environment.
- It supports the maintenance of natural areas which are used as ecotourism attractions by:
 - generating economic benefits for host communities, organizations and authorities managing natural areas with conservation purposes;
 - providing alternative employment and income opportunities for local communities;
 - increasing awareness towards the conservation of natural and cultural assets, both among locals and tourists.

Source: World Tourism Organization (2001), *The British Ecotourism Market, Special Report*, page 19.

Ramsar Convention:	“The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) -- called the "Ramsar Convention" is an inter-governmental treaty that embodies the commitments of its member countries to maintain the ecological character of their Wetlands of International Importance and to plan for the "wise use", or sustainable use, of all of the wetlands in their territories.” (The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, n.d.)
Ramsar Sites:	Wetlands designated by the Contracting Parties for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance because they meet one or more of the Ramsar Criteria.
Responsible Tourism:	A form of tourism which minimizes negative economic, environmental and social impacts in comparance with “Traditional (Mass) Tourism”.
Rural tourism:	A form of tourism taking place in rural areas or settlements, providing employment and income to local population, and offering individualized holiday products to consumers. Rural tourism is based on accommodation service which is complemented by additional services/facilities relying on the local social, cultural and natural resources, which are exploited according to the principles of sustainable development. (Todorović M., Štetić S., 2009)
Socially Conscious Tourism	Engages in traditional community life and experiences cultural heritage
Sustainable Infrastructure	Refers to building/development that conserves resources such as water or energy and contributes to sustainability of an area and its natural resources.
Sustainable Tourism	“Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.” (As cited in Ramsar, 2012)

Stakeholder	A person, group, organization or institution which is or can be affected in the process of ecotourism development;
Tourism corridors	An approach to tourism that offers travelers the opportunity to visit a variety of built and natural attractions along a themed route. By moving away from the well-established destination resort model of tourism development that focuses on a specific locality, tourism corridors offer visitors the opportunity to travel through a variety of landscapes and visit a range of iconic and non-iconic yet locally significant attractions. (Prideaux and Cooper, 2002:23)
Traditional Tourism	Mass tourism with minimal regard to the environment or the local communities

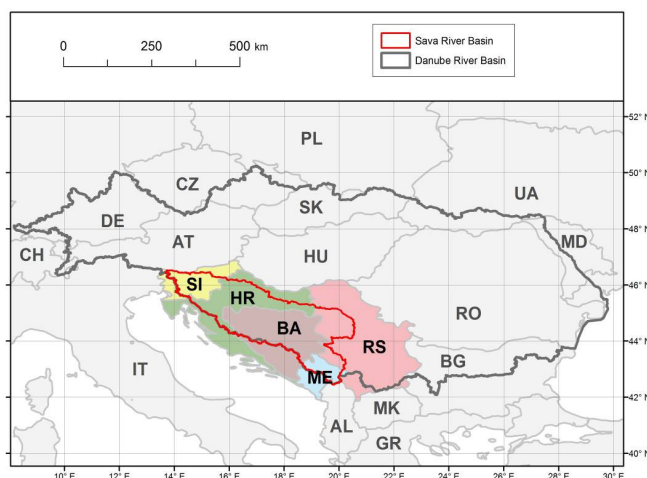
Different types of responsible tourism



1.2 Basic Facts on the Sava River Basin

The Sava River Basin (Sava RB) is a major drainage basin of South Eastern Europe with a total area of 97,713.20 km² and is one of the most significant sub-basins of the Danube River Basin, comprising 12% of this basin.

Location of the Sava River Basin



The basin area is shared among six countries: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Albania. The population of the five countries (Albania is not included since only negligible part of the basin area belongs to its territory) of the region is approximately 18 million and half of this number resides in the Sava River Basin.

Ecological and cultural values

The Sava River Basin is of significance due to its outstanding biological and landscape diversity, but also because of its cultural heritage. It hosts the largest complexes of alluvial riparian hardwood forests not only in Europe but of the entire Western Palaearctic. A large portion of these floodplains are still intact and support flood alleviation and biodiversity. Wetlands are cradles of biological diversity, providing the water and primary productivity upon which countless species of plants and animals depend on survival. They support high concentrations of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrate species. Wetlands are also important storehouses of plant genetic material.

These functions, values and attributes can only be maintained if the ecological processes of wetlands are allowed to continue functioning. This performs also a variety of ecosystem services of vital importance to people. Unfortunately, and in spite of important progress made in recent decades, wetlands continue to be among the most threatened ecosystems, owing mainly to ongoing drainage, conversion, pollution, and over-exploitation of their resources.

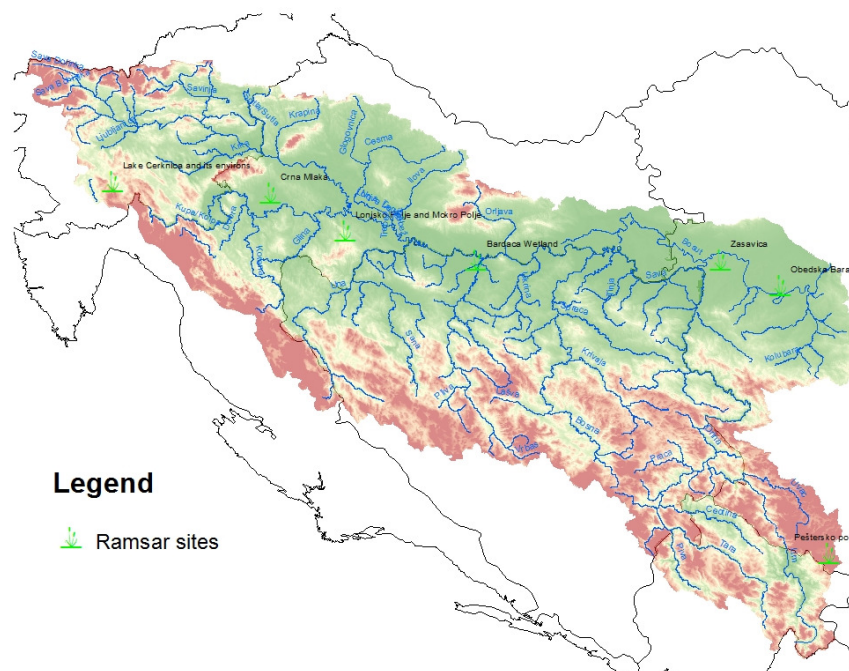
The basin's wetlands are simultaneously areas of outstanding living, organically evolved cultural landscapes with exceptional cultural values: it is here where an intact rural culture has taken place adapting completely to the appearance of flooding including vernacular architecture and a today unique pasturing system with autochthonous domestic breeds.

Because of the above mentioned ecological and cultural value of the wetlands, the Sava riparian countries have designated seven sites in the Sava River Basin according to *The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat* or so called *Ramsar Convention*. The basic data on the Ramsar Sites in the Sava River Basin are given below:

Basic data about the Ramsar Sites in the Sava River Basin

Country	Ramsar Site	Designation date	Coordinates		Area (ha)	National and/or status
BA	Bardača Wetland	Feb. 2, 2007	45°06'N	17°27'E	3,500	Important Bird Area
HR	Lonjsko Polje and Mokro Polje	Feb. 3, 1993	45°21'N	16°21'E	50,560 (51,218 GIS)	Nature Park, Ornithological Reserve
	Crna Mlaka	Feb. 3, 1993	45°37'N	15°44'E	625	Ornithological Reserve
RS	Obedska Bara	Mar. 28, 1977	44°44'N	20°00'E	17,501	Nature Reserve
	Zasavica	Mar. 13, 2008	44°56'N	19°31'E	1,913	Important Bird Area, Special natu-re Reserve, partia-ly, Important Plant Area, partially
	Peštersko polje	May 1, 2006	43°05'N	20°07'E	3,455	Important Plant Area, Important Bird Area
SI	Lake Cerknica and its surroundings	Jan. 19, 2006	45°45'N	14°23'E	7,250	Natura 2000 site, Ecologically Important Area, Regional Park

Locations of the Ramsar Sites in the Sava River Basin



Wetlands and Tourism

Although the Ramsar Convention has not had a specific focus on tourism and recreation, the 11th Meeting of the Conference of Parties held in Bucharest in July 2012 enacted a Resolution XI.7 on Tourism, recreation and wetlands, which confirms that sustainable tourism and recreation can contribute to the achievement of public policy objectives and can bring economic opportunities for securing wetland conservation and wise use and the maintenance of key socio-economic wetland values and functions, both in Ramsar Sites and in other wetlands. It confirms that sustainable tourism and recreation can both benefit wetlands and contribute to the conservation of ecosystem services, global biodiversity and sustainable development goals and targets, and recognizes that sustainable tourism

should make optimal use of environmental resources, respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities and provide socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders.

The Ramsar Sites provide a focal point for developing ecotourism and are presented herein as a basis for networking remote destinations within the Sava River Basin in order to advance sustainable tourism, grow local economies, and promote the long-term protection of ecologically sensitive areas.

It is critical that development of ecotourism in the Sava River Basin depend on a basin-level approach and regional cooperation. By establishing these linkages, ecotourism could be developed while simultaneously creating a sustainable balance between nature protection, cultural preservation and responsible economic development. Development of ecotourism, as well as alternative forms of responsible tourism, should be strategic and promoted at both regional and local levels in order to create stakeholder cohesion and advance efforts towards transboundary cooperation.

1.3 Sustainability and Ecotourism Objectives

The concept of sustainable tourism encompasses two elements, the first of which satisfies the ability to meet the demands of present tourists while enhancing the future opportunities for community, and the ability to protect and preserve the environment and local heritage in a sustainable way. It is envisioned such a management of resources that the aesthetic, economic and social needs are satisfied through the protection and maintenance of ecosystem services (biodiversity, ecological processes), life support systems and cultural integrity.

Sustainability along the Sava will address two distinct dimensions for the achievement of a sustainable tourism policy. The first dimension that needs to be addressed is the minimizing the negative impacts on the environment and society; and the second is the need to include and maximize the benefits and positive impacts of tourism for conservation of the environment, cultural heritage, and contribution to the local economies, and well being of local population and visitors.

In accordance to the ACTION for MORE SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN TOURISM¹, a report issued by the European Commission's Tourism Sustainability Group, sustainable tourism policies will address the environmental, social and economic impacts outlined in Agenda 21. It defines indicators for tourism sustainability in destinations, and 12 key aims and actions, including Economic Viability, Local prosperity, Community Wellbeing, Biological Diversity, Resource Efficiency and Environmental Purity.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a form of sustainable tourism focused on nature-based and cross cultural travel that provides adventure and the wellbeing for both the visitor and the host community. It promotes a responsible tourism that seeks to promote and conserve pristine ecological and cultural environments, raise awareness for conservation of natural and cultural heritage and support sustainable development.

The principle elements of ecotourism include:

- Conservation of ecosystem services (e.g. biodiversity)
- Educational and interpretative experience
- Viable economic opportunities for the local community through small scale entrepreneurship
- Empowerment of the local community through active participation and decision making of stakeholders and capacity building

¹ ACTION for MORE SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN TOURISM, Report of the Tourism Sustainability Group, February 2007, http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/_getdocument.cfm?doc_id=237

- Promotion of the use of renewable resources, use of green technologies and practices
- Promotion of socially responsible actions for visitors and the host community.

1.4 Main Purpose and Scope of the Transboundary Ecotourism Guidelines

The main purposes of the Transboundary Ecotourism Guidelines are:

- To provide expert contribution to unified approach to sustainable development of ecotourism in wetland areas of international importance (Ramsar Sites) in the Sava River Basin;
- To outline the scope of work / terms of reference for the preparation of a master plan for development of ecotourism in the Sava Basin.

The scope of the Guidance includes:

- description of sustainable management and policy considerations in ecotourism at different policy levels (international, national and local);
- description of technical measures to be implemented in ecotourism
- stakeholder involvement in development, planning and management of ecotourism
- determinations of funding possibilities for further development of ecotourism

The guidelines could serve as a policy-level (strategic) document as an input in national/entity-level strategic planning of sustainable tourism development. The guidance is intended to be used in particular at Ramsar Sites, buffer zones which are connected with Ramsar Sites and the tourism corridors between those locations in the Sava River Basin, but could be applicable to all areas with ecotourism potential.

2 Outlines of the Guidelines

Strategic objectives discussed in the Transboundary Eco-tourism Guidelines for the Sava River Basin have set aspirations for Ramsar Site management for the next 5-10 years. Many of these have been shaped into more specific actions as part of the consultation process with the various stakeholders. The many actions generated were then prioritized, again by way of consultation, to make the most effective use of limited partner resources and aimed at delivering outcomes that will help achieve the long-term objectives for each respective site as well as the Ramsar Sites as a cooperative cluster.

Five themes emerged from the consultation process used to develop and prioritize actions for the Ramsar Site(s) Management Plan to sustainably develop eco-tourism activities. These themes are:

- Develop and sustain transboundary eco-tourism activities;
- Managing Ramsar Site and wetland landscapes to maximize their conservation, and public benefits and to preserve their ecosystem services;
- Sustainable economic development;
- Stakeholder involvement and community participation;
- Conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

These themes are divided into sub-themes, and then subdivided into focal areas of similar sets of actions, such as those related to “managing visitor impact” under the Managing Ramsar Site Landscapes theme. Focal areas are addressed in more detail in the form of the Action plan, prepared as 5 separate tables for each of the 5 themes.

Each focal area represents the overarching priorities identified by way of consultation and stakeholder

input. The focal areas provide a collection of detailed actions to aid to the delivery of **expected outcomes** and **strategic objectives** in the next five years, between reviewed periods of the guidelines established here. The expected outcomes and strategic objectives relate to the sub-themes which are further explained in the following chapters.

2.1 Develop and sustain transboundary eco-tourism policies

2.1.1. Establishment of a Framework for Ecotourism Development in Sava River Basin

OBJECTIVE: Establish basis for framework that allows for site specific characteristics and requirements

The main focus of this section is the support to establishment of a framework that would identify existing natural and cultural tourism products/activities as well as the potential to develop very specific niche products specifically relevant to each site, which is key to the long term, sustainable development of the Sava River Region protected areas and its surrounding communities. The framework will be the guide on where to prioritize efforts and funds in a logical framework context that takes into consideration the competitive advantages, available human resources, and regional context of each respective site. The framework would analyse, compare and harmonize land use planning, nature conservation and tourism development policies..

The framework should be developed through a formal or informal working group of relevant stakeholders, including the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC), Regional Environmental Center (REC), representatives from each of the protected areas, local authorities, relevant ministries, as well as private and NGO stakeholders who have a vested interest in the protected wetland areas of the Sava River Basin.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- ◆ Identification of the main natural and cultural potential in the river basin
- ◆ Identification of main characteristics of each site as basis for sustainable tourism development
- ◆ Analysis, comparison and harmonization of land use planning, nature conservation and tourism development policies
- ◆ Identification of liaison for stakeholder groups to participate in the process of policy establishment.

2.1.2 Baseline Study

OBJECTIVE: Identify risks and conflicts between ecotourism development and wetland conservation

Although ecotourism can often bring great benefits to communities and stimulate local economic growth, there are also many risks and threats that accompany it. A comprehensive assessment should be carried out in order to evaluate and map existing tourism offers and their facilities. This assessment should also identify areas for potential conflict due to land use, different activities or unsustainable practices. The assessment should highlight the fatal flaw checklist and integrate it into the overall zoning and master plan of the protected areas. This comprehensive assessment, which could be part of the baseline study/assessment, should also identify policy or legislative needs in order to effectively enforce issues that pose a threat to any respective protected area.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Evaluation of existing network of established tourism offer within Sava River Basin
 - Map facilities and services within the Sava River Basin (e.g. nature parks, cultural landmarks, local restaurants, green lodging, etc.)
- Identification existing or potential conflicts of uses/activities
- Determination of site specific expectations, limitations
- Development of fatal flaw checklist for Ramsar Site development (no-go activities)
- Identification of policy or legislative needs
- Development of SWOT analysis

2.1.3 Development of Transboundary Policy for Ecotourism Development in Sava River Basin

OBJECTIVE: Engage government entities and policy/decision makers in promoting cooperation and compliance

The ISRBC, with involvement of REC is well suited to begin the process of engaging both local and national level governments on transboundary policy development that would enhance and provide mechanisms for the successful and effective implementation of environmental measures and tourism development.

Analysis of current policy and legislation are key aspects for creating a set of concrete recommendations to policy makers that will ensure both the continuation and improvement of environmental standards as well as pave the way for cross-border economic cooperation for developing and promoting eco-tourism activities in the Sava River Basin.

The transboundary policies should respect and follow each of the respective national policies as well as all internationally recognized guidelines such as Ramsar, UNESCO and the European Sustainable Tourism Charter. There are very clear and practical policies and procedures established at an international level, as well as many successful cross-border initiatives, that could be the foundations for the establishment of transboundary policy agreements on ecotourism between the Sava River Basin nations.

The creation of a sustainable tourism development strategy is essential for a structured approach to tourism development. The strategy needs to be based on careful consultation and be approved and understood by local stakeholders. The sustainable tourism development strategy should contain:

- Definition of the area to be influenced by the strategy, which may extend outside the protected area
- Assessment of the area's ecosystem services, historic and cultural heritage, tourism infrastructure, and economic and social circumstances; considering issues of capacity, need and potential opportunities
- Assessment of current visitors and potential future markets
- Set of strategic objectives for the development and management of tourism, covering:
 - *conservation and enhancement of the ecosystem services and heritage;*
 - *economic and social development;*
 - *preservation and improvement of the quality of life of local residents;*
 - *visitor management and enhancement of the quality of tourism offered.*

- Action plan to meet these objectives
- Indication of resources and partners to implement the strategy
- Proposals for monitoring results

A lot of the groundwork for this strategy is already developed through this study and other tourism related activities. But the detail should be refined through a fully participatory and consultative approach with relevant national and international institutions, for example through establishment of a Sava River Basin Ecotourism Group. This will ensure local ownership and increase the level of success of future activities.

The development of a protected area for sustainable tourism is dependent on building a strong local network of service providers in and around the park. The best approach to this is the formation of a local sustainable tourism group (or other similar groups which already exist) that brings the park, local communities and local tourism enterprises together as a collaborative entity. The formation of a group of this nature is an essential component of both the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism and PAN Parks certification. The creation of an independent NGO representing all stakeholders allows for transparency, trust and also a potential alternative access to funds that state institutions can not apply for.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Identification of existing and required policies relevant to development of ecotourism
- Engagement of national authorities to ensure cooperation between sites in different countries
- Definition of specific expectations for sites based on Ramsar guidelines and other relevant guidelines such as UNESCO programs and conventions
- Strengthening of cooperation to ensure transboundary nature conservation and ecotourism integrity and continuity
- Encouragement of collaborative promotional action at large scale, international tourism fairs and exhibitions
- Assurance of the proper application and integration of international and national tourism legislation
- Establishment of the perception and public image of the Sava River Basin as a complete and collective tourist destination
- Establishment and promotion of sustainable tourism and exchange of information on best practices through cooperation with tourist destination in other countries.
- Development and promotion of transnational synergies for a profile and improved promotion of tourism.
- Identification of government liaison to communicate between policy makers and stakeholders
- Promotion of incorporation of these guidelines' measures into national legislations

2.1.4 Development of a Master Plan for Ecotourism Development in Ramsar Sites, Buffer Zones and Corridors in the Sava River Basin

OBJECTIVES:

1. Define unified path for development of sustainable ecotourism and ensure its consistency with Regional and Global Ecotourism Standards
2. Contribute to development of a master plan for ecotourism in the entire Sava River Basin

Based on the results of the initial framework/baseline study, the transboundary policy recommendations and international standards established for all Ramsar Sites, a global Master Plan should be developed for all Ramsar Sites in the Sava River basin. Some of these areas already have addressed full or partial aspects of Tourism Development Master Plans, such as Lonjsko Polje – Posavina.

It is advisable that Master Plans are developed for all sites, being based on (i.e. reflecting) the approach and objective of the global Master Plan. It must also carefully integrate the expectations and capacities of local, regional and national stakeholders. The Master Plan will also conclusively identify local products, stakeholders, and target groups through a participatory process of research and analysis.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Identification of protection status of considered and potential areas and existing relevant policy agreements
- Identification of regional/national/entity/local expectations
- Identification of local products
- Identification of main stakeholders/target groups
- Identification of Program of measures

2.1.5 Establishment of Joint Certifications & Training Standards

OBJECTIVE: Promote consistency and high level of standards for ecotourism

Active involvement in international networks is a crucial part of becoming fully functioning protected areas of the highest standard. Networks such as the Europarc Federation and PAN Parks provide access to a wide range of practical expertise, development opportunities, peer support and promotional opportunities. They also provide support in dealing with policy issues at national and international level.

One of the greatest benefits is access to opportunities for certification of management standards and sustainable tourism. Both networks have certification schemes – Europarc is focused on tourism and PAN Parks encompasses all aspects of the park management. They are actually complimentary to each other – the sustainable tourism activities are parallel with development of a sustainable tourism strategy, formation of a local partner group and certification of local businesses. PAN Parks takes the tourism aspect a step further with brand development and joint marketing activities. In addition PAN Parks looks at the park holistically with regard to conservation management, wilderness areas and staff development.

Local level certification, label and branding efforts should follow international guidelines whilst developing their own very unique and locally generated identity. Quality standard labels such as the Sava River Eco-Label should be created following previously established international standards but abiding by their own, unique regional branding schemes. Eco-labeling should be well integrated into the branding and image of the region as a recognizable tourism region. Officially state recognized quality standards such as ISO 14000 environmental standards should also be a priority and guideline. Voluntary monitoring measures such as the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) are practical ways of introducing European Union standards and sound environmental practices into everyday management practices.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Development of indicators for sustainable management based on NECSTouR (<http://www.necstour.eu/necstour/home.page>) and EDEN (http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/eden/what-is-eden/index_en.htm)
- Implementation of additional Eco-labels and certificates, such as European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas² issued by EuroParc Federation
- Promotion of the incorporation of ISO 14000 family addresses various aspects of environmental management
- Promotion of the incorporation of EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme), a voluntary environmental management instrument, developed by the European Commission
- Development of transboundary training standards for workers in ecotourism in the Sava River Basin
- Assurance of consistency and strict requirements with branding

2.2 Managing Ramsar Site and Wetland Landscapes to Maximize Wetland Conservation and Public Benefits and to Preserve Their Ecosystem Services

2.2.1 Promotion of Sustainable Resource Management

OBJECTIVE: Promote and develop sustainable resources management practices at ecotourism sites

The term “sustainability standards” refers to a voluntary, usually third party-assessed, norms and standards relating to environmental, social, and ethical and safety issues, adopted by national parks to demonstrate the performance of their organizations in specific areas

In recent years, numerous standards have been established and adopted. Most of them refer to the triple bottom line of environmental quality, social equity, and economic prosperity. The basic premise of sustainability standards is twofold. Firstly, they emerged in areas where national and global legislation was weak but where the consumer and NGO movements around the globe demanded action. Secondly, protected areas and/or national parks may wish to demonstrate the environmental or ‘green’ merits of their particular area.

Sustainability Standards should be adopted and embraced as part of the parks new vision. Sustainable building, complete with energy efficiency components will in the long-term be highly beneficial and cost effective for the park in every way. A no-waste policy, with recycling, composting and reusing should officially adopted as part of park policy. The leave no trace policy, where visitors carry-out everything they’ve brought in should also be part of the overall sustainability goals of the park and visitor satisfaction.

There are guidelines and criteria for energy efficiency (EU), Leave no trace, and recycling. The Europark charter has clear and concise guidelines on tourism certification which includes sustainability standards. These are several key factors for waste water, waste management, sustainable building and energy efficiency:

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Assurance of general good practice principles

² <http://www.europarc.org/uploaded/documents/460.pdf>

- Tourism developers plan for sustainable tourist facilities that reduce impacts on the environment and ecosystem services
- Businesses implement a practice that reduces all forms of pollution including light, noise, ozone depleting compounds, air and solid contaminants.
- Purchasing policies emphasize environmentally friendly products
- Establishment of sustainable water use system
 - Water sources are indicated, measured and policies implemented to conserve and reduce consumption
 - Conserve water within buildings, hotels, restaurants, and offices
- Establishment of sustainable wastewater management
 - Wastewater (sewage, grey-water from hotels, storm water from parking areas/gardens) is effectively treated, reduced and reused when possible
- Establishment of sustainable waste management
 - Solid waste polices are implemented to reduce waste that is not recycled or reduced
 - Composting, recycling, limited packaging, reusable products
 - Use of toxic and dangerous chemicals are controlled and minimized and substituted with ecologically friendly products where possible.
- Establishment of sustainable energy use
 - Energy consumption is measured, reduced and where possible replaced with renewable energy, especially within tourism buildings and park management offices
 - Greenhouse gas emissions are measured and controlled, and procedures are implemented to reduce and offset emissions to achieve climate neutrality
- Establishment of sustainable use of consumer goods
 - Disposable and consumable goods are measured for implementation of policies that reduce and reuse resources
- Reduction of light and noise pollution

All of these factors – besides being cost effective – help build a green label brand for the region. The parks should use this green label as part of its marketing and visual identity and help set the standard for businesses in the wider region.

2.2.2 Facility Planning and Infrastructure Development

OBJECTIVE: Establish regional expectations for land management and tourism facility development

This key objective should be implemented as part of the Master Plan process and in collaboration with local authorities on development and planning issues in and around Ramsar Sites protected areas. Zoning is part of the official legislation regulating protected areas and is clearly outlined in management plans (when available).

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Definition of planning expectations and development limits for each ecotourism site
 - Core/Restricted-use areas
 - Bird nesting, rare plants, sensitive cultural resources
 - Buffer zones
 - Tourism activity zones

- Hiking trails, kayaking, biking,
- Facilities and infrastructure areas
 - Gift shops, offices, restaurants, hotels
- Research zones and education areas
- Traditional management zones
 - Fish hatcheries
 - Organic farming and use of traditional crops
 - Fishing; Selective forestry
- Creation of land use map for each site with current and future development of different zones

2.2.3 Monitoring, Reporting and Adaptive Management

OBJECTIVE: Ensure the long-term protection of sites to prevent damage, or cumulative impacts of tourism

An important conservation and resource management activity is that of research and monitoring. Without accurate reliable data about the past and current situation of the park and its eco-systems it is impossible to establish an effective management regime. Under the current structures many of the protected areas do not have management capacities that would include sufficient care of ecological services and cultural heritage of the areas. With the redefinition of the priorities to strengthen conservation activities, it is recommended the inclusion of specialist ecologists and cultural heritage specialists in the staff structure.

This will enable the Ramsar Sites managers to have the most accurate information and capacity to manage the conservation of sensitive eco-systems and vulnerable cultural heritage sites in their sites, buffer zones and tourism corridors, as well as adapt the tourism and conservation management measures to possible habitat changes caused by tourism, visitation, climate etc.

An important part of the role of these staff members will also be to liaise with other institutions and academic research projects that want to undertake research in the park. This will provide a co-ordination of research activities – enabling the park to guide the focus of research to priority areas and maximize the benefits for the park. In-house expertise will also increase the quality of monitoring and research carried out by both rangers and by external individuals and institutions.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Standardization of data collection techniques and compile data in a central location for access by Ramsar Site managers
- Establishment of data consistency maintain system to avoid conflicts in policy interpretations and regulations
- Focus on qualitative and quantitative data to document changes in wetland conditions and to monitor disturbances to ecosystems
- Establishment of system to track visitor usage (e.g. number, season, origin)
- Collection of annual data on economic and ecological conditions at each site and provide an annual summary
 - Water Quality
 - Wildlife Utilization

- Etc.
- Establishment of record system for positive and negative aspects of management and development on the natural resources at each Ramsar Site
- Collaboration on tourism development and planning both locally and regionally
- Development of the system to track the market trends and economic conditions within the tourism sector and communities peripheral to the Ramsar Sites
- Establishment of success/failure reporting (tourism and conservation) system
- Promotion of the improvement and statistical and analytical information relating to tourism
- Establishment of reporting system and mechanisms for all stakeholders to participate in monitoring and reporting, where problems or changes are observed by businesses, visitors, landowners etc.(e.g. animal behavior, rapid increase or decrease of visitors) so that relevant authorities are aware of the circumstances
- Establishment of the biodiversity (particularly native species and ecosystems) in good ecological status.

2.3 Sustainable Economic Development

The state of each of the Ramsar Sites in the Sava River Basin is inextricably linked to the well-being of its communities; its long-term viability is dependent upon the sustained vitality of local communities and the continued support of people who live and work in, and visit the protected areas. As such, the Ramsar Site designation should benefit the local economy and local communities in ways that are sustainable and which work to conserve and enhance the Protected Wetlands special qualities. The benefit is mutual.

A variety of businesses operate in and around the Ramsar Sites. Some of these are considering the environmental impacts of their activities in an effort to become more sustainable and resilient to future changes. Whilst these forces may seem to hinder future development, they can also be seen as opportunities for innovation that help deliver the Ramsar Sites purposes and duty: developing microgeneration of renewable energy, creating niche markets for sustainable agricultural products, capitalizing on Ramsar Site branded products or designing sustainable buildings, as examples.

2.3.1 Regional Branding & Marketing

OBJECTIVE: Raise the profile of the Sava River Basin areas as a premier destination

In order to raise the profile of the Sava River Basin areas as a premier destination, efforts need to be made at several different levels – strengthening the quality of the offer, developing a strong brand identity and promoting the brand. It is suggested that this activity is carried out in a parallel process across the whole of the Ramsar Site network in the Sava River Basin region. There is potential for the development of a visual brand identity that encompasses the regional network but at the same time allows a strong individual identity for each of the protected areas.

A good example of that approach is the visual identity developed by the Croatian Authorities for national parks and protected areas, such as in Lonjsko Polje. Each park had a visual design created that was based on iconic species or landscape features special to each park. The strong clean graphic design brought many advantages – visitors were immediately aware that they were in a Forest Park, the identity could be used across all communication and interpretation material, and the quality of the design brought commercial potential through sales of souvenirs such as t-shirts and mugs. Often visitors

would try to collect a set of all the parks promoting economic benefits for local communities through tourism.

The use of the visual identity in a prominent manner is critical for ensuring that visitors and transit traffic realizes that they are in the Ramsar Site. Gateway signage should be high profile at all exit and entry points of the park. This also helps to raise awareness and also local pride in the park. Consistent identity and house style should be applied over all new publications of the national park, the website and also extended to the promotional identity of the region. Under activities to help promote and develop local economic development, it is suggested that a template is created that can be adapted to produce promotional leaflets for each of the local businesses that have a consistent approach. This helps strengthen the identity of the park, reduces costs for local businesses, helps promote the partnership approach and can be compiled into a folder for use at travel fairs and other promotional events.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Creation of an Sava Eco-Label and Ecotourism label
- Development of marketing pilot plans developed for cross border regions
- Development of promotional material

2.3.2 Operational Expectations of Tourists, Communities, Tourism Industry and Other Stakeholders

OBJECTIVE: Promote behavioral adaptations to encourage conservation and protection of ecosystem services, through community development.

Sustainable tourism is an excellent tool to use if you want to simultaneously protect nature and stimulate regional development around a protected area. In addition, if one is to respect international standards and governmental commitments, then sustainable tourism is really the only activity that can be undertaken in accordance with most categories of protected areas.

The role of the local tourism associations and development agencies should be focused on the development of the tourism offer of the protected areas and the surrounding area – not just that that offered by the parks themselves but also supporting private enterprise development. The Sava River Region should be seen as a destination and the tourism team of the park should lead on the role of destination management.

Recognized best practice for tourism across Ramsar Sites globally is now focusing on building strategic local partnerships rather than standing alone. It is enshrined at national level in the tourism policy of the US National Parks Service, for example. It ensures the best possible results in providing quality experiences for visitors, ensuring a common approach to conservation and creating sustainable economies in and around the parks.

This approach is at the core of both the recommended protected area certification schemes for the Sava River Basin – the ‘European Charter for Sustainable Tourism’ and ‘PAN Parks Certification’. The process of going through both or either of these schemes will provide a good framework and structure to guide tourism development in the Sava Region.

The role of the Ramsar Site management will be to facilitate the development of this initiative and host to the secretariat activities. It should not be to control the group. The group should work together to help refine the offer of the protected areas in the Sava Region and develop a strategic approach to

sustainable tourism development.

The confidence of visitors is based on assurance of quality – this would be an essential role of the tourism team to develop this concept and culture. The development or implementation of an eco-tourism quality certification should be progressed with regard to existing and new development around the site. A strong approach to certification is achieved through the collective involvement of the tourism group. Ideally standards should be based on recognized international models but adapted to fit the best achievable standards within the regional context.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Provision of educational briefings, literature and demonstrations to encourage sustainable visitor behavior and minimize impacts to the local cultural and ecosystem services
- Distributions of fairly and effectively policies and investment opportunities
- Encouragement of entrepreneurship to stimulate competition (eg. promote entrepreneurship, and small and medium sized enterprises(SMEs))
- Support and development innovative services and products
- Promotion of a year-long tourism to overcome seasonal tourism
- Development of tourist services diversity
- Promotion of preservation of cultural heritage and local economies through local arts and crafts
 - Development of a collaborative code of conduct for the indigenous and local communities
- Education of all park staff and managers on the proper use of resources and measures to prevent negative impacts on the ecosystem services and the local communities/culture
 - Establishment of training for guides and rangers to teach tourist and community members about resource conservation; live by example to change perceptions and behaviors
- Establishment and enforcement of monitoring customer satisfaction mechanism, through collect customer feedback, and where possible make corrective measures.
- Promotion of business policies pertaining to environment and social development
 - Provision of opportunities for businesses to create awareness of cultural and environmental sensitivities
 - Establishment, promotion and assurance of businesses incorporate into their management plans a long-term sustainability management system.
 - Assurance that businesses comply with the national legislation, while promoting the highest international standard.
 - Promotion of businesses to actively support infrastructure, community development and social initiatives.
 - Assurance accurate reporting by the businesses
 - Promotion businesses to buy locally and fair-trade services
 - Emphasis on quality and sustainability of jobs to ensure worker's rights, well-being and a living wage
 - Implementation of policies against the commercial exploitation
 - Offer and implementation of equal opportunities hiring policies
 - Provision of training and education opportunities for employee development

- Requirement of all employees in the ecotourism sector, to receive training to ensure preparedness for their role within the sustainable ecotourism management

2.4 Stakeholder Involvement and Community Participation

It is the general practice in most countries that government policy encourages protected area authorities to work closely with their communities to explore new and innovative ways to live sustainably within the context of the protected areas purposes and duty. Although there is a high interdependence within the area of Sava River region, at present the parks in general do not have the resources or the know-how to create a sustainable development approach for both the park and its communities.

Issues such as community infrastructure, transport, building design, settlement patterns and renewable energy generation are not tackled at a community level but are rather left to a top-down decision making pattern that often excludes community participation and henceforth, the sustainability aspects.

2.4.1 Identification of Stakeholders

OBJECTIVE: Identify a balanced and equitable representation of stakeholders

For any development endeavor to be successful, it must have a participatory approach. Development in protected areas such as Ramsar Sites requires a broad range of expertise and inclusivity. The action plan will carefully identify stakeholders – from experts in the field of eco-tourism, karst topography, wetlands, forestry ecology, marine biology to local & national governments, park management, community leaders, NGO's and tour operators. The role of these stakeholders needs also to be clearly defined in order to maximize their skills and know-how and not to create a platform that would lead to confusion.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Map of the interested/existing stakeholders
- Identification of stakeholder interest, influence, importance and awareness
- Definition of their role in development of ecotourism

2.4.2 Stakeholder Collaboration

OBJECTIVE: Encourage collaboration/communication between stakeholders

In order to promote transparency and cohesiveness a working group (formal or informal) can be established at the local level, with certain key representatives being allocated to represent the micro-locations at the Sava River region level. This most certainly should be the Sava River Basin level. Having multi-levels groups ensures inclusivity at every level and also provides a platform for transparency and decision sharing at every level. The agreement from the Ivanic Grad conference (held on December 13 14, 2012) was that the ISRBC can provide initial coordination for such a stakeholder forum. The regional working group should define the parameters of cooperation but there are several key areas that should be highlighted:

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Definition of area of work/influence of a stakeholder forum
- Establishment an stakeholder forum and designate an ecotourism lead to communicate with government and policy makers

- Consider a rotation for the lead to equally engage all sectors
- Encouragement of transparency of reporting among the stakeholders on activities, plans and opportunities
- Establishment of avenues for stakeholder communication and provide opportunities for information sharing:
 - Websites, collaboration sites (e.g. share point, FTP)
 - Schedule workshops, conferences, trainings and education
 - Develop a data base to track funding opportunities (e.g. grants)
- Establishment of collaboration of the Forum with the scientific community with the aim of providing environmental, socioeconomic and other data through coordinated research activity
- Encouragement of the collaboration and cooperation between national tourism offices, national authorities, statistical institutes and other institutions
- Encouragement of a stakeholder review of and participation in upgrading of guidelines

2.4.3 Community Outreach and Engagement

OBJECTIVE: Engage the Community in ecotourism development and wetland protection and provide educational opportunities

The community can and should be an integral part of the park's identity. It should be a mutually beneficial relationship that nurtures both conservation principles and sustainable livelihoods for the communities in and around the park (and indeed in the wider region).

Community engagement should be facilitated across the activities of the park by a number of activities – the development of the Local Tourism Partnership, through local economic development activities, daily contact between rangers and community users of the park and environmental education activities targeting young people, visitors, fishing and hunting associations, and schools in local communities.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Provision of education on cultural, historical and natural heritage, in the service (for the needs) of tourism development, for:
 - schools
 - local community
 - visitors
 - fishing and hunting associations
- Promotion of and encourage establishment and/or work of artist guilds and art fairs; musician guilds
- Promotion and encouragement of nature or science exhibitions
- Annual ecological events or environmental conferences
- Organization of community events for locally recognized skills or traditional practices
- Promote and encourage local business development or community projects (neighborhood development)
- Promotion of marketing campaigns focusing on awareness for tourists on destination sources, means of transportation, workers exploitation and interactions with the local residents
- Provision of better information to wetland users. Awareness-raising and sensitization activities are taking place to highlight the importance of biodiversity conservation.

2.5 Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity

2.5.1 Ecological Considerations, Protection and Management of Biodiversity

OBJECTIVE: Determine ecological status to be able to minimize negative impacts on the ecological status.

Conservation and sustainable development is the primary role of most Ramsar Sites throughout the world today. Although there are ongoing conservation activities within the Sava River Basin area, with staff specifically tasked for that purpose, it is not always at the forefront of activities within protected areas. This is largely due to

1. Inadequate resources to focus on conservation and
2. A conceptual gap that allows hunting and exploitation.

A baseline assessment should be implemented to determine the multi-layered facets of sustainable development challenges within protected areas. An in-depth analysis of areas such as sensitive habitats or nesting areas should limit or eliminate human activity in those areas. The carrying capacity of each respective area should be also be determined to regulated and evaluate human impact on the environment. Long term effects of human use also need to be taken into consideration.

The overall conservation management structure should have an inventory of wildlife and native species.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Established lists and maps of endangered species and ecosystems
- Documentation on past alterations and mapping of existing environmental conditions at Ramsar Sites
- Identification of sensitive habitats/nesting areas or culturally sensitive areas to remain off limits to human use
- Determination of carrying capacity of sites
- Recognition of potential for long-term impacts/cumulative impacts
- Establishment of Ecological Baseline useful for recognizing and measuring impacts
- Assurance that any harvested species that are sold, displayed, consumed or traded comply with all regulation and ensure a sustainable utilization of the wildlife.
- Assurance that all captive wildlife and protected species are held by legally authorized individuals and entities
- Development and implementation of policies that protect native species and prevent the introduction of invasive alien species.
- Promotion of businesses to contribute to the protection and conservation of wetlands and other areas with high biodiversity value.
- Facilitation of conservation management policies to limit and minimize the negative impacts and disturbances of natural ecosystems and prevent adverse effects to the viability of local populations.
- Evaluation of the existing network of established tourism offerings

2.5.2 Community- based biodiversity projects

OBJECTIVE: Develop and implement community-based biodiversity projects for the benefit of the public and wildlife

Community-based biodiversity projects should be regularly implemented by environmental NGOs, local

schools, and universities performing research activities in Ramsar Sites , buffer zones and connecting corridors, in cooperation and under coordination of relevant PA management authorities. Promotion of results of such projects at regional (Basin) as well as national level can have a multiplier effect towards new socio-economic action, and enable additional biodiversity gains within the local communities.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- Annual program of volunteer activities targeted at biodiversity protection.
- Biodiversity gained and linked to local socio-economic actions by promotion of community-based projects.

2.5.3 Awareness and understanding of the wetlands biodiversity

OBJECTIVE: Raise awareness and understanding of the wetlands biodiversity at policy level

It is urgent to increase understanding and awareness of wetland biodiversity issues to prevent the loss of ecosystem services. They are vital for human survival but today's increasing pressures (such as the impact of a growing human population, climate change, intense demands for economic growth, imperatives for poverty eradication and improving people's livelihoods,), continue to overtake precedence.

Apart from actions aimed at users and visitors of wetland areas (already addressed under focal area 2.4.3), there should be general awareness actions aimed at policy-makers and development planners, so that any development decisions take into consideration conservation of the ecosystem services. Such awareness actions should be coordinated regionally at the Sava River Basin level, preferably based on consultation among relevant PA management authorities.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- Policies that are in place to ensure that future development proposals do not harm the ecosystem services of the Ramsar Sites in any way.
- Introduction of reporting system that enables promotion of the conservation of ecosystem services in the protected wetlands.

3 Recommendations and Future Directions

Each of the five themes in the Guidelines includes: a brief description of why the theme is important to Park management, priority actions that are needed to make adequate progress toward the outcomes in the next five years, who is needed to deliver the actions, and additional actions to be considered. The list of partners is not comprehensive; it includes the principal responsible parties and should involve everyone positioned to ensure effective delivery of the actions.

Transboundary policy can be a lengthy process. There should be mechanisms put in place to work simultaneously on longer term goals such as policy development and the short term quick win goals of practical cross border cooperation. With the presently existing structures within each of the protected areas there is already room for practical cooperation. Promotions and product development (combing the existing offers at 2 or more of the designated areas) can be done immediately. A marketing pilot project has been development as an annex to this study to ensure quick and immediate action whilst working towards the long term goals outlined in this study.

3.1 PRIORITY ACTIONS 1 - Develop and sustain transboundary eco-tourism policies

The main focus of this document is to propose a blueprint on how to create and sustain transboundary eco-tourism activities in the Sava River Basin. However, in order to promote a standardized approach and to recognize the challenges of conservation and sustainable development in each of these environmentally sensitive areas, it is necessary to create a strong framework that both local stakeholders and governments can agree and comply to. This set of priority actions is therefore based on identifying, defining, and outlining the special characteristics and resources of each Ramsar Site which will lead to a comprehensive Master Plan that will guide the development practices of the protected areas of the Sava River Basin and beyond.

Theme 1: Develop and sustain transboundary eco-tourism policies

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
DEVELOP AND SUSTAIN TRANSBOUNDARY ECO-TOURISM POLICIES				
Creation of transboundary policy framework for eco-tourism development	Individual baseline studies at each Ramsar Site: mapping and resource inventory to confirm main cultural and natural characteristics and values.	Park Management w/ expert consultants	ISRBC, ENGO's, REC	Immediate Quick win
	Engage local/national governments and decision makers in creating a cross-border framework agreement to promote cooperation and compliance	ISRBC	Park Management, REC	Immediate Quick win
	Identify and delegate communication liaisons both between stakeholders as well as with government bodies/relevant authorities.	Park Management, REC, ISRBC	Municipalities, relevant ministries	regular activity
Develop Master Plan for eco-tourism in Sava River Basin with spatial plan	Based on baseline study(ies) and policy framework developed, create a comprehensive Master Plan that includes all Ramsar Sites in the Sava River Basin	Expert team in eco-tourism, spatial planning, and environmental protection	REC, ISRBC, Park Management, Farming Organizations, Local Communities, Tourism and Other Businesses, Universities, Local urban planning office.	Immediate

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
Joint Certifications and Training Standards	Utilize Master Plan to influence eco-tourism policies at both local and regional level.	REC, ISRBC, Park Management	Farming Organisations, local communities, , Tourism and Other Businesses	Long term
	Create unified approach to training and certification standards for park staff, guides, and policies and procedures for each site	Park management	REC, ISRBC	Regular activity
	Organize Ramsar Site Board & Management Group.	ISRBC	REC, Park Management	Regular activity
	Apply to Europarc for Charter status.	Park management	ISRBC, REC	Regular activity
	Apply for European Geopark status.	Park Management, ISBRC, REC	Ministry of Environment	Regular activity
	Implement environmental certification for operations within the park	Park management	ENGO, Tourism Association, certified organizations	Regular activity

3.2 PRIORITY ACTIONS 2 - Managing Ramsar Site and their landscapes to maximize wetland conservation and public benefits

The Park's landscapes comprise both natural and cultural components. Agricultural and other ecosystems, diverse landforms, wildlife, geological features, the historic environment, as well as towns and villages – among other elements – contribute to the natural and cultural heritage referenced in the Ramsar Sites primary function. Indeed, the Ramsar Site designation confers the world's highest status of protection as far as wetland ecosystem and scenic beauty are concerned. Along with wetland biodiversity, these elements have value in their own right. Ecosystem services also provide valuable benefits to local communities and visitors alike. These ecosystems and landscapes contain the natural capital that, if cared for properly, ensures the prosperity and well-being of future generations.

The Ramsar Sites and wetland landscapes are not static, though. The same natural and anthropogenic forces that have contributed to forming the existing landscapes also influence their future form, in both desirable and undesirable ways. Given the scale of impact associated with some of these changes, such as climate change or change in land usage, protected wetlands values and spatial distribution in the Sava River Basin may be adversely affected. Consequently, active management is necessary to mitigate undesirable processes and optimize the success of conservation efforts and delivery of public benefits. This responsibility is shared across the wide range of stakeholders concerned with the future of the Ramsar Sites and their diverse ecosystem and landscapes, further emphasizing the need for an integrated and cohesive approach to their management. A cooperative approach will increase the likelihood of continued success.

Theme 2: Managing Ramsar Sites and their landscapes to maximize wetland conservation and public benefits

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
MANAGING LANDSCAPES				
Sustainable Resource Management	Secure comprehensive plan for waste and waste water treatment/management	Park management, local authorities	Local community, ISRBC, REC	Immediate actions
	Design and implement a program of energy efficiency, recycling, and utilizing renewable energies	ISRBC, Park Management	REC, ENGO,	Regular activity
	Identify sensitive areas	REC , Park Management	ENGO, local planning authorities	Immediate
Facilitate Planning and Infrastructure Development	Define planning expectations and development limits (carrying capacity) in and around the Ramsar Site	Park Management, local government ISRBC	Local community and businesses, REC,	Regular activity
	Implement corporate education strategies to raise awareness and understanding of the sites biodiversity, landscapes and environment.	ENGO, Park Management	REC, Ministry of Environment	Regular activity
	Create Land-use map that will be available for local community, private sector, and local gov't.	Park Management	ISRBC, REC	Regular activity
	MANAGING THE CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE ENVIRONMENT			
Recognize and enhance community's role in managing the Ramsar Sites	Develop and implement mechanisms for actively involving community members in the decision-making and management of the Ramsar Site(s) and their landscape.	Park Management	Local Farmers, Farming Associations, ENGO's, REC	Regular activity
	Develop a demonstration project to preserve traditional land-use methods.	REC	Park Management, ISRBC, Farming Association, ENGO	Regular activity

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
Develop a research and management agenda for the natural ecosystems and environment of the protected area(s)	Explore better ways to utilize local community groups in developing solutions to address issues facing the areas community.	Park Management, REC	Local Farmers, Farming Associations, ISRBC, ENGO	Regular activity
	Secure funds and implement one large, area-based land management project	REC, ISRBC, Park Management	Farming Organizations, Local Communities, Tourism and Other Businesses, Universities, Research Institutions, Local urban planning office.	Immediate
	Implement an ecosystem approach to wetland, habitat and wildlife management.	REC, Park Management	Farming Organisations, local communities, ISRBC, Tourism and Other Businesses	Regular activity
MANAGING WETLANDS				
Monitoring, Reporting and Adaptive Management	Research and implement widely used systems for data collection and wetland management in Ramsar Sites	Park management, University, ministry	local government, ENGO, ISRBC	Long term and strategic
	Establish reporting system and mechanisms for all stakeholders to participate in monitoring and reporting	Park management, University, ministry	local government, ENGO, ISRBC; Landowners, local community	Long term and strategic
	Assess underground aquifer systems of karst and their effect on surface wetland ecosystems	Park Management, university, Ministry of Forestry, Ag, and Water Management	Ministry of Environment, REC, ENGO	immediate
	Implement EU best practice Wetland and Woodland protection strategies at all SRB Ramsar Sites.	REC, Forestry Service	Park Management, REC, Ministry of Environment	Regular activity

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
MANAGING VISITOR IMPACTS				
Manage visitor impacts to the wetlands ecosystem landscapes, habitats and wildlife	Implement visitor management of Management Plans.	Park management	REC, ISRBC, Tourism Businesses, User Groups	Regular activity
	Develop and promote a code of conduct per protected area (area or activity based)	ISRBC,	Park management, Tourism Businesses, User Groups, REC	Regular activity
MANAGING GEODIVERSITY				
Protect and manage the wetlands geodiversity	Conduct recognized Geological/ Geomorphological Sites audit.	University	REC, ENGO, Ministry of Environment	Regular activity
	Plan and undertake site based conservation project work on sites of geological importance.	University, Ministry of Environment	ISRBC, REC, ENGO, Park Management	Regular activity
	Monitor Ramsar Site locations with geological importance and take action to ensure their favorable conservation status.	Park Management, University	ISRBC, ENGO,	Regular activity

3.3 PRIORITY ACTIONS 3 - Sustainable Economic Development

Tourism provides an essential component of the local economy in each of the Ramsar Sites in the Sava River Basin. Along with economic benefits, though, tourists can create additional pressures on wetland resources and local communities beyond those exerted by other forces of change, such as increased footpath erosion and carbon emissions. Managers, then, need to work with tourism businesses and activity providers to minimize the impacts of tourism whilst maximizing benefits locally. Local tourism businesses in cooperation with the park managements and local and national authorities need to make greater strides in developing sustainable transport networks, creating local supply chains, investing in local communities and promoting sustainable economic development. Actions in this Plan will continue to improve upon these efforts.

Successful management of Ramsar Sites is not complete without efforts to promote understanding and raise awareness about the protected area(s), its resources and its key management issues and practices. The importance of this role is enshrined in the Ramsar Sites second purpose.

Communication is necessary to garner funding to support efforts to maintain and enhance the Ramsar Sites biodiversity, their natural beauty and cultural heritage. Understanding and awareness of their values are vital to promoting local pride and sense of place and to contributing to the social and economic well-being of local communities. These services are also effective means of encouraging responsible use of the area by visitors. They can be used to illustrate to the wider community the

advantages of organic farming, for example. In all cases good communication and dissemination of information are best used to convey the importance of the Ramsar Site and the opportunities it has to offer everyone.

Theme 3: Sustainable economic development

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
DEVELOP AND SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE TOURISM				
Regional Branding and Marketing	Promote fair trade and support of local economies to visitors and potential partners.	Businesses, Community Organizations	Tourism Associations, park management	Regular activity
	Create Sava Eco Labels to increase visibility and insert quality control mechanisms	ISRBC	Park management, tourism associations	Regular activity
	Promote the use of local food to businesses and visitors.	Park Management, Tourism Association	Farming Unions, Local Businesses, Tourism Service Providers	Immediate
	Create thematic trails for hikers/bikers – bird routes, ancient migration trails, etc.	Businesses, Community Organizations	Tourism Associations, park management	Regular activity
	Develop web based services which provide clear, coordinated and important pre-visit information and promotion of opportunities.	Professional Agency	Tourism Providers, Local Authorities, Geopark Management Group, Park Management	Immediate quick-win
	Demonstration Project: Develop a marketing pilot	Marketing agency	Tourism association, park management	Immediate quick-win

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
Funding Opportunities	plan for pre-existing tourism offers in two or more of the Ramsar Sites			
	Develop the Ramsar Site local interpretative partnerships and one for the Sava River Basin Ramsar Sites	ISRBC, Park Management	Community groups, ENGO	● Regular activity
	Develop interpretative content of Ramsar Site themed publications and events.	Professional agency	Park Management, REC, ISRBC, Tourism Association	Regular activity
	Increase the bilingual delivery of interpretation, information and education.	Professional agency	Tourism Association, Tourism Providers	Regular activity
	Investigate sources of funding and various ways of self-financing	Park management, ISRBC, REC	Local NGO's, local municipality	Immediate
	Research and write quality project proposals for EU funds and international credit lines.	Park management, REC, ISRBC	Consultancy firm, local authority	Immediate quick win
	Improve sustainable economic impact of tourism	Seek funding to develop and implement marketing strategy.	Park Management, Tourism Association	Tourism businesses, user groups
Encourage day visitors to stay		Tourism Service Providers, Tourism Association(s)	Park Management	Regular activity

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
Monitor tourism impacts	longer and spend more by improving content/products offered in Ramsar Sites.			
	Monitor agreed sustainable tourism indicators.	Park Management, ISRBC	REC, local community, service providers	Regular activity
	Implement EMAS voluntary audit system developed by European Union	Park management	REC, local community, ENGO, service providers	Regular activity
Operational Expectations	Develop indicators for sustainable management based on NECSTouR and EDEN	ISRBC, park management	REC, local community, local authorities	Regular activity
	Organize Sustainable Tourism Partnership and Tourism Conference.	ISRBC, REC, Tourism Association	Park Management, tourism businesses	● Regular activity
	Maintain regular contact and practice transparency about protected area issues with all Sava River Basin stakeholders	Park management	Municipalities, development agencies, ISRBC	Regular activity
	Maintain and develop business training programs aimed at improving business involvement in protected areas.	Regional Development Agencies, Park Management	ENGO, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Environment	Regular activity
	Develop locality and themed business clusters program	Park Management, Businesses	Community organizations, farming associations	Regular activity
	Invest in green services and products to deliver interpretation, education and	Business, Ministry of Environment	All Partners, Individuals	Long term & strategic

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
	information and demonstrate use to the public.			
	Provide training and development for businesses and information providers to ensure delivery of a first class welcome, high quality information, interpretation and interaction.	Park Management, Regional Development Agency	Tourism Associations, Tourism Businesses	Regular activity
	Provide local people with access to information, interpretation and education on their environment and promote the benefits on offer.	Park Management	Tourism Association, User Groups,	Regular activity
FARMING				
Support farmers in changes affecting the future of farm practices and businesses	Support farmers in changes to farm practices, especially where it involves development of specialist local products (e.g., traditional organic breeds farm processing).	Farmers Local Communities,	Park Management, Local Authorities, Farming Unions,	Regular activity
	Promote increased procurement of locally produced food by schools, hospitals and other public services.	Local Authorities, Chamber of Commerce	Farming Unions, Local Businesses, Park Management	Regular activity
	Research and support options for local food/ produce	Local authorities,	Farming Unions, Local Businesses, Park	Regular activity

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
	marketing.		Management	
	Work with interested farmers to develop products and services that capitalize on the Ramsar Site status.	Park Management	Local Farmers, Local businesses, Tourism providers	Regular activity
	Support farmers who wish to diversify in non-agricultural areas.	Community Organizations	Local Authorities, Farming Unions, Park Management	Regular activity

3.4 PRIORITY ACTIONS 4 - Stakeholder Involvement and Community Participation

Ramsar Site authorities in the Sava River Basin have a duty to foster the economic and social well-being of their local communities. The Ramsar Site charter encourages protected wetland authorities to work closely with their communities to explore new and innovative ways to live sustainably within the context of the Ramsar Site purposes and duty. This includes examining community infrastructure, farming techniques, transport, building design, settlement patterns and renewable energy generation. These options should encourage the vitality and viability of the Ramsar Site communities, towns and villages with sustainable development as the end result. Simultaneously, stakeholders must conserve and enhance the characteristics that provide the Ramsar Site communities with their cultural identity or sense of place. The actions that follow are steps toward this sustainable future.

Theme 4: Stakeholder involvement and community participation

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION				
Encourage and support community-led initiatives that build awareness of and resilience to climate change and	Provide outreach programs to local groups to increase awareness and use of local opportunities for recreation, reducing travel and associated carbon emissions.	ENGO, Ministry of Environment, local municipality	Park management, ENGO	Regular activity

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
carbon emissions	Create links between all parties including park management, private sector, NGO sector and public sector	ISRBC, REC	Park management, local business	Regular activity
	Assist the development of appropriate renewable energy schemes that produce mutually beneficial outcomes for local communities and the local environment.	Ministries, local authorities, local business	Park management, ISRBC	Regular activity
	Identify farmers in the Ramsar Sites utilizing sustainable farming practices and promote them as best practice examples throughout the area and beyond.	Farming Associations, local government	Park management, farmers,	Regular activity
	Collaborate with local farming associations/co-ops to identify on-farm, sustainable energy projects and promote these as examples of best practice.	Local municipality, Ministry of Agriculture	Farmers Association, ENGO, local community	Regular activity

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
Deliver a Sustainable Development Fund which meets the strategic priorities of the Ramsar Site(s) Management Plan(s)	Provide an affordable, accessible and effective sustainable transport network that meets the needs of residents and visitors.	Local municipality, transport company	ENGO, Transport Ministry	Long term and strategic
	Develop and support by way of a Sustainable Development Fund community based sustainable transport initiatives designed to reduce the carbon footprint.	Communities, Businesses including Social Enterprises	Park Management, ISRBC, REC	Long term and strategic
	Develop and support by way of the Sustainable Development Fund community based visitor transport initiatives including access to visitor "hot spots."	Communities, Businesses	Park Management , REC, Other Agencies	Long term and strategic
	Develop and support by way of the Sustainable Development Fund sustainable food marketing and the promotion and consumption of local produce.	Communities, Businesses	Farming Associations, Park Management Other Agencies	Long term and strategic

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
	Develop and support by way of the Sustainable Development Fund projects designed to provide environmentally benign access to water.	Communities, Businesses	Park Management, ISRBC	Long term and strategic
	Generate greater awareness and understanding of sustainability issues related to renewable energy, energy efficiency and other innovative measures designed to reduced communities' ecological impact across the protected wetlands area.	Communities, Businesses	ENGO, Ministry of Environment	Regular activity
COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT				
Support local food production	Encourage market gardens and local markets.	Farming Associations	Farming Unions, Local Businesses,	Regular activity
	Support organic agriculture practices	Local Communities	ENGO, farming associations / coops	Regular activity
COMMUNITY PRIDE				
Support initiatives which enhance community pride in and	Promote the use of recycled, secondary and waste materials where compatible with the local planning	REC	Park Management, local authorities	Regular activity

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
benefit from the Ramsar Site designation	policies.			
	Improve and facilitate the prevention and removal of litter through community action, particularly from rivers and lakes.	Local Communities, ENGO's	Local Authorities, ISRBC	Immediate
	Deliver community based outreach program that increase the value of and benefit from the Ramsar Site designation.	Local Communities, Local Authorities	Park Management	Regular activity
	Provide work placement, volunteer, and other skills programs in the protected areas.	Park Management,	Youth Organizations, Accredited Training Providers	Regular activity
	Design and implement community renewal initiatives that promote local distinctiveness, a sense of community and a sense of place.	Community Organizations	Local authorities, tourism associations	Regular activity
	Promote an increase in vocational training opportunities to	Local authorities, community organizations	Accredited training providers, ENGO	Regular activity

Sub-theme/Focal	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
	improve local knowledge and skills, such as traditional low impact farming, land management skills, local culture and history.			
	Encourage projects that promote a sense of community and a sense of place, emphasizing local distinctiveness, culture and history.	Local community organization, historical societies	ENGO, Park Management	Immediate, regular activity

3.5 PRIORITY ACTIONS 5 - Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity

Biodiversity encompasses all aspects of the living world, from genetic variation among individual organisms to differences between species and habitats. Along with having its own intrinsic value, people depend on biodiversity for food, building materials, the air we breathe, even for enjoyment and spiritual renewal. Humanity’s increasing global population and mechanization has intensified demands on biodiversity whilst simplifying and fragmenting otherwise complex relationships. The loss of one species can lead to the demise of other species and potentially the loss of entire habitats. These issues apply to the Ramsar Sites as much as the wider community.

The task facing protected area managers is to conserve biological resources and enhance them where possible whilst finding new and sustainable means for economic development. International and national policies require that biodiversity is a prime consideration of all sectors of Ramsar Site management. This task will not be easy given the uncertainties of climate change or dangers of intensified development, for example, which will exacerbate the impacts of other pressures on biodiversity. The best way forward is to implement an ecosystem approach to biodiversity management which considers a holistic interaction between different components of a wetland area. This will be done in cooperation with all of the Ramsar Sites biodiversity partners.

Theme 5: Conserving and enhancing biodiversity

	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
Ecological Considerations	Create a list of activities threatening Ramsar Sites in the Sava River Basin	Park management	ISRBC, REC, ENGO,	Immediate quick win
	Provide management advice and training to area landowners.	Park Management	REC, ENGO	Regular activity
	Implement protection mechanisms for endemic species	Park Management	Local government	immediate
	Restore and enhance ecological connectivity along the Sava River Basin.	ISRBC, Park Management	Local government, REC, ENGO's	Regular activity
	Establish key conservation actions for the Ramsar Sites in the Sava River basin	ISRBC	Park Management	Immediate
	Develop and implement community-based biodiversity projects for the benefit of the public and wildlife	Deliver an annual program of volunteer activities targeted at biodiversity protection.	Park Management, ISRBC	Local schools, universities, ENGO's
Link biodiversity gain through local socio-economic action by promoting		REC, ENGO, Park Management	ENGO, local business,	Regular activity

	Actions	Lead Organization(s)	Partners	Action Timeline
Raise awareness and understanding of the wetlands biodiversity	community-based projects.			
	Influence policies to ensure that future development proposals do not harm the rich biodiversity of the Ramsar Sites in any way.	Park Management, ISRBC	ENGO, REC,	Immediate
	Report and promote the biodiversity conservation work undertaken in the protected wetlands using a recognized reporting system.	Park Management, ISRBC	REC, ENGO	Regular activity

3.6 Sources of Financing

Financing for the action steps outlined in this document for transboundary eco-tourism development can come from various sources at all levels. These opportunities need to be well researched and regularly followed by the relevant stakeholders in order to secure the funding needed for the investment needed in developing sustainable economic activities in both each respective Ramsar Site as well as collectively.

Local	Municipal funds, local grant schemes, local ENGO's, sponsorships, local business donations, income generation from tourism activities, entry and service fees, taxes
National	Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Agriculture, corporate sponsorship, environmental funds
Regional	Most CBC funds are available from EU CBC initiatives.
European	EU Delegation, Europarc, Geopark, Panparc, GIS, SIDA, ADA
International	WWF, UNDP, USAID, UNEP, JICA, IUCN

3.7 Action Plan Timeframe

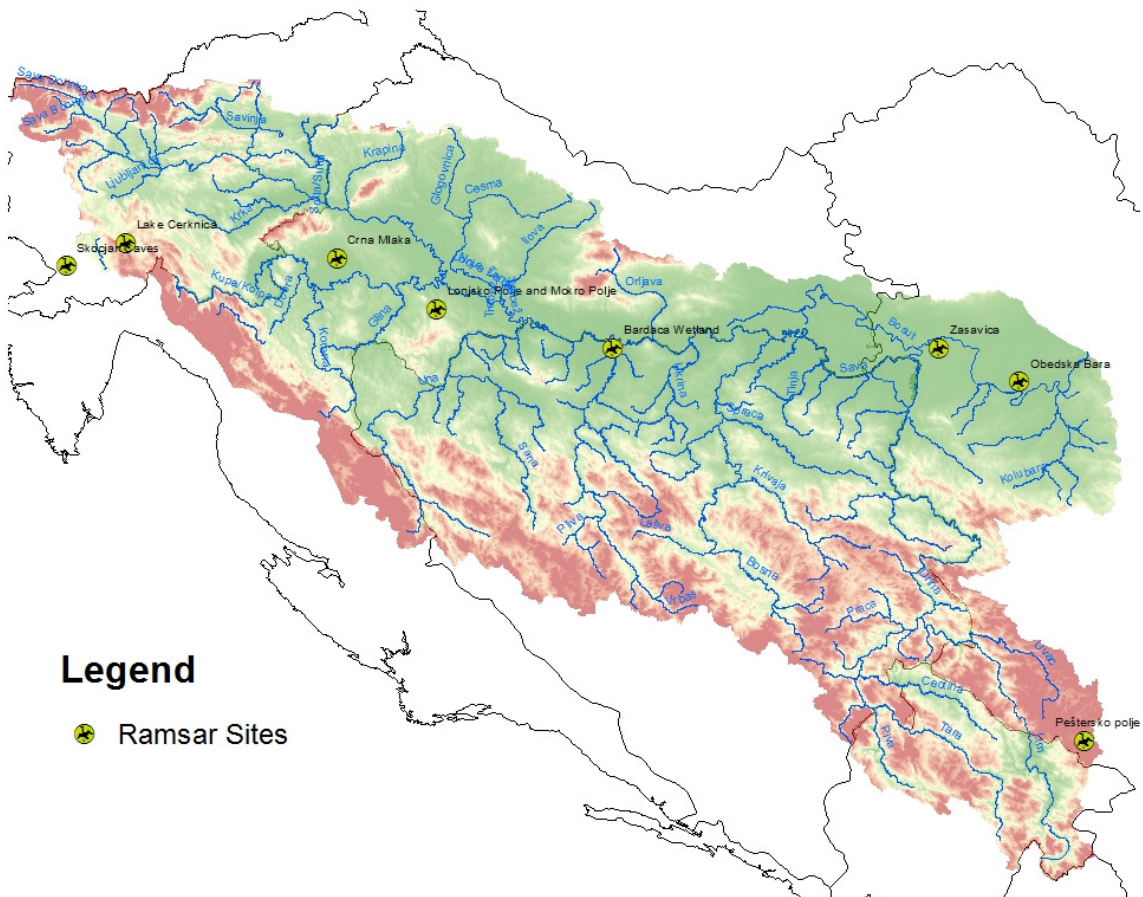
It should be noted that this action plan is not in itself a project but rather the commencement of a long and complex process. Specific timeframes are more difficult to place on ongoing processes that will take many years to successfully develop and maintain. Therefore the timeline expresses more of the priority order and the length of the process in 5-year terms.

THEME	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
1. Develop and sustain transboundary eco-tourism activities					
• Creation of transboundary policy framework for eco-tourism development	X				
• Develop Master Plan for eco-tourism development in Sava River Basin with a spatial plan	X	X			
• Joint Certification and Training Standards	X	X	X	X	X
2. Managing Ramsar Sites and their landscapes to maximize wetland conservation and public benefits					
• Sustainable Resource Management	X	X	X	X	X
• Facilitate Planning and Infrastructure Development	X	X	X	X	X
• Managing the natural and cultural heritage		X	X	X	X
• Managing Wetlands	X	X	X	X	X
• Managing Visitor Impacts		X	X	X	X
• Managing Geodiversity				X	X
3. Sustainable economic development					
• Regional Branding and Marketing	X	X	X	X	X
• Develop partnership working with businesses		X	X	X	X
• Identify Funding Opportunities	X	X			
• Improve sustainable economic impact of tourism			X	X	X
• Monitor tourism impacts			X	X	X
• Operational Expectations	X	X	X	X	X
• Support farmers in changes affecting the future of farm practices and businesses		X	X	X	X
4. Stakeholder involvement and community participation					
• Encourage and support community-led initiatives that build awareness of and resilience to climate change and carbon emissions			X	X	X
• Stakeholder Collaboration	X	X	X	X	X
• Community Outreach and Engagement	X	X	X	X	X
5. Conserving and enhancing biodiversity					
• Ecological Considerations	X	X	X	X	X
• Develop and implement community-based biodiversity projects for the benefit of the public and wildlife		X	X	X	X
• Raise awareness and understanding of wetlands biodiversity		X	X	X	X

Appendix A: Ramsar Sites within the SRB

Reference Ramsar Sites

Bosnia and Herzegovina	Croatia	Serbia	Slovenia
Bardača Wetland	Lonjsko Polje and Mokro polje	Zasavica	Cerknica Lake
	Crna Mlaka	Obedska Bara	
		Pestersko polje	
			Skocjan Caves- <i>not in Sava River Basin</i>



Bardača Wetland (Bosnia and Herzegovina)



Ramsar Site	3,500 ha
Buffer Zone	
Natural values	This Ramsar Site is an important bird area that is situated in the Sava River floodplain. The fishponds that have been constructed since the early 20th century and further enlarged in the 1960s for irrigation purposes make up for half of this site. Its importance is due to the ponds, floodplain forest, meadow and swamp areas that support a range of endangered species, especially birds that use it as a stopover site. It is rich in fish fauna (e.g., <i>Gymnocephalus schraetzer</i> , <i>Zingel streber</i>) and contains a large range of amphibians such as <i>Salamandra salamandra</i> , <i>rana dalmatina</i> , and the pond tortoise <i>Emys orbicularis</i> . There has been an interruption in the hydrological regime due to the construction of channels, pump stations, and the damming of nearby streams. Presently, pressures to this site are from permanent, intensive agricultural practices such as intensive pasturing and the unwise use of fertilizers and pesticides. Primary economic generation is derived from Aquaculture and fish production
Cultural Values	
Tourist Activities	Historic Hotel and Restaurant Local Restaurant with Local Food University Research Area Habitat Restoration, Enhancement and Preservation Indigenous Livestock Grazing and Fish Farming Swimming and Picnic Area
Manager	Marko Miholjčić Archeologic national Park Donja Dolina-Bardača Ilica 11. Novembra b.b. 78420 Srbac Tel: +387 51 740 001 E-mail: marko.miholjcic@gmail.com http://www.bardaca.com/

Lonjsko Polje and Mokro polje(Croatia)



Photo: Boris Krstinić: Lonjska polje_Kratečko

Ramsar Site	50,560 ha (51,218 ha)
Buffer Zone	(Central Posavina)
Natural values	One of the most intact and integral floodplain ecosystems of the entire Danube river basin representing the largest complexes of riparian hardwood forests in the entire Western Palearctic and both natural and man-made wet grassland-ecosystems hosting a significant number of endangered species like lesser-spotted eagle, white-tailed eagle, spoonbill and black stork.
Cultural Values	Organically evolved cultural landscape representing the only remaining authentic portion of the so-called wet border of the former Military frontier, as well as a unique animal husbandry system with autochthonous domestic breeds of horses, cattle, pigs and geese, vernacular wooden architecture. The cultural heritage of Lonjsko Polje demonstrates an exceptional example of adaptation to flooding.
Tourist Activities	Educational programmes, European stork village Čigoč, gastronomy, , accommodation in traditional wooden houses, hiking, bird watching, boat trips, biking, canoeing, fishing, horse riding.
Manager	Javna ustanova Park prirode Lonjsko polje Krapje 16, HR-44324 Jasenovac Tel.: ++385 (0)44/672-080, 611-190 Fax: ++385 (0)44 606-449 E-mail: info@pp-lonjsko-polje.hr http://www.pp-lonjsko-polje.hr/Menu_OK.asp

Crna Mlaka (Croatia)



Ramsar Site	625 ha
Buffer Zone	41,40 km ² (Jastrebarsko)
Natural values	Ornithological Reserve. An area of fishponds surrounded by flooded oak woodland and meadows. The site is important for numerous species of breeding birds and as a staging area for such spring and autumn migrants such as the Great white egret, Osprey, and the Peregrine falcon. Human activities include commercial and recreational fishing and tourism.
Cultural Values	There are buildings for different purposes constructed in the area of wildlife sanctuary Crna Mlaka, eg. the most prominent on, the castle 'Ribograd'.
Tourist Activities	Fish farming
Manager	SPECIAL ORNITHOLOGICAL RESERVE "CRNA MLAKA" Ul. Tadije Smičiklase 7 Jastrebarsko Tel.: +385 1 6283 453, 6283 533 E-mail: crna-mlaka@zg.t-com.hr http://www.crna-mlaka.t-com.hr/



Ramsar Site	1,913 ha
Buffer Zone	
Natural values	It is situated in northern Mačva, and dominates the ecosystem of the southern area of the Sava river, for 33 km with the rivulet Zasavica and its tributary the Batar. Within Serbia, it is one of the last preserved pristine swap areas. The aquatic and swampy ecosystems are in line with fragments of floodable meadows and forests. Due to the favorable natural conditions are favorable, it supports many rare plant and animal species, such as greater spearwort (<i>Ranunculus lingua</i>), water violet (<i>Hottonia palustris</i>), marsh nettle (<i>Urtica kioviensis</i>), freshwater sponge (<i>Spongilla lacustris</i>), oligochaete (<i>Rynchelminis limnosela</i>), Danube crested newt (<i>Triturus dobrogicus</i>), ferruginous duck (<i>Aythya nyroca</i>), as well as the otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) and beaver (<i>Castor fiber</i>). And within Serbia it is the only place that you will find the mudminnow, <i>Umbra krameri</i> .
Cultural Values	This is traditionally a grazing and cattle breeding area, in particular the autochthonous races. Throughout many centuries, the traditional and long usage methods of this area, support and maintain the grassland habitats within the Reserve. Zasavica has been woven into the cultural identity of the local population, as well as a source of inspiration for many myths and legends.
Tourist Activities	Educative programmes, fishing, navigation, hiking
Manager	Pokret gorana Svetog Save 19 Sremska Mitrovica Tel.: ++381 022/614-300 E-mail: zasavica@zasavica.org.rs http://www.zasavica.org.rs/



Photo: Vladimir Dobretić; Obedska bara

Ramsar Site	17,501 ha
Buffer Zone	(Southeastern Srem)
Natural values	<p>The site is important for threatened breeding bird species, including egrets <i>Egretta garzetta</i> (400 pairs), <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> (300 pairs), <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>, and <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>, storks <i>Ciconia nigra</i> and <i>C. ciconia</i>, the spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>, eagles <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>, <i>Aquila pomarina</i> and <i>A. heliaca</i>, crakes <i>Porzana parva</i> and <i>P. porzana</i>, and the woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos medius</i>. Furthermore, the site includes rare insects, fish, reptiles, amphibians and mammals. Rare and relict water lilies are also found.</p> <p>The site is a seasonally inundated area of the River Sava floodplain, with marshes, ponds, wet meadows, the Obedska Bara oxbow lake, and <i>Salix/Populus</i> and <i>Quercus</i> woodland. Obedska Bara has a great variety of herbal communities, such as coastal, shallow water, surface water, swamp, and wet forest communities, with all types of vegetation. The oxbow lake is 13.5 km long, with a maximum width of 0.75 km. The whole area of Obedska Bara proper includes the oxbow lake, the inner area bordered by the lake and the immediate outer belt; this measures about 2,400 ha.</p> <p>The Obedska Bara Nature Reserve is a strict nature reserve in part, and partly a scientific research reserve. An area of particular natural beauty has the function of an outer protective zone. A management plan is being prepared. To counter siltation and eutrophication, depressions were cleaned up to enable better water flow, and trees and bushes were extracted from the wet meadows. The water regime has been improved by increasing the mean waterlevel by 0.5 m during the dry period.</p>
Cultural Values	Kupitnik fortress, St.Luka's church, Obed monastery, Old Village, Ethno park, Monument
Tourist Activities	Hotel, educative programmes, gastronomy, bird watching, ciklo safari
Manager	<p>"AGEO" d.o.o., Beograd, Jug Bogdanova 26 "OBEDSKA BARA" u.t.o., 22417 Obrež Telefon: +381 (022) 488 622 E-mail: ageo@eunet.rs http://www.obedskabara.net/</p>

Peštersko polje (Serbia)



Ramsar Site	3,455 ha
Buffer Zone	50 km ² (Raška, Stari Vlaho Region)
Natural values	<p>Wet peatbog habitat, extremely rare and endangered in this biogeographic region, and the most important example of a conserved peatbog in Serbia. The disappearing river Boroštica flows through typical karst field with many shafts, along the course of which mineral-marshy soil and peat are being formed. The largest peatbog on the Pešter Plateau spreads through Peštersko polje, at altitudes of 1,156 to 1,162 m. Pešter is distinguished with a specific temperate-continental climate, modified with elements of the mountainous climate, unique on the Balkans, for which this area is called the "Balkan Siberia". This is the coldest region in Serbia during the winter, with the minimum temperature of -39°C. The main wetland types are non-forested peatlands, permanent rivers and seasonal freshwater marshes on inorganic soils. Aquatic vegetation grows in the newly-formed lake, channels and watercourses, and the fossil riverbed of the Boroštica. Emerged vegetation grows in the coastal area of the lake and along the channels, levees, pools etc. The vast peatbog area represents a particular feature of Peštersko polje.</p> <p>Peštersko polje provides survival for a number of vulnerable, endangered and critically endangered species (IUCN).</p> <p>Endangered plant species: <i>Fumana bonapartei</i> (R), <i>Halacsya sendtneri</i> (R), <i>Linum tauricum</i> subsp. <i>Serbicum</i> (I (nt)), <i>Potentilla visianii</i> (R), <i>Verbascum nicolai</i> (R). Orchid species should also be added to this list: <i>Orchis morio</i> (nt), <i>Orchis tridentata</i> (R), <i>Orchis laxiflora</i> (R), <i>Orchis coriophorus</i> (R), <i>Dactylorhiza incarnata</i> (R), which are included in the CITES Convention as well.</p> <p>The most important representative of endangered animal species is corncrake <i>Crex crex</i> (Threatened: Vulnerable).</p>
Cultural Values	<p>The entire existence of the Pešter local population is based on traditional cattle breeding. The local culture of the Sjenica-Pešter Plateau is determined by several principal characteristics as isolation, economy based on cattle breeding, and Islam and Christianity as two dominant confessions. A marked negative anthropogenic influence exists in the surrounding boggy area, which is observed through the commercial exploitation of peat and through activities on surface water removal. Intensive grazing of cattle and sheep is present on pastures, and the meadows are mown.</p>
Manager	http://panacomp.net/srbija?mesto=srbija_pester



Ramsar Site	7,250 ha
Buffer Zone	222 km ² (Municipality Cerknica)
Natural values	It is the largest and most typical intermittent karst lake in the region. Its formation happens during rainy periods when the volume of water can no longer be drained through sinkholes, and the lake has no surface outflow, thereby discharging exclusively underground. Numerous picturesque karst phenomena can be found in the area, such as karst sources, estavelles, ponors and ponor caves, abound, and the Križna cave (also known for its underground lakes) the Rakov Škocjan valley (formed by the collapse of the ceilings of underground caves) and the River Rak. It supports and is the habitat of many rare and endemic species, such as cave beetle and cave salamander. Furthermore, within Slovenia the lake is the only nesting ground for the red-necked grebe, the redshank and the ferruginous duck as well as a breeding place for the corncrake.
Cultural Values	In the middle of the lake, on the Gorica Island, there are remains of Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, and Iron Age settlements. Furthermore, there are prehistoric settlements in the area from the 12th to the 4th centuries BC and even a Roman necropolis nearby.
Tourist Activities	Hotel, Apartments, Private rooms, Ecological farms, Restaurants
Manager	Notranjski regijski park Tabor 42, Cerknica, Slovenia E-mail: info@notranjski-park.si http://www.notranjski-park.si/



Protected Area	413 hectares
Buffer zone of the Park:	45 000 hectares
Natural values	<p>The Skocjan Caves are a typical “karst architecture” developed at the juncture of impermeable flysch and permeable limestone rocks. Six kilometers long caves are most famous because of huge underground passage (up to 146 m height and 123 m wide) with vast halls (volume of one of them exceeds 2,200,000 m³) that are cut into a limestone bedrock by the Reka River. A total depth is more than 200 meters. The Škocjan Caves Ramsar Site is thus exceptional due to the cave dimensions and the three dominant hydrological characteristics, the underground river with a discharge oscillating between 0.050 m³/s and more than 400 m³/s; moving water currents fed by rainwater; and pools of stagnant water. Heavy rains in spring or autumn can cause exceptional increase of the river water level that sometimes exceeds 100 meters and results in big floods in the cave. Biodiversity is a result of specific conditions in the collapse dolinas and the underground environment. One of the pioneer researches of karst phenomena started in Škocjan Caves and in general, in the Classical Karst. Many expressions that are nowadays used in speleological terminology worldwide thus originate in the Slovenian language.</p>
Cultural Values	<p>The Škocjan Caves Park is a rich archaeological site. Impressive archaeological finds, dating from the Neolithic through the Bronze and Iron Ages to Antiquity and Middle Ages, indicate the importance of the site in the past for settlements, burial grounds and rituals. Additionally, there are also some 12 km of</p>

³ Skocijan Caves are not located in the Sava River Basin. They have been taken as a good example for development of the ecotourism at the Ramsar Site.

	<p>underground paths mostly carved into the cave walls at the end of 19th century by the first explores of the caves.</p>
Tourist Activities	<p>Škocjan Caves are one of the three Slovenian Ramsar Sites (1999), a World Heritage Property (1986) and since 2004 a core area of the Karst Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO MAB Network). In the protected area there are guided tours to the cave, museum collection, educational trail, and in the restored cultural monument.</p> <p>Yearly Events: The Park's day; The traditional walk along the Reka River ponor; The Škocjan Festival – the latter two organised by local Tourist Society;</p> <p>The three villages in the protected area provide apartments, private rooms, a restaurant and local food.</p> <p>The main tourist attractions in the buffer zone include a number of valuable natural sites, as well as cultural monuments. Well preserved nature offers a possibility for active weekend tourism as well as stationary tourism. There are several international cycling and walking trails crossing the area. The area is also known for its gastronomy and local products. Tourist farms are offering typical local dishes and accommodation for visitors.</p>
Manager	<p>Javni zavod park Škocjanske jame, Slovenija Škocjan 2, 6215 Divaca Telephone: +386 (0)5 70 82 100 Email: psj.info@psj.gov.si http://www.park-skocjanske-jame.si/</p>

Appendix B: Transboundary Tourism Case-Studies

Case studies were provided by the core expert group.

1. “The Una River-The Unique Resource for Sustainable Development”

Partners Republic of Croatia:

1. The Municipality of Croatia Dubica,
2. Croatian Tourist Organization Kostajnica

Partners Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. Kostajnica Municipality,
2. Tourist Organization Kozarska Dubica,
3. Tourist Organization Kostajnica

Length/ Value of project: 12 months (03/09/2011). € 236,023.97

Brief Description of Project:

The project seeks to improve the competitiveness of local tourism program potentials by creating joint republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina tourist offers along the bottom of the river Una. The promotion of joint tourism offers, improves the competitiveness of local tourist economy that leads to the creation of new jobs, and increases the number of visiting tourists in the surrounding area of the project facilities where the spent improving capacity. The project involves activities such as the construction of a venue for recreational fishing, with the construction of small tourist facilities (lodges), and activities focused on education of tourist guides and training of rural households. Project activities are focused on building tourism infrastructure capacity that will serve targeted groups (fishermen's associations/union, students, tourism organizations).

2. “Sava Navigo ”

User 1 (FLP) Centre for Development of Inland Navigation (CRUP), Zagreb

User 2 Center for Ecological Sustainable Development (CESD), Sarajevo

Length/ Value of project: 12 months (01.01.2011.) € 153,866.47

Brief Description of Project

Specific objectives are to create a basis/foundation for development of nautical tourism on the river Sava, and the creation and promotion of regional identity the tourist offer of Posavina. The main activities include: analysis of joint tourist offer HR and BA Posavina (existing and potential resources); analysis of cross-border legal regulations for tourist boats; River Basin field test (identification of objects

on the waterway) and inclusion into the Auto-Cad map; create tourist nautical maps , and promotion of the regional identity Posavina.

3. “Una –Spring of Life”

User 1 (FLP), Zadar County, Croatia

User 2 Municipality of Bihac, Bosnia

Partners (HR)

1. Public institution for managing protected natural areas Zadar County;
2. ZADRA-Zadar County Development Agency;
3. Zadar County Tourist Association/Union;

Partners (BA)

1. Association "UNA"
- 2 "PLOD center" Centre for the promotion of local development
3. Tourist Association of the Una-Sana Canton

Length/ Value of project: 24 months (01.04.2011.) € 421,050.23

Brief Description of Project:

The main activities are related to the creation of joint tourist offer and implementation of minor works to improve the tourist infrastructure of the river Una: source Una in Croatia, and waterfalls and the old town of Una Ostrovica in Martin Brod in Bosnia. One result of the project activities is a draft joint strategy on tourism development in the cross border area in the upper course of the river Una. Planned are a variety of educational and promotional activities.

4. “BIKE 4 TWF”

User 1 (FLP) SI-MO-RA, Development Agency Sisak-Moslavina County, Croatia

User 2 Pre, Agency for Economic Development of the Municipality of Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Partners (HR)

1. Nature Park Lonjsko polje;
2. Tourist Organization of Sisak-Moslavina county;
3. City Hrvatska Kostajnica ;
4. Municipality of Jasenovac

Partners (BA)

1. National Park Kozara
2. Tourist Organization of Municipality Prijedor
3. Tourist organization of Municipality Kozarska Dubica.

Length/ Value of project: 24 months (31.12.2010.) € 330,067.66

Brief Description of Project:

The project will contribute to the integration and revitalization of the economy in the border area, and encourage the sustainable development through activities aimed at increasing local tourism offers of these border areas that consist of improving its attractiveness (the construction of bicycle lanes) and putting more effort into its promotion.

The main activities are: construction and improvement of bicycle paths, training of tourism personnel/staff, setting up internet kiosks, inventory of existing tourism potential of the border regions.

5. “Revival of CB partnership through rural development

User 1 (FLP) Center for Civic Initiatives, Zagreb, Croatia

User 2 Local Action Group (LAG) Una-Sana, Sana Bridge, Bosnia

Partners (HR): Municipality of Gvozd

Partners (BA): Municipality Bosanska Krupa

Length/ Value of project: 22 months (25.12.2010.) € 172,536.36

Brief Description of Project

The project aims to build capacity (technical, administrative and human) for the development of joint tourism offers in the border area by relying on common cultural and historical heritage in rural areas (development of two educational modules on rural tourism and a course for tourist guides). Promotion of joint tourism offers will be developed on the basis of a common marketing strategy for rural tourism through the establishment and equipping of info-centers and the creation of lists of prospective destinations along the common web portal and online virtual map.

6. VIOR -Vinkovci and Orašje Heritage Tourism Project

User 1 (FLP) Town Vinkovci, Croatia

User 2 Municipality of Orasje, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Partners (HR): Turistička zajednica grada Vinkovci

Partners (BA); Turistička zajednica Posavske županije

Length/ Value of project: 12 months (01.02.2011.) € 132,501.60

Brief Description of Project

The project aims to contribute to the advancement of tourism offers and heritage empowerment in Vinkovci and Orasje. Project activities are focused on the development of joint cross-border cultural and

heritage tourism products, tourism and cultural facilities, heritage preservation through education, training and knowledge transfer, and promotion and raising awareness on the protection of cultural heritage with the use of modern communication tools. The project will result in the establishment of "virtual centers of heritage resources," a new tourism brand based on the cultural heritage, numerous promotional activities and education about appropriate ways to develop new tourism products.

7. Moving towards successful public participation in the Sava River Basin water management

User 1 (FLP), Centre for Development and Support, Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina

User 2 Green Action Zagreb, Croatia

Partners (HR): Green dream, Vinkovci

Partners (BA): Environmental Coalition Una basin EKUS, Bihac

Length/ Value of project: 24 months (01.01/09.02. 2011.) € 512,553.14

Brief Description of Project

The purpose of this project is to sensitize and educate the public to actively participate in creating an integrated plan for management of transboundary waters in the Sava (Sava River Basin Management Plan). The main activities include meetings with local authorities and relevant institutions in the field of environmental protection in the border area, seminars, workshops and panels on water management (water management) activities to raise awareness and media promotion of the project, participation in the drafting of an integrated management plan for the Sava River Basin.

8. Strategy for tourist development/ Partnership for Sustainable Development Slovenian tourism

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia has defined tourism as one of the most important economic and strategic sectors, creating new jobs and has a highly positive impact on balanced regional development. In SI the Strategy for tourist development for the period 2012-2016 has been developed. According to the Strategy the tourism in SI in 2016 will be based on sustainable development and will be very successful economic sector because of its key contribution to social welfare and reputation of the country in the world. The concept of sustainable tourism development is emphasized in all areas and levels. In general three general development areas have been notified:

- Increasing the competitiveness,
- Favorable business environment,
- Effective and innovative marketing.

The main objectives are:

- Competitiveness
- Quality of life and prosperity
- Reputation and development of Slovenian tourism
- Visibility and reputation of Slovenia in the World

All these objectives are accompanied by a fundamental orientation to sustainable development, concern for the economic, socio-cultural and natural environment, environmental impact management and environmental quality, the transition to a low carbon society, etc. To achieve above mentioned

objectives it is necessary to:

- Successfully implement the principles of sustainable tourism development,
- Provide a favorable business environment,
- Achieve higher quality and create conditions that will enable greater competitiveness of Slovenian tourism,
- Plan and implement effective and innovative marketing and promotion of Slovenia as an attractive tourist destination.

9. Master plan for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia

Tourism has been identified as the key sector which can drive the diversification of rural economy and can support Serbia meeting its MDG objectives.

The Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia defines specific Serbian tourism goals and the Rural Tourism Master Plan will play an important role in supporting these objectives through the development of Rural Tourism. The goals for Rural Tourism development in Serbia fit within overall goals for Serbian Tourism.

The overall vision of Rural Tourism master plan of Serbia is to develop master plan for socially, economically and environmentally sustainable rural tourism. Serbian rural tourism relies on a large and diversified number of natures and culture based assets which need to be conserved, sustainably used and further enhanced through tourism development.

Sustainable rural tourism generates local income and integrates local communities with a view to improving livelihoods and reducing poverty; conserves natural and cultural assets such as biodiversity, cultural heritage and traditional values; supports intercultural understanding and tolerance, aspires to be more energy efficient and climate sound, avoids over consumption of water; and minimizes waste.

Nature and Earth Tourism is defined as tourism that develops in a natural environment and involves an activity carried out by the tourist. Nature and Earth tourism is an important component of the activeness of Rural Tourism, including a broad range of activities that can be done in natural setting.

Ecotourism is defined as responsible travel to natural areas that preserve and respect the environment and improve the welfare of local residents. Ecotourism main motivation is to allow tourists to discover, get to know and enjoy nature through participating in activities. These may include special interest activities.

(Quote from Master Plan for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia)

10. Measures within European Ecotourism Network

Below, you will find brief descriptions of some measures taken by various companies or organizations within the European Ecotourism Network. These are all **copied directly** from the 'Library' of the **European Ecotourism Network website** and specific url's are listed.

The Achenal Eco-model comprises initiatives towards protection and sustainable management of culturally and environmentally valuable rural landscape. Some good results already achieved in this direction: agriculture has been stabilised (with farmers' children again willing to take over the farms) and has become more extensive (area devoted to organic farming and extensive agriculture doubled and still increasing). The number of farm-holiday visitors has also risen significantly. Many working

groups are now well established and can increasingly run themselves. Schools and kindergartens have been recruited as partners (e.g. biotope sponsorships, project days). The growing degree of networking facilitates the implementation of measures.

Incorporation of Culture

The Achental eco-model promotes the local processing chain by making visitors appreciate local food and craftsmanship. This has a value both for tourists and locals who will be more proud of their culture and more motivated to hold that policy of development. Further, the projects plans prices for producers that will manage their business according to environmental sustainability.

Community Development / Protection of Sites

The Lake Võrtsjärv Foundation raises the awareness of the public by developing unified views on the balanced development of the Lake Võrtsjärv region, preserving and protecting Lake Võrtsjärv as a sensitive body of water, and promoting the image of Lake Võrtsjärv as a rapidly developing recreational region both in Estonia and beyond. Lake Võrtsjärv is member of Living Lakes International network and partnership whose mission is to enhance the protection, restoration and rehabilitation of lakes, wetlands, other freshwater bodies of the world and their catchment areas.

Retrieved from <http://data.prismanet.gr/ecolnet-case-studies/view.php?id=51>

Basic Services

The owners of Milia avoid to encourage infrastructure developments near the location of the settlement in order to safeguard the surrounding area from spawning tourism development (roads, power lines, water supply). Milia is completely autonomous in water, power, sewage and communications.

Incorporation of Culture / Local Employment

Restoration of the houses of the Milia settlement is done using local labour, traditional technics and material and reused material that were remnant after the years of abandonment. Local cultural elements have been incorporated to the design of the cottages and the restaurant and traditional products and local dishes are offered to guests. Most of the consumed fresh products are produced in Milia using organic methods. Traditional products from other producers are also on display and can be bought by guests. Local labour is used in most operations. 8 to 30 persons work on location either for the restoration of the settlement and maintenance or for farming . Four persons leave in Milia permanently, all year.

Wastewater / Solid waste disposal

Electricity and hot water is obtained by solar energy and grey water and sewage are processed and used for watering the plants. Pesticides are not used and all cultivation and farming is organic. All organic waste is composted.

Retrieved from: <http://data.prismanet.gr/ecolnet-case-studies/view.php?id=8>

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