

1 Danube Delta  
Biosphere  
Reserve

2 Lower Prut  
Nature Reserve

3 Lower Prut  
Floodplain  
Natural Park

4 Kalimok-Brushlen  
Protected Site

5 Rusenski Lom  
Nature Park

6 Persina  
Nature Park

7 Đerdap  
National Park

8 Lonjsko Polje  
Nature Park

9 Kopački rit  
Nature Park

10 Gornje Podunavlje  
Special Nature  
Reserve

11 Duna-Dráva  
National Park

12 Duna-Ipoly  
National Park

13 Fertő-Hanság  
National Park

14 Dunajské Luhý  
Protected  
Landscape Area

15 Záhorie  
Protected  
Landscape Area

16 Donau-Auen  
National Park

17 Donauauwald  
Neuburg-  
Ingolstadt

# ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN PROTECTED AREAS ALONG THE DANUBE

## REPORT OF THE ASSESSMENT TOUR AND QUALITY GUIDELINES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

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**DANUBE PARKS** 2.0  
network of protected areas STEP 2.0



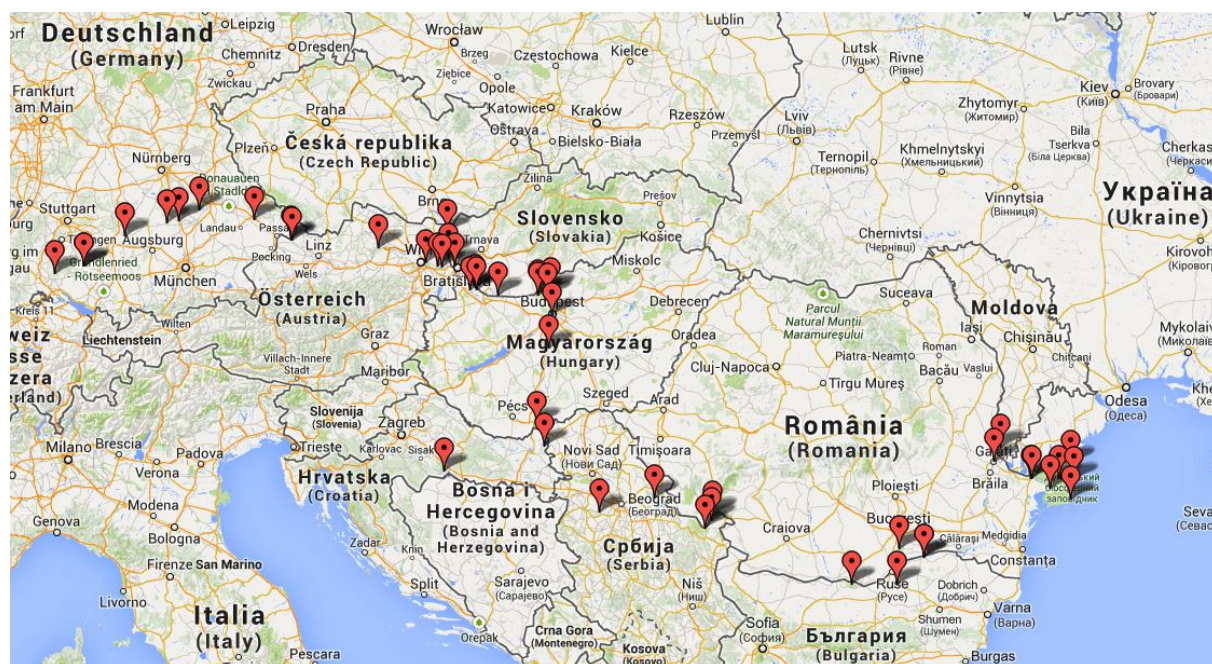
## Table of Content

<b>1 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATIONAL SITES, INSTITUTIONS AND ACTIVITIES ALONG THE DANUBE</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 GERMANY	4
1.2 AUSTRIA	10
1.3 SLOVAKIA	15
1.4 HUNGARY	16
1.5 CROATIA	24
1.6 SERBIA	26
1.7 BULGARIA	29
1.8 ROMANIA	31
1.9 MOLDOVA	36
1.10 UKRAINE	37
1.11 ADDITIONAL TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS	38
<b>2 ANALYSIS AND GOOD PRACTICE</b>	<b>43</b>
2.1 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS	43
2.2 CONTENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION OFFERS	43
2.3 MISSION STATEMENT / GUIDING PRINCIPLES	44
2.4 TARGET GROUPS	45
2.5 MARKETING AND INFORMATION	46
2.6 METHODS	46
2.7 QUALIFICATION	47
2.8 LANGUAGE	48
2.9 ACCESSIBILITY	49
2.10 EVALUATION	50
2.11 SHOPS AND RESTAURANTS	50
2.12 PUBLIC TRANSPORT & LOCAL MOBILITY	51
2.13 CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT	52
<b>3 GUIDELINES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN PROTECTED AREAS ALONG THE DANUBE</b>	<b>54</b>
3.1 PREAMBLE	54
3.2 CONTENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES	54
3.3 MISSION STATEMENT / GUIDING PRINCIPLES	55
3.4 TARGET GROUPS	55
3.5 MARKETING AND INFORMATION	56
3.6 METHODS	56
3.7 QUALIFICATION	56
3.8 LANGUAGE	57
3.9 ACCESSIBILITY	57
3.10 EVALUATION	57
3.11 FRAMEWORK CRITERIA	58
<b>4 ANNEXES</b>	<b>59</b>
4.1 AGENDA OF THE ASSESSMENT TOUR	59
4.2 INTERVIEW PARTNERS	60
4.3 INTERVIEW GUIDELINE	64

## 1 Environmental educational sites, institutions and activities along the Danube

This chapter describes briefly those sites and institutions that were visited during the assessment tour between 29.5. and 14.6.2013 including some telephone interviews done by a DANUBEPARK trainee after the assessment tour.<sup>1</sup>

Information from the questionnaires that were sent back by sites and institutions not visited within the tour – due to time constraints or content wise decisions - are taken into consideration in chapter 2 (analysis).



Overview of visited sites / interviews taken. For details see:

<https://maps.google.at/maps/ms?msid=218365181834588326455.0004d4f7e4e82c4964695&msa=0>

<sup>1</sup> Data and information always could be incomplete or even wrong, according to information that we did not receive or misunderstandings caused by language problems or time constraints.

## 1.1 Germany

### Nature Park Obere Donau

The nature park administration is – together with a visitor centre and tourism information – based in an old train station. It offers in-door and outdoor environmental education: e.g. water ecological analysis that combines excursion with in-door analyses. The in-door exhibition is combined with a quiz to motivate children to read the information. Regular forest-pedagogical activities are offered in cooperation with a nearby youth hostel.



The main target group is schools and pupils (4000 / year), but also individuals (total number of visitors is approx. 20.000/a). A recently started Master thesis should assess environmental education options for seniors along the cycling trail. No special focus is put onto visitors with special needs, as “the terrain is very difficult and the building of the visitor centre is under monument protection. Therefore the demand is also very low.”. Some new information boards offer also Braille letters.

The main content of the environmental education offers are the caves, bats, and birds of prey, rarely also some special topics like conflicts of use or recreational management. In winter special excursions for watching and identifying animals in wintertime are offered.

Professional staff (foresters, biologist) is complimented by young volunteers (European Voluntary Service) and persons doing civilian service. All employees should pass own forest-pedagogical trainings, but no formal quality criteria for the rangers are in place. “Enthusiasm is more important then formal qualification.” Externals offer additional special excursions or activities, e.g. herbs or specials about felt.

No universal design – e.g. for information boards – exists, as different initiators (associations, companies, private persons) can apply for and built such facilities.

In former times French was more used then today, actually some information is available in English and the water ecological analyses would be on request.

The nature park sees an important connection to local culture and regional development, therefore on focus is also set on local products like wool and felt, which can be found in the visitor centre and the shop in many different aspects as well in some educational offers like handicraft workshops.

A special aspect of the educational work related with regional mobility is the establishment of the ‘Naturpark Express’, a supplement to a local train line (see good practise in chapter 2.11). Public transport is both available by this train and – e.g. on weekdays – by bus, but sometimes lacks density.

The environmental education offers follow a 15-year-old management plan that should be renewed quite soon. Evaluation is mainly done by feedback of the teachers, but not on a regular base.



### Protected Area 'Flußlandschaft Donauwiesen'

The 600 ha protected area contains an approximately 10 km long Danube stretch from Riedlingen to Zwiefalterndorf that is close to nature including its floodplains and the bordering slopes.

The PA itself offers no environmental education offers. Within the area only private persons offer guided tours. The association for water management offers special trainings (120 hours) for certified 'water guides' ('Gewässerführer Schwäbische Donau'). The tours focus on river basics, floods, and animals.

One private person coordinates the offers, no quality control, no organised feedback exists.

The guided tours are hardly accessible by public transport, the next train station is too far to walk, no direct bus line exists.



### mooseum

The mooseum is one of around 50 certified Bavarian 'Environmental stations' (Umweltstationen), one of the criteria for this certification is that at least one full-time person with specialisation in environmental pedagogics is employed. Besides that the mooseum has 4 part-time employees, one intern (via the program 'volunteer ecological year'), around five external persons (on request) and several volunteers. Every person in the centre is both qualified in the content and in environmental didactics as well.



The focus of the content is wetlands and bogs, including human usages and its impacts, but also 'every-day environment' like history of washing and soaps, nutrition, etc.. In-door offers are on the one hand a touchable exhibition, games like 'nature sudoku', but also workshops for children, families and adults, e.g. broaching the issue of use of willows. A new topic – mainly in the outdoor area is renewable energy (which is also used by the centre for its own energy needs). The centre offers as well practical courses (e.g. tree cutting), excursions and vacation activities (day programs) for children titled 'touch the nature'.

The centre is partner of the Auenzentrum Neuburg-Ingolstadt in the development of a multilingual app for outdoor excursions. The app should also give information about

the whole Danube stretch in Bavaria – regarding cycling, nature and culture and should be ready in April 2014.

Specialities are bookable mobile offers: For 250,- € / day e.g. an ‘energy-day’ or a ‘Danube-day’ presenting history and new developments, can be booked for local events, exhibitions, fairs, etc.

The mooseum has special Guiding Principles that include nature and social aspects into the education aims. Feed-back and quality assurance is done by questionnaires for the group leaders and for parents and kids.

Free entrance is offered for persons with special needs, but exact programs for mentally and physically challenged persons are only in a planning phase. English guidance and workshops could be offered on request (meaning that they are not actively marketed). The centre would be also interested in special programs for young persons with migration background, but at the moment such extension ‘is not manageable’.

No direct access by public transport to the centre exists, the centre is organising tractor pick-ups from the next train station – a service that has to be paid by the guests.

The mooseum cultivates different contacts and networks – e.g. with other environmental stations (Haus am Strom, Passau) in Germany, also different regional actors and stakeholders, but no international cooperation.

### **Auenzentrum Neuburg-Ingolstadt**

The Auenzentrum (‘Floodplain Centre’) is an association that runs an exhibition (dioramas, interactive flood simulation, touchscreen with simulation of re-naturalisation project, info boards...) in an old hunting castle of the former Dukes of Bavaria.

Different excursions could be booked via the Auenzentrum: excursions with certified Nature- and Landscape Guides, with trained tourist guides (which are less specialised), excursions for cyclists and special offers for families and schools – but nevertheless the main target group is school classes. Those excursions are done by external guides, the Auenzentrum is just acting as intermediating agency. The Auenzentrum itself has only one paid person, being responsible for opening and closing the exhibition rooms.



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The exhibition and the excursions are only available in German. But the centre is ready to develop a multilingual smartphone based audio guide for the exhibition that should be also transformed into an app for outdoor excursions. The app should also give information about the whole Danube stretch in Bavaria – regarding cycling, nature and culture. This should be ready in April 2014 and is developed in cooperation with other institutions – e.g. the mooseum.

The Auenzentrum produces one magazine per year, which is distributed to experts and semi professionals in Germany, Austria and Switzerland for free and is sold to

visitors in the centre. This magazine is an important communication tool for experts dealing with nature conservation in river systems..

Although the design of the exhibition is based on interviews of hikers, cyclists and visitors (done by the university Eichstätt-Ingolstadt), there is no regular quality assessment scheme in place, but a Master thesis currently interviews visitors.

The Auenzentrum developed in cooperation with the university Eichstätt-Ingolstadt a development strategy and Guiding Principles. Part of the plan is the development of complete packages (together with the regional tourism association and the university Würzburg) for physically and mentally challenged persons. Integrated in those packages should be guided tours with intensive nature experience.

A often requested point is a café and shop in the centre – which is currently also under planning, but needs to be run by the castle owners – the family of Wittelsbacher. At the moment the Auenzentrum is not accessible by public transport.

### **Donaumuseum Ingolstadt (planned)**

The planned Europäisches Donaumuseum (European Danube Museum) in Ingolstadt has not yet a concrete opening date, it is in the phase of first idea collection and political decision making. The further concretization should be done together with the DANUBEPARKS project partner.

The idea is to use the Kavalier Dallwigk, a formerly part of the town fortification, later used as industrial building.

External experts from the university Eichstätt-Ingolstadt do the planning. The entrance area should be designed as train station hall, the room sequence will simulate a journey along the whole Danube. Webcams from different parts of the Danube will bring life impressions into the building and some parts of the exhibition will be dedicated to cultural-historic topics. Outside of the building a water playground will connect to the Danube.

Multi-linguality will be reached by the use of audio-guides, “being barrier-free is an aim, but could be challenging”.



### **Weltenburger Enge**

The protected area of the Weltenburger Enge faces pressure by high visitor numbers, approximately 500.000/a. Three linear and eight round hiking trails lead tourists through the area, but the main number of visitors reach the abbey of Weltenburg – and to a boat trip from there through the gorge to Kehlheim.





Info boards – only in German – between the abbey and the boat landing place present values and sensitivity of the area. On board English information is available by audiotape (if the majority of guest is non-German speaking). Nature- und landscape-guides offer more than 65 guided tours per year for free, presenting the Danube in general, but also more specific topics, as plants, animals, fungi, etc. Companies book those tours for team days, parents for children birthdays.

All ages are represented within the tours; from approximately 3000 tour guest per year 425 were children in 2012. Tours are also offered and regularly used by physically and mentally challenged persons. The trail along the Danube coming from Kehlheim fits to wheelchairs, which is announced in the programs.

All guides are trained nature- und landscape-guides and forest pedagogues, but have no special qualification in guiding persons with special needs. Quality assurance is done by questionnaires that evaluate the guides – this is an obligatory external evaluation done by the States Fund for Nature Protection.

The abbey hosts one 'nature room' in the visitor centre, a rather poorly equipped 15 m<sup>2</sup> exhibition with some pictures, stuffed animals and questionable information: e.g. the old tradition of using the European feather grass (*Stipa penata*) as hat decoration is presenting – without indicating that the feather grass is a red list species today.

The limitation of the area manager for three years is one of the reasons why the area has no long-term strategies in place; no personal visions for the development could be felt.

Both edges of the PA Kehlheim and Weltenburg are easy to access by public transport.

### Infohaus Isarmündung

Aside the inner exhibition area the information centre offers a large outer part that contains educational trails, playing areas, hands-on experiences (e.g. about ground water level) and a herd of aurochs. One of the main goals is visitor management.

The content focus on high water dynamics, generally the information centre offers environmental education, but has no special underlying concept. Visions are based in the personality of the director. Believing in the growing importance of and interest in nature the information centre will steadily increase its activities.

The information centre is (only) open from beginning of April till end of October, the main target group is kindergarten and primary schools, limitation is given by only two full-time and one part time employee (plus some volunteers).

Employees are currently trained in special pedagogics for persons with special needs. The centre has regular persons with mobility handicaps but also persons from hospices as visitors.





Quality assurance is done by the distribution of questionnaires, but “not many are returned and we are not sure if they are too long or too complicated”. External support is thought of but not yet concretised.

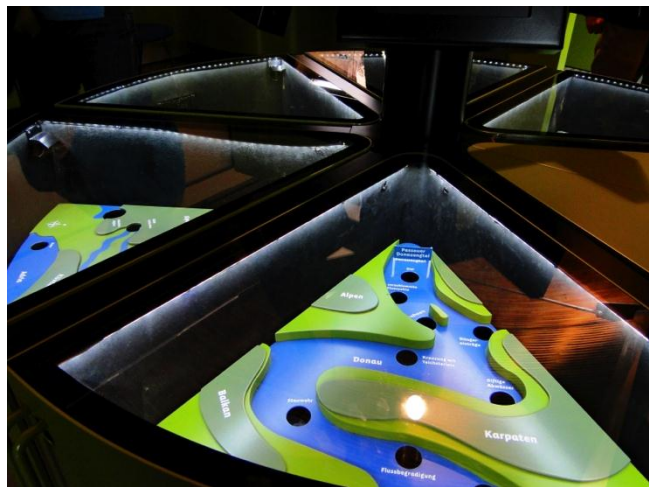
Gentle Mobility is an issue, but no topic. The information centre is not far from the cycling trail; bus has no direct access to it and is hard to find for cyclists. No direct public transport connection exists. Mobility would be an interesting issue for special services, e.g. the operation of a traditional ferryboat, but due to lack of capacities this cannot be done.

The information centre has no own café or restaurant, which is seen as problem, as the neighbouring inn cannot fulfil the expectations.

### **Haus am Strom**

The Haus am Strom is part of the building complex at the Danube Power Plant Jochenstein (and can use the processing heat of the power plant for heating). It contains a standing exhibition (since 2012, the old one was changed after 9 years) and one room for changing exhibitions (e.g. for local artists).

The concept for the environmental education is experience oriented and based on the trilogy nature-energy-water. Not only local issues are presented, but also global aspects e.g. concerning water usages and shortages. The exhibition area consists of Dioramas with light and sound buttons, some living reptiles and fishes like sterlet, an interactive landscape profile, some games (e.g. concerning energy savings and energy mix) and interactive knowledge transfer tools. Additionally some binoculars are available.



The population around Passau is important target of the activities, especially also its schools that have the option to reach Jochenstein by boat. The centre offers excursions for children (which is the main target group) and families. The target groups were analysed according to the sinus milieus in the population within 100 km radius.

Although the house is directly at the Danube cycling trail, most of the cyclists don't stop as it is too near to the starting point in Passau.

Excursions are also offered with a native English speaker, the audio guides for the exhibition work also in English and Netherlands (as there is a nearby Dutch holiday camp). The guides have one external training plus two internal trainings per year.

The centre itself is completely barrier free, for the excursions this is not the case. The association of war invalids regularly comes with groups; the centre also offers activities in facilities for handicapped. Due to personal concern of one employee also activities for mentally disabled persons are offered. Additionally the integration of persons with special needs even into the employees is an important task.

Evaluation is done by questionnaires, the 300-400 returns/a are once a year analysed.

The Haus am Strom runs also successfully a shop and rents out a restaurant. The shop tries to offer regional products e.g. bird nesting boxes made by an association for disabled, cheese or honey from local producers. The influence on the restaurant for respective measures is difficult, but improvements can be seen.

Access by public transport is not easy. A boat shuttle from Passau connects once in the morning and leads back already at noon. Bus connection brings visitors only to Obernzell, from where the website of the Haus am Strom advises to organise a taxi service.

The centre is seeking for a closer cooperation with DANUBEPARKS, other plans are a fish pass at the hydro power plant and a nature trail in the near outer area.

The Haus am Strom has a close cooperation and common marketing as Danube Valley Experience Park Bavaria Austria with the 'Gigant der Donau' in Engelhartzell. (see first point in Austria). It has built also cooperation with other centres along the Bavarian Danube, for example with the mooseum, the Haus im Moos or the Umweltstation Isarmündung.

## 1.2 Austria

### Der Gigant der Donau

The 'Giant of the Danube' in Engelhartzell is mainly an aquarium presenting – amongst other fish – one Beluga (in a rather small basin). The garden visualises - in a more artistic than really ecological way - the whole Danube stretch with some small representing ecosystems and information boards, e.g. about invasive species.

The local Caritas (a catholic social association) supports the operation of the place.

The 'Giant of the Danube' has a close cooperation and common marketing as Danube Valley Experience Park Bavaria Austria with the Haus am Strom in Passau. (see last point in Germany).

Bus connections along the Danube connect Engelhartzell with the surrounding villages and Passau.



### Arbeitskreis Wachau

The Arbeitskreis Wachau is an association consisting of the 13 municipalities in the Wachau, some farmers, associations of wine and apricot growers and some NGOs. The main task is the protection and development of the Wachau region, e.g. by tourism projects, visitor guiding systems, etc.



Environmental education is just a small part in some projects, e.g. within the world heritage trail, a hiking trail around the Wachau or within the implementation of two nature protection projects financed by the LIFE+ program of the EU.

In one of the projects the Arbeitskreis Wachau implemented a Nature Trail, as part of the international biodiversity campaign 'Natura Trails' run by Naturefriends International (another 'Natura Trail' is found in the Danube Delta). The trail is regularly used for excursions.



As main educational offers the Arbeitskreis undertakes 20-30 excursions/a with a fixed date both for adults and school classes. Those excursions present the Danube, the dry grassland on the slopes, beavers and the re-naturalisation projects. Additionally sometimes international volunteer projects for planting Black Poplar and White Willow or for cutting invasive species are arranged. The guides are biologists without special didactic training, guided tours are available on request also in English.

Regular lectures about birds and habitats, taking place in local inns or association facilities, are considered to be important education offers for the local population.

The association has no capacities do develop more environmental education programs, as all activities have to be financed by projects. Another LIFE+ application is in the pipeline, one module would develop another theme-trail for wetlands.

Some of the excursions (except the Natura Trails) would be possible in a wheelchair-accessible version. Public transport in the Wachau region exists on a very regular basis of buses on both sides of the river and ferries for connections.

### **Nationalpark Donau Auen**

The Nationalpark Donau Auen runs different visitor centres: The main indoor and outdoor exhibition is situated – together with the national park administration – in Orth / Donau. Other centres are operated by the land owners and partners of the national park: The Lobauhaus by the Forest Department of the City of Vienna and Castle Eckartsau by the Austrian Federal Forest Management (ÖBf).



A noticeable fact is that the different educational offers run by the partners NP administration and Austrian Federal Forest Management are basically based on the same strategy (the Forest Department of the City of Vienna has no Management Plan for the Viennese part of the

NP) and 10 years management plan (2009-2018), but have different design and layout and different methods of evaluation and quality assurance.

The management plan contains a chapter on education providing quantitative but no qualitative aims. The aim is to reach as many people as possible and increase their sensibility for nature, nature protection and their knowledge about the national park. Although the clear aim of wide audience is stated, the target groups are not defined in detail. Annual programs, approved by the national park body, break the Management plan down in concrete activities, events and offers. Additionally the Lobauhaus follows the Guiding Principles of the Vienna Forest Department, as Eckartsau does with the Guiding Principles of the Austrian Federal Forest Management.

Main target groups of the active environmental education program are generally schools with special programs (excursions, workshops, camps, ...). For the permanent exhibition in Orth the main target groups are individual guests (25.000/a, motivated also by the inclusion into a Lower Austrian regional activity card) and groups. Eckartsau wants – aside its large experience in even very large international children and youth camps – to focus in future more on families and also companies. Nearly 10% of the individual visitors in Orth are Slovak, all activities are available in German, English and Slovak language, the (historic) guided tours in Eckartsau also provide Hungarian and Czech – while the new exhibition is only in German. Other languages for guided tours are basically available on request.

Differences appear also in the offered methods: Whilst the exhibition in Orth uses very innovative methods to look mainly at the historic and nowadays interaction between nature and humans, the Lobauhaus has a more traditional view to species and biodiversity. Eckartsau offers a very new and very innovative designed exhibition looking to special use and management issues like hunting and forestry.

The Vienna Forest Department offers no boat tours “because boating is forbidden for the public in [this part of] the national park”, on the other hand the visitor centre in Eckartsau offers sometimes even scientific excursions into the highly protected areas. A speciality of the Lobauhaus is night excursions, taking place only twice a year “as the pressure of visitors is anyway very intense.” Very successful are birthday parties for children connected with nature experience games. The Vienna Forest Department developed a handbook for excursion guides, including background information, didactics, etc., which is used by the guides in the Viennese part of the national park.

A look to barrier-freedom shows differences in-door and outdoor as well: The exhibition in the castle Orth is wheelchair-accessible, as the Lobauhaus is, but not castle Eckartsau, the open-air attraction ‘Schloßinsel’ could be partly difficult to handle due to small gravel. Some of the excursions could also be mastered by mobility handicapped persons, but there is no active marketing done. Some activities were offered for blind people, but the demand was (too) low. Activities for mentally handicapped or for integrated school classes could be offered in small groups on request. The website itself is not barrier-free.

Different guides have different criteria for their education and training: Whilst the national park administration is only using rangers (trained according to a common Austrian standard), the two forest administrations mainly use forest pedagogues (a training offered by forestry education institutions). The forest pedagogues who do guided tours usually also took the training for Rangers. Additionally sometimes “externals” - rangers from the NP administration, or students of forestry – offer excursions with



special topics. Didactics for persons with special needs is yet no issue neither in the ranger training nor the forest pedagogics training.

Participants in excursions of the NP in Lower Austria receive an on-line questionnaire some time after the activity. A very bad feedback generates an automatic mail to the administration, so that they can react immediately. Additionally the national park administration did an external mystery check for the quality of its visitor programs and the rangers lasting several months. This was not done for the offers provided by the partner Vienna Forest Department. The forest administrations work with traditional questionnaires – in separated forms for teachers, pupils (in two different age classes) and excursionists.

The national park runs or rents out different shops and restaurants / cafes. The use of organic and fair trade as well as regional products would fit to the philosophy but are – for different reasons – difficult to implement. But it is “steadily improving”.

Public transport is a difficult topic for the national park (except the parts in Vienna). Consideration of strengthening the existing public bus line and/or establishing a common shuttle service with the nearby castles are done. But it has also to be stated that the website point ‘arrival’ contains rather detailed information for car access, but only the telephone number of the public transport information – not even a link to the respective websites. Information for cyclists including the ferryboat could not be found.

### **Verein AURING**

The Verein AURING is a small association without any core funding at Hohenau / March – one of the Danube tributaries. The main purposes are re-search (bird ringing station), nature protection and environmental education around the ponds of a former sugar factory.

Target groups are diverse: from kindergarten, school classes to retired locals and incentives for companies from Vienna. Interestingly (although near to the cycling path) not many cyclists or cyclist groups are coming.

AURING offers programs all year round, nevertheless the main seasons are April-June and September-October. AURING has no employees, only volunteers and 10-12 nature guides who are paid for the excursions (by participants fees). Additionally activities in cooperation with schools are offered: In-door presentation with living amphibians at the school or a combination of in-door and outdoor project days concerning Natura 2000.

AURING has “not really” a (written) mission statement, but tries to implement education for sustainable development. All current programs are registered and awarded under the UN decade for education for sustainable development.

Quality assessment of the guides is mainly done by the selection (mainly biologists with a conservation specialisation) and a system of co-guiding for the start. Some



guides have a special nature guide education. Twice a year an internal workshop discusses how the tours could be improved. Feedback from the visitors is done in a non-structured and non-systematic way: questionnaires and feedback drawings for children exist, but are not used every time.

Access by public transport is rather easy, as Hohenau has a train station and good connections from Vienna.

### **Storchenhaus Marchegg**

The association is formed by WWF and local municipalities that maintain a small protected area (Ramsar, Natura 2000) and operates an information point ('White Stork House') in the castle Hohenau, including a small shop / info point, a new exhibition inside the castle and a stork watch tower in the wetlands – financed by a LIFE+ project till 2014.



Some more activities are in a planning phase: A webcam in the stork colony, leaflets about the storks and an unguided scavenger hunt through the forest.

Two part-time employees – one national park ranger from the NP Donauauen and one ornithologist – offer information and (spontaneous, free of charge) guided tours to the stork colony. During the upcoming summer month some WWF volunteers should be available for support. New in the program is also a bookable guided tour to the primeval forest. The visitors are often elderly people, families and cyclists. Regional schools are actively approached.

There is no written Guiding Principle on the understanding of the Storchenhaus concerning environmental education “as the development was so fast. But it would definitely help”. No quality assessment is done. Also no own website is yet available.

The information and guided tours are available on request in English; a native Slovak could guide the exhibition in the castle. The offers are difficult to access for persons with restricted mobility – stairs lead both to the information point and the watchtower. Mentally challenged people do sometimes use the offers.

The small shop tries to increasingly offer local products, partly produced by persons with special needs, e.g. honey, noodles.

Access by public transport is poor – the train station is approximately 5 km away. A private bike rental is available.



## 1.3 Slovakia

### Daphne - Institute for Applied Ecology

Daphne is a regional association working since 1999 in the area of the Danube-Morava conjunction. The association organises wetlands, forest, general nature, etc. excursions for kindergarten, primary and secondary schools.

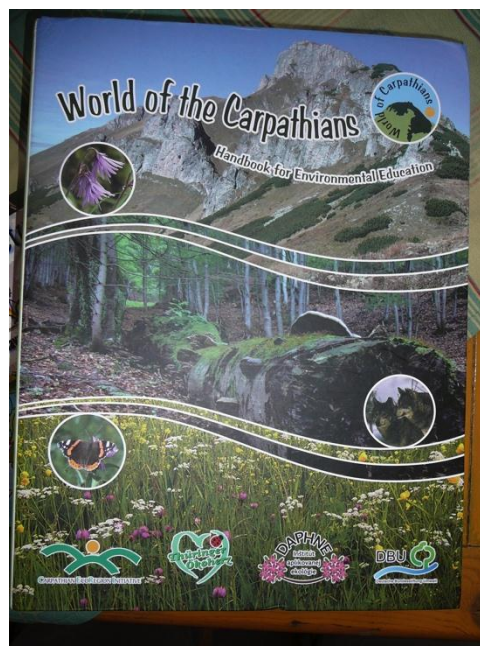
Daphne developed and maintains approximately 80 km of nature trails with information boards and develops free of charge educational material for kindergarten – including information for parents / adults.

The activities are based on a clear Mission Statement that states that Sustainable Development should be made understandable for children – with interactive, interesting and easy to understand methods.

For environmental education purposed Daphne employes one person full-time in Bratislava and in summer time additionally 4-5 volunteering university students.

On request the excursions can also be offered in English. For persons with special needs – mentally and physically – Daphne offers in-door activities, implemented by persons without special didactic training.

Quality assessment by questionnaires for teachers was only started in 2013; therefore the method is still under development.



### BROZ - Regional Association for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development, Veľkolélsky ostrov Island

The Regional Association for Nature Conservation and Sustainable development (BROZ) was established in 1997. The activities of BROZ focus on practical nature conservation and sustainable development support in the region of Western Slovakia. In the Danube region Danube river revitalization, restoration of water regime of river branches and adjacent wetlands are important part of the work.

Many of the activities (riverbank restoration, re-opening of river branch, protection of floodplain meadows, trim-



ming the coppice willows and grazing) are performed directly on Veľkolélsky ostrov Island, which is one of the last preserved large Danube islands, and was leased by BROZ for 25 years.

Besides these practical activities, BROZ is engaged in increasing awareness of nature conservation in the region by working with general public and schools, organizing excursions, presentations, lectures and seminars as well as preparing publications, exhibitions and documentary films.

Excursions are done by walk, by bike, by boat, horse riding, horse carriage or carriage with tractor focusing on topics like ornithology, invertebrates, botany, Danube, re-naturalisation, etc. According to the group external experts (scientists, conservationists) complete the BROZ staff. In the near future, BROZ would like to take part in the European Volunteer Service to engage volunteers from other countries to their activities. A special group are local villagers, where BROZ offers lectures and discussions concerning controversial topics, e.g. voles.

Schools from the region are an important target group, but also international cooperation (CZ, HU) camps take place. Offers could be done also in English, German, Hungarian, also the information boards are in Slovak, English and Hungarian.

BROZ plans to use an existing farm as environmental education centre, including accommodation for 20 people, permanent exhibitions, laboratories, etc.

No feedback possibility or quality assessment is yet in place, neither are the offers based on any written Guiding Principles or quality guidelines. BROZ is welcoming the DANUBEPARKS initiative on the quality guidelines for environmental education offers.

Veľkolélsky ostrov Island and the planned centre are accessible by public bus / train (3 connections to Bratislava / working day) and bicycle.

## 1.4 Hungary

### FUTURA Interactive Science Adventure Centre

This recently opened Science Centre in Mosonmagyaróvár covers a wide range of topics in a concept of the four elements, only some of them are related to the Danube.

The exhibition follows a very interactive, playful approach; instructions and explanations are available in Hungarian, Slovak, English and German, but also in French, Spanish or Italian (with extra costs). Visitors have the options just to follow the written instructions (supported by a scientific 'floor guide'), to have a personal guide from the centre or – mainly for teacher – to get training to be able to support groups (school classes).

The centre has 12 full-time and 30 part-time employees, the later mainly students. It expects 70.000 visitors per year.





Barrie free access is given, for group bookings special programs for wheel chairs, blind people and mentally disabled are available. For the later the centre has a contract with special schools to bring their own guides. For persons with special needs all offers are for free, but at the moment no special focused marketing is done for this target group.

Aside a guestbook for feedback Futura organises special days for teachers to get feedback, but also to introduce and discuss new ideas, test new tools, etc.

Access by public transport is no problem, as train and bus are near, information is available on the website. More than that the centre has special contracts with the MAV (the Hungarian railways) – visitors coming by special trains get a reduction on the entrance fees.

### **Pisztráng Kör – Lipot ecocentre**

Pisztráng Kör is a regional association offering nature experience and environmental education.

The association is contracted by the national park Fertő – Hanság to organise summer camps for young people. Pisztráng Kör owns a piece of land including some orchards, a campsite and a building, which is used for educational purposes. For the participants they offer guided tours, nature trails, cycling and canoe trips.



Solar boats are planned. All tours are connected with environmental problems and / or sustainable development and are used for intensive discussions. The programs also often combine nature experience with cultural backgrounds (handicrafts, net weaving, wood carving, etc.) and activities like star watching.

Pisztráng Kör has three full-time employees, plus six additional staff members from April till October. All of them have high practical and theoretical knowledge in didactics. The director has a background as Waldorf-school teacher.

English offers would be possible, but are not actively marketed. The same goes for offers for persons with special needs. Pisztráng Kör has even experiences with lame and blind people in canoes.

Feedback is often given personally; questionnaires are existing but not obligatory used. Pisztráng Kör offers shuttle service from the next train station.

### **National Park Fertő-Hanság: Summer Camp Asvanyaro**

**Fertő-Hanság** administrates a large area, containing a national park and PA of other status, the main area is not related to the Danube. In Asvanyaro, at the edge of the Danube wetlands the National Park offers on the one hand camps for schools (Mon-Fri) and weekend camps for kids in the summer holidays. Activities offered during the camps are days dedicated to different topics: water, birds, insects, botany, in a mix-

ture of experience and semi-scientific methods. Different types of activities are offered for different age groups (primary and secondary school).

30 bikes are available, which are mainly used to reach the nearby restaurant.

The camp has one person for maintenance, three involved rangers and some volunteers (on personal contacts).

In an HU-SK ETC-Program in 2012 one building was made ready for wheelchairs, the activities would be wheelchair-accessible (if the person is transported by car to the restaurant), but “challenged people are not conscious for such programs”.

Direct access by public transport is not possible.



### **Duna Muzeum, Esztergom**

The Duna Museum is situated in an 18<sup>th</sup> century, early baroque building that was bought in 1973 by the Water Management Council (a part of the Ministry of Rural Development). It contains a collection of water management professions in Hungary, the official name is ‘Water Management & Environmental Protection Museum’, so there is only some direct connection to Danube related issues – which sometimes leads to confusion with tourists.



Aside the standing exhibition the museum offers workshops for all ages. But main target groups are kindergarten, primary and secondary schools and retired people. Individual tourists and cyclists come to the museum, but the cruise ships have contracts with other museums. From 18.000 visitors 70% are children.

The workshops are a mixture of films, theoretical and practical parts, e.g. in nature friendly papermaking. Danube related topics are special fish catching methods, ship building (including practical testing). If schools request the museum would come – most probably together with an environmental expert (e.g. from Duna-Ipoly national park) into schools for external workshops. The museum offers also program for summer camps (without accommodation) and special events during the different ‘festival days’ – Danube Day, Day of the Earth, World Day of Water.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> From Hungary on downstream those events for the mentioned festival days were found in nearly all visited sites and Protected Areas.



Two persons with museum pedagogical background are employed for the workshops, three specialists do the museums didactics (out of all together 26 full-time employees). So far only workshops in Hungarian language are requested, the guiding in the museum is also possible in German and English.

The museum has some experiences with blind people, bought already a Braille printer (which is not yet in use). For persons with mobility restrictions the building has an elevator and is presented as barrier-free.<sup>3</sup> One person is specially trained for mentally handicapped people.

The work and the offers are based on a Mission Statement that is discussed and renewed every year. The defined main topics for knowledge transfer are science, technology, water, sources of nature and society.

Quality assurance is done by questionnaires that are distributed on the spot during a special time period and a guest book.

Esztergom as regional centre has good public transport facilities.

### **Pilisi Forest School**

The Pilisi Forest School is owned by the Pilisi Forest Department, a state owned company. The centre offers a modern yurt type camp and 30 different types of workshops for 1,5 – 3 hours length.

60% of the total 7000 participants/a are children, equally from kindergarten, primary and secondary school; coming from all over Hungary. After installation of a heating in some of the accommodations also families and adult groups are coming.



50% of the visitors are day-trippers, for schools it is typical to stay 2 nights.

The program is not related to the Danube; typical offers focus on plants, animals, forest as complex habitat, forest management and the human influence on nature. Also hands-on workshops like 'forest kitchen', painting with plants, herbs workshops are often booked.

Two full-time and six external freelancers organise and guide the activities, none of them specially qualified in didactics. "Important is the knowledge of and love for nature. Not the pedagogical background, but the feeling is important". In the choice of the freelancers it is important that they are born in the region (not 'only' living here).

English workshops would be possible, French only with an interpreter. But motivated by the Pilisi Forest company four employees take part in German and English courses.

Access for wheel chairs to the workshop house and one accommodation (two wheel chairs) is possible, participation in outdoor programs is rather difficult. Children with

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<sup>3</sup> The author doubts that the exhibition is really fitting for wheel chairs.

special education needs do come regularly, for slightly mentally handicapped children one course took place (supervised by a freelancer without special training). Quality assurance is done by the system of slow step-by-step introduction of new colleagues. All freelancers have their special field of interest, which is taken into consideration when the workshops are planned and tasks are distributed. No systematic feed-back is in place, but “observations are taken into account when the program is developed further.” Hungarian Forest Schools are regularly (every 5 years) certified by an independent NGO ([www.kokosz.hu](http://www.kokosz.hu)) (quality criteria are not available). The government pays school programs only if they do it in certified forest schools. The access by public transport is possible in a connection of bus line plus a local taxi or walk. No shuttle service or similar exists.

### **Duna-Ipoly National Park: Sas Hill visitor centre and Pulsatilla Forest School,**

Duna-Ipoly administrates a variety of different spots and areas, containing caves in the city of Budapest, national park area and PA of other status.

Environmental education activities of Duna-Ipoly National Park generally focus on all ages and target groups: from kindergarten, schools, students to families, adults and retired. Outdoor activities (guided tours, study trails, ...) are more important than indoor offers. The idea is to discover different nature related topics in a playful way. Only on Szentendre island the tours are combined with canoe and / or cycling tours. Plan is to widen the guided cycling tours.



Duna-Ipoly has no central strategy for environmental education, the individual heads of the different centres and forest schools decided with their personality very much about the exact measures. But a centralised environmental education concept is in progress.

When Duna-Ipoly develops new guided tours, natural and cultural values and locally available guides are checked. For the canoe and cycling tours on Szentendre Island external guides are employed, they need a special license to stir a canoe. The national park organises trainings for internal and external guides for canoeing – including interpretation skills and didactics, nature and Danube related topics. The canoe guides have additionally one training day per year – presenting new rules on water transport, but also interpretation techniques, etc. All Hungarian national parks together organize one three-day-conference / training for all rangers per year.

A special offer of the Duna-Ipoly National Park is accredited training for teachers – both in content and methods.

Usually guided tours in foreign languages (English, German) are possible. Extra programs are also possible for people with special needs, on **Sas Hill** one day (20<sup>th</sup> August) is dedicated only to persons with limited mobility. The facilities on Sas Hill are



barrier-free (with help also for wheel chairs). A special tour for blind people was developed in the new garden of the directorate – and is actively marketed.

The national park – especially the centre on Sas Hill – “is prepared for mentally handicapped persons”. Material and spots are available, but no special training for guides was offered. The website of Duna-Ipoly is barrier-free, as “web-sites of public institutions has to be according to Hungarian law.” Generally the focus on persons with special needs is – “although nowhere written down – extremely important for the national park directorate.”

Duna-Ipoly National Park uses QR-codes in the Sas Hill visitor centre that lead to a movie, text and pictures on the website – but only for a trail that is only visited with guided tours!

Local or regional products are not a topic within the environmental education, but actively offered e.g. within the activities during the Earth Day. Brochures and the website inform about public transport, if no access exists Duna-Ipoly tries to establish a contract with a bus company as ‘official partner of the national park’ to offer discounts for schools.

The **Pulsatilla Forest School** offers excursions mainly for primary schools and kindergarten. Families come mainly for picnic – due to financial problems, as the excursions could not be offered for free.

1500 visitors per year use the offers of the Forest School. Excursions are guided by the leader of the forest school, for larger groups help of two rangers can be organised. The length varies between 2 and 3 hours, content is mainly based on nature and environmental protection (herb or mushroom identification, bird housing, ...) other topics are water biology, bird ringing or others. Different in-door activities are available, using natural materials and providing knowledge about topics like forestry, but also handicrafts or waste recycling. All in-door programs could also offered directly in schools.



The ranger education in Hungary is not centralised (except the exam), but only possible for persons with a degree in a nature related subject. Environmental education is nowadays offered as university course. Pulsatilla Forest School is registered as Hungarian Forest School, but not yet certified as there are not enough visitors, which is also due to the fact that no cheap accommodation in the surrounding could be offered.

English led activities would be possible, but are not requested. The programs can be adapted to persons with special mentally or physical needs, except wheel chairs.

Neither a guest book, nor questionnaires for feed-back concerning the environmental education offers are available, except for teacher trainings – where this is obligatory and special questionnaires / feed-back options after new exhibitions. Only some tourism related analyses (by the ministry for Rural Development) are regularly supported by handing out questionnaires.

Public transport access is possible by local bus service; but the groups usually organise their own transport.

### **Jankovich Mansion Conference and Event Centre, Racalmas**

The local authority bought the building and renovated it as base for (eco)tourism. The main building is a conference centre, furthermore some rooms contain an exhibition on Danube fishing tools, Africa and local history) and the centre offers excursions and maintains a nature trail. The local primary school holds biology lessons sometimes in the facility. Since the local teacher who offered environmental education retired the biology courses for locals were stopped.



The centre offers an exercise book that could be used and filled in when doing the nature trail. The nature trail is partly devastated by vandalism; bureaucracy – not the money – hinders an immediate renovation. 2000 people / year (1400 children) see the nature trails, mainly as part of touristic programs (e.g. for conference participants).

There are no capacities for offers in foreign languages, a Mission Statement or strategy does not exist.

### **Duna-Drava National Park: Visitor Centre Kölked**

Duna-Drava administrates a large area, containing national park and PA of other status. Environmental education is relevant in all parts of the area. The target groups are wide: adults, students, families with children, but also experts (e.g. bird watchers, speleologists, ...) and the local population. For the moment cyclists are not very important, although the access by bike is usually signposted.



Although having actually different target groups there is no written specification or justification.

The national park has no special development strategy or Mission Statement for environmental education, all visitor centres develop annual programs with a focus on different topics.

Approximately 2500 people per year participate in guided tours, all areas offer nature trails about wet land forests, landscape history, etc. – most of them with QR-Codes.

Workshops for school classes are offered in a combination of lecture and flexible guided tour.

Duna-Drava has 15 employees for nature education and ecotourism plus 30 rangers who also guide tours - working for 7 visitor centres, educational centres and caves. Guides usually have no special didactic education, undergo once the ranger training. Due to heavy work load “they simply often have no time for additional training”.

All offers could be done on request in English and German, in some parts also Croatian. Duna-Drava has not much experience with persons with special physical needs, “as there is also not much request”. A new project together with an NGO in the Pintérkert Arboretum in Pécs tries to develop some offers for blind and other challenged persons. Mentally handicapped persons do use many programs; Duna-Drava has no specially trained staff for this target group, but “offers successfully the kindergarten programs.”

Like Duna-Ipoly also Duna-Drava distributes the questionnaires of the Ministry for Rural Development, which looks more on tourism statistics, but also contains questions on the visitor satisfaction.

The – within the new action of all Hungarian national parks – branded regional products and others, like handicrafts, etc. sold in the national parks shop(s).

Public transport is weak; no chance for mobility without a car, the national park has no capacities for cooperation or supporting measures.

The **Visitor Centre in Kölked** has a focus on white storks. Aside a living stork in the garden the exhibition rooms present wetland sceneries’, information boards, some landscape profile tables and an interactive monitor with the simulation of natural annual water cycles. Most of the visitors receive a guided tour through the exhibition with personal interpretation. Individual tourists using the exhibition, the interactive elements are on a second priority.

Visitors can get familiar with the lifestyle and migration of White Storks and get insight into the methods of stork ringing during lectures.

The **visitor spot at Boki-Duna** presents an outdoor exhibition of historic and recent ways of fishing and fishing equipment, all different types of nets, and catching methods. During excursions visitors could learn about the cultural history of fishing and actively take part in net repairation, etc. – and after testing the fishing equipment enjoy a Hungarian fish soup or other traditional fish dishes, cooked or fried together with the park employees.





## 1.5 Croatia

### Nature Park Kopacki Rit

The 'entrance building' and main visitor centre in Kopačevo is after a burn currently under reconstruction and will be expanded in 2014 with 3 new buildings – gallery, pavilion, administration offices and walking paths.

Visitors can there receive an overview about geography, ethno heritage and architecture of village Kopačevo before taking a boat trip. The planned new centre should contain multi-media and multi-senses-approach (sounds, tactile objects, etc.). A nature trail leading to the boat-landing place provides information in Croatian, Hungarian and English.

Most of the visitors to guided tours by boat or canoe, lasting around 1-2 hours. For children interactive games are integrated into the guided boat trip. Aside the water excursions also land excursions are offered, often for specialist, e.g. bird watching or deer mating tour lasting between one hour and several days. Guided tours are additionally available in English, German and Hungarian, with an interpreter also in French. Visitors in Kopacki Rit can also rent bicycles and take their own tour through the park. Kopacki Rit organised once cycling excursions, but due to limitations in available guides and possibilities for intensive marketing this was stopped for the moment.



The current target groups are children and school classes (60% of the 33.000 annual visitors, the number is increasing as more parents can pay the fees), but also adults and companies. Approx. 25% of the visitors are foreigners. Aside local schools many schools from other regions visit the nature park.

The Management Plan that is in place contains general information about environmental education (in a chapter 'visiting the PA') but no details (e.g. quantitative aims, working definition for environmental education, etc.).

Quality assessment is done by guest books and personal interviews of visitors following interview guidelines, done by volunteers. A systematic complaint management is in place.

The nature park built a visitor centre in an existing facility in Tikveš including accommodation possibilities, exhibition rooms, movies, etc. This facility is now under further development and modernization. Educational programs for children are held here, partly in cooperation with local NGOs. For children interactive games are integrated into the educational programs. Also park experts visit local schools and hold lectures there. Public events with some educational programs are done e.g. at the day of nature protection, International Bat Night, World's Wetland Day, Bird Migration Day.

The new visitor centre is going to have a barrier-free access for persons with limited mobility and the park gives them also an option for the boat trip (no specially

equipped boats but special support). The PA has also experiences with programs for mentally disabled persons – but no internal (or external) training for guides for this target group is offered.

The nature park has one formally qualified person for the environmental education programs; others have practical experience.

Website and Facebook are used for marketing and information purposes.

Public transport is neither available – except a bus to Bilje – nor would it be practical, as park-internal transport is needed, which cannot be offered by the PA administration. Smaller excursions will be possible with a recently bought small train.

The souvenir shop in the park sells exclusively local handicraft and regional agricultural products, e.g. local honey (“expensive but authentic, but visitors are willing to pay for those high-quality products”), ajvar, jam, ....

### **Lojnsko Polje Nature Park**

The Nature Park has a very strong focus on regional architecture and life style. It contributes to the overall regional development by strengthening unique regional culture and contributing to the regional identity. Lojnsko Polje motivated private persons in traditional houses to start offering Bed & Breakfast – at the moment approximately 200 beds in 23 accommodations.



The headquarter in Krapje has actually a seminar room and some outdoor educational tools (info boards, starting pint of a nature trail, etc.), and will develop till end of 2013 a visitor centre including souvenir shop.

Different programs and facilities focus on different topics: spoonbill, white stork, corn-crake, amphibians, the Croatian Posavina horse, the Turopolje pigs, architecture, ... Guidebooks for teachers and rangers have been developed. Many programs combine nature and biodiversity with water management, culture and (traditional and current) human use.

The Nature Park offers workshops for children and kindergarten, but also foreign study groups are an important target group. Excursions could be done in Croatian, German and English and can be adapted to different target groups. Three walking trails are also signposted in Croatian and English.

Around 20.000 visitors come every year, of which approximately 10.000 pay a ticket for a service. Many tourists (an increasing part of currently 15-20% foreigners) combine excursions with recreation activities (cycling, canoeing). Special interest is shown in this group for bird watching. A ‘problem’ is seen in the fact that organised groups use excursions and the next time the foreign guide is already a ‘local expert’ and don’t uses the Nature Park services anymore.

Lojnsko Polje Nature Park has – together with the tourism association - an important role in the (direct) marketing for regional products. A brand for products (cheese, honey, pork, hors meat, etc. ) is under development.

The Nature Park offers a 7-day program including final exam and certificate for guide training and preferably employs locals that passed this training. The training includes biodiversity subjects, but also local history, didactics and communication. Several employees did some additional special training abroad.

The centres and parts of the programs do fit for persons with limited mobility, for mentally challenged persons the programs could be adapted. One guide has even a respective education.

Quality assurance is done via questionnaires distributed by the accommodation owners - which means that guests staying just for one day are not reached. Questionnaires are available in Croatian, English and German; they reach a return rate of proximately 15%. Teachers are directly approached with other questionnaires.

Public transport only exists for school kids.

## 1.6 Serbia

### Obedska Bara

The Protected Area Obedska Bara is the oldest protected area after Yellowstone (1874) and is administrated by Vojvodina Suma.

The visitors in Obedska Bara change according to the season: May to June many primary schools come for excursions (organised via an agency, that uses most of the costs), in the summer month families come for recreation and barbeque, in autumn more retired people visit also for recreation purposes.



The offered excursions consist of a 30-45 minutes lecture, approximately 20 minutes at the watchtower and finally a walk along a forest nature trail for another 30-45 minutes. The rest of the planned time the children stay in the playground of the park.

Upgrades of this model are under development, including boat trips with a new catamaran. In the inner part of the park a 7 km long educational trail exists.

Adult groups do not often come, very little foreigners. For them the programs could be slightly adapted.

The PA employs four guides (three of them forest rangers, one forest engineer), if necessary more could be organised. They had internal training for the content of the tours, did some study trips (as part of the DANUBEPARKS project), but have no special training on didactics or methodologies.



Some of the material is available in English, one guide could also offer a tour in English – but this is hardly requested.

Obedska Bara has no real visitor centre and no shop or restaurant facilities. There is an idea to turn a nearby hotel in a park owned accommodation and visitor centre. The environmental education offers are not based on any theoretic document or strategy paper; they have been developed within the last four years “and are still very flexible” – and under further development. The administration also decided to be more active in direct marketing in local and regional schools, where already lectures are given.

Events are organised for the International Day of Forests and other festival days.

The facilities are not yet wheelchair-accessible (access to the landing place; the watch tower (only the ground platform), ...), but the PA has experiences in a cooperation with a school for pupils with special social and mental needs.

There is no quality assessment system in place.

A bus line to Belgrade operates 6-7 times / day, also on weekends, but usually guest do not use public transport.<sup>4</sup>

### Deliblatska Pescara

The Protected Area Deliblatska Pescara is administrated by Vojvodina Suma. Actually it is mainly a large recreation centre (130 beds) that is mainly used for schools, children and sportsmen. Six walking trails (without information boards or any other tools; some should be developed in the future) are available for optional guided tours that were offered by a sport teacher without environmental background.

Individual guest are coming for week-end stays – and mainly use the recreation facilities.

Four hunting houses exist and one building complex should be turned into a small visitor centre with some rooms for accommodation, a shop and some exhibition area. Another hunting house in a Ramsar site could be used for workshops if necessary. Through an IPA program two minivans were bought, that could be used for guided tours to the sand dunes.

Programs that are organised for person with special needs do not focus on environmental education.

Tourist guides from the tourism association in Bacevo are trained in nature conservation.

No questionnaires or other feedback options are used at the moment.



<sup>4</sup> ... as it is still a status symbol in many CEE and SEE countries to have and use an own car. Using environmentally friendly means of transport is often seen as ‘being not able to afford a car’.

## National Park Djerdap

The National Park administration runs a visitor centre in Donji Milanovac, providing standing and changing exhibitions and movies. Information is presented in Serbian, English and German. Additionally a renovated visitor centre in Plocé offers a standing exhibition on plants and animals.

The national park has a very close connection and cooperation with the local population. Once a month workshops with games, puzzles etc. are organised in the local kindergarten and schools to raise awareness for the PA. The older population is approached in stakeholder meetings with fisherman, hunters, etc. Aside environmental education (lectures) actual problems and new development is discussed.

Offered guided tours last one day, the content depends on the interest of the tourist (group), the NP rangers could offer basic nature excursions, for specialised topics biologists, forestry engineers, and other experts are employed in the PA. But most of the visitors just see the viewpoints and don't take the time for environmental education offers.



School classes can book excursions or workshops in the school (valid for the local schools); especially successful is the Junior Ranger Program, which was part of an European Junior Ranger activity.

The PA has strategic documents for every area of work (forestry, hunting etc.). Environmental education is included in the annual Management Programme (the 10-years long-term Management Plan was not yet adopted).

Djerdap has 75 employees, of which around 10 would offer guided tours. Excursions could be offered also in English and Romanian, but there is a lack of interest for the latter. The guides are specialists in the content, but only some have yet training on methods or didactics and interpretation. But all of them will have a training in didactic within the next few months as a part of the Bioregio Carpathians project (a EU SEE project).

There is no guestbook used, but children are asked directly for feedback. Feedback from teachers is not asked. Some feedback is also collected via the Facebook profile.

The visitor centre would be barrier-free, but according to the administration there is not a visible demand from people with special needs. For the future there are some plans especially for blind people.

The public transport possibilities are rather good, but schools in Serbia have very strict rules for the excursions and are not allowed to use public transport. They always have organized transport. Tourists rather come here by car or bicycle than by bus. Donji Milanovac is an important stop for cruise ships. Approximately 90.000 tourists come this way from April to October, but only 10% leave the boat – and visit often the historic site Lepinski Vir as an optional part of official programme for the boats.

## 1.7 Bulgaria

### Nature Park Persina, Belene

The Nature Park Persina has a small visitor centre, with a photo exhibition, a hydraulic landscape model, some games and – special! – a diorama with fibreglass (and not stuffed) birds and fish.

The area has no special marked trails, but can organise and offer excursions – walking, by bicycle or (rented) motorboat. Five canoes would be available, but at the moment there is no guide with a respective license in the centre and there is also limited interest by the guests.



Main target groups are on the one hand children on the other bird watchers. In 2012 approximately 5000 visitors were in Persina, of which 50% were children. Visitors are mainly from this part of Bulgaria and stay for maximum one night. The Eurovelo 6 is not so far away, but the PA has no allowance to signpost the junction to the visitor centre – but plans to do it in an ‘informal way’.

The administration plans a map with some marked trails and boat routes.

Connected with festival days – Danube Day, Wetland Day, Earth Day, .. – workshops or drawing competitions for children take place.

Three persons are available for guided tours – including the director. She has a certification as tourist guide and guide in botanical gardens. Guided tours are offered without any fee for the guide – participants just have to pay e.g. for boat rental – as this would be “bureaucratically too difficult”. The tours could be offered in Bulgarian, English and Russian, other languages with interpretation. Some parts of the website are also available in English.

The Masterplan does not contain anything about environmental education, but the general aim is to include mainly the local people to raise their awareness and acceptance. Quality assessment is done by verbal feedback.

The nature park often receives guests by bus organised by the Bulgarian union of people with disabilities. A special route to a resting place is accessible for wheel chairs, as well is the ground floor of the visitor centre.

### Ethnographic Museum 'Danube fishery and boat-building', Tutrakan

The Ethnographical museum ‘Danube fishery and boat-building’ is part of the Museum of history Tutrakan and it is hosted in an architectural monument from the beginning of XX century. It functions as museum since 1974. It preserves culture artefacts of the Bulgarians from the fishermen’s settlements on the Danube.

Original fishermen’s instruments from the Antiquity and devices, which are used in the present time are presented in chronological sequence. Photographs and black



and white drawings explain the way of fishing in the settlements along the Lower Danube.

Approximately 5000 visitors per year are counted in all four Tutrakan historic places. These are mainly adults from Bulgaria and abroad. There are also some cyclists from the Eurovelo 6 find their way to the museum.

In additionally the museum experts are ready to some workshops / outdoor games at the lawn aside the premises, targeted at kindergarten and primary school groups. At this moment this activities face rather low interest.

For the time being the museum presents in rather traditional – but still very appealing – way, it has a very good lightening concept that creates a inspiring atmosphere.

There is no development strategy or Masterplan in place. For feedback a guest book should be available. No other quality assessment like questionnaires is used as ‘experience in Ruse showed that guests have no interest in answering questionnaires’.



One of the museum guides has a pedagogical background.

### Rusenski Lom Nature Park

Rusenski Lom has different facilities (visitor centres, information centres) with permanent exhibitions, libraries or simply materials dissemination points. An objective is to have bilingual visitor centres.

Some trails have information boards, mainly about the plants of Rusenski Lom. Most of the visitor and information centres are barrier free.

Brochures and maps are available in English.

The major target groups for environmental education are student from elementary and secondary schools from Ruse and students in Ecology from Ruse University. Many school-children visit the Nature Park or Nature Park's employees go to schools for lectures on nature in general, on specialised topics and/or games, etc. Activities like making sculptures from waste plastic are especially popular at the Earth Day, the Day of Nature Parks, etc. Teachers are asked for proposals what new topics should be developed.



The Masterplan (2008-2018) describes only a frame for environmental education but no specific targets or measures. The work program is developed per year. Currently

the Masterplan is in a half-term update, and more programs for education should be integrated within the next period.

Furthermore, some companies from Sofia and Varna plan their team buildings in the area. The Nature Park is also preferred for visits by retired people from the region.

Guided tours are available led by three employees of Nature Park Rusenski Lom's directorate. They could be organized in rather short notice and could be also booked via the website. Most of the guides have a background as biologist and large personal experience in guiding. In 2013 the Ministry offered a 2-month long training course for guides especially for Rusenski Lom. Excursions could be guided in English, French, German and in some cases Romanian.

Quality assessment is mainly done by personal feedback. Questionnaires for tourists are not used.

## 1.8 Romania

### Nature Park Portile de Fier

The Nature Park has one visitor centre where schools and tourists (mainly from Romania, but also international cyclists) come with some exhibition rooms providing information, pictures and some stuffed animals.

Especially for the Day of Plants and the Day of Earth the Nature Park provides presentations for schools and outdoor activities. At the Day of Parks an annual competition (quiz) is organized for the kids.



16 nature trails with information boards did exist, but several of the boards and signposts have been stolen and were not replaced.

One newspaper issue per year provides information about touristic activities; it is distributed at schools, in the communities and at different info centres.

A project application for 2014 foresees to build a bigger information centre in Orsova directly at the Danube focusing on water habitats. Further project applications (LIFE+) plan a bird watching tower and new ecological routes for children about birds, plants, forest species and geology.

The Nature Park Portile del Fiere has 13 rangers and 6 administrative persons, all the rangers work with schools, they have education at forest lycees or environmental faculties, but have no special training for didactics.

Both the Management Plan and the Communication Plan contain some hints for environmental education, but no specific targets and measures. Both plans are prepared for five years, but not yet approved by the ministry. The future situation is generally not clear, as the contract ends in 2014 and the ministry could give the administration of the Nature Park to another organisation, e.g. to Romsilva.

No experiences with disabled persons have been made so far.

Quality assessment is mainly done by personal feedback. Teachers are included in the program planning. Questionnaires for tourists are not used. Facebook comments are used for improvement.

Public transport is weak, one daily bus connection leaves Orsova along the Danube.

### **Nature Park Comana**

The Nature Park was only established as a result of a LIFE+ project in 2006. It provides a network of observation towers and a brand new visitor centre (*which is not yet ready*). The visitor centre will contain a laboratory for children, a room for accommodation, pictures and monitors. Still projected is a special pavilion for monitoring options and more information and awareness material.



The Masterplan, which is not yet approved, contains a chapter on education and the communication strategy defines target groups.

Within the Romanian-wide activity 'school different' 1.200 persons came to visit the Nature Park on one day, in total approximately 30.000 per year. Many people from Bucharest come for picnic at the weekend; the PA has to restrict the access to important areas. Only a few of them are interested in nature and culture.

The Operational Program for the Environment formulates the objectives of 10 biking trails (56 km) with information boards and bikes to rent. Cyclists would also come on a cycle route from Bucharest. Additionally there are also possibilities for water excursions: one motorboat, 4 kayaks and two fishermen boats (which are not requested).

Comana has five permanent rangers in the field and four persons in the office. Guided tours / excursions are done by rangers, who are trained as guides. Collaboration with a cycling organisation from Bucharest should allow also training for cycling guides, as there is more interest in cycling excursion than in hiking tours.

Huge interest is given for bird watching, one ranger is specialised in birding. English tours can only be provided with interpretation, but most of the foreign groups come with their own guides. But information material is available in English.

There is more demand for school programs (lectures in the schools, excursions, workshops, games) than the rangers can offer. An annual contest 'Together for Nature' is arranged.

Separated watchtowers are built for tourists and experts.

A special quality assessment scheme is not yet in place, but teachers are asked for feedback.

The public transport connection to Bucharest is very good; nevertheless most of the visitors come by own car.



### **Ecotourism Museum Center "Danube Delta", Tulcea**

The museum presents ecosystems of the Danube Delta and the continental part of the Dobrugea and the Macin mountains, but also geology, culture and historical aspects. It provides a series of diorama with ecosystems and nature sounds, cultural scenes, diverse information and an aquarium with local and tropical (“as the visitors want to see colourful fish”) fish – including Beluga and other sturgeons in a rather small basin. There is no direct relation to ‘ecotourism’ – this is just a misleading name as result of a EU PHARE project.



Additionally space for changing exhibitions, e.g. winners of a children’s drawing contest, is given.

There is no written concept for education “but general ideas and plans”.

The main target group are children (from kindergarten to high school), the museum offers special workshops about plants, fish and birds from the delta, but also practical workshops concerning e.g. paper production, work with clay, etc. During the tourism seasons many foreign visitors are coming – both organised and individual. All together the museum has 50.000 visitors per year, 70% are children, 30% tourists. “The locals do already know the museum”.

Material was available in English and French, but reprints could not be financed. A shop at the exit sells diverse material; its assortment could be increased and improved.

The museum employs 20 specialist, 5 persons do workshops and guided tours. They have not yet a special training for didactics or museum pedagogics.

Disabled persons have free entrance (as everywhere in Romania), the building is said to be wheelchair-accessible. Few groups come with mentally handicapped persons, bringing their own specialised support.

Quality assurance is done questionnaires that are distributed for one week per month. One employee is responsible for complaint management and feedback. With teachers and school classes open discussion take place.

Tulcea has as regional centre good public transport access.

### **Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve / Information centres in Tulcea, Murighiol, Sf. Gheorghe, Sulina and Crisan**

The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration (DDBRA) runs a visitor centre in the administration building in Tulcea and centres in several of the delta communities: Murighiol, Sf. Gheorghe, Chilia Veche, Sulina and Crisan (under reconstruction). The personal is sharing the information work in the centres and accompany groups on field trips (only for official delegates, special students groups or similar groups) in the surrounding. Regular excursions cannot be offered. Due to temporary lack of staff Sf. Gheorghe and Chilia Veche are maintained by one to two rangers only.

The mission statement states that the main task is to 'raise the awareness of locals and visitors for the importance of the area', main target groups of DDBRAs are the local schools during the school time. The annual environmental program is developed in a dialogue with the teachers, special topics, e.g. waste, are fixed for one year. But also university students come for projects, and individual tourists visit the centres, during the season tourists and information given to tourists (also by phone by the centre in Tulcea) is one of the core work of the visitor centres. In total two third of the counted guest are Romanians.



DDBRA runs awards, e.g. a regular drawing award for school kids.

Material is to be prepared in Romanian and English, but often the financial means do not allow a reprinting. Out-door activities could be done in Romanian, English, French and – with some difficulties – even in German.

There is no common quality assessment method in place; all visitor centres try to do according to their own conception. Some use questionnaires, but stopped as tourists had “not enough patience” or because “the evaluation is too complicated”.

There is practically no experience with handicapped persons (except some cruise boat passengers arriving in Sulina), probably because the terrain and the transport in the delta are too complicated for this target group. Transport is one of the most challenging issues in the Danube Delta, many sites are only accessible by boat, and the – slow – regular boat lines only serve three main Danube branches (no regular line connects cross-border with e.g. Izmil or Vilkovo, at the moment, 2013, the official border crossing is at Galați, Giurgiulești).

DDBRA offers on the website a list of authorised pensions, hotels and tour operators for information of the tourists. A future idea is to provide a list of qualitative accommodations for tourists based on an auditing.

There are only slight differences between the centres in the municipalities:

The centre in **Murighiol** cannot offer excursions due to a lack of staff capacities, and the “difficulty of the area”. Also the school activities take place in-door. Murighiol offers rather easy access by car and bike, touristic activities in Sf. Gheorghe are festivities and events (e.g. the day of the village).

In **Sf. Gheorghe** cooperation with an environmental education centre in Germany was established. This led to an education for sustainable development project, in which kids developed thematic routes that could be assessed interactively by electronic media (GPS and audio guide system). The DDBRA also implemented in Sf. Gheorghe a Nature Trail, as part of the international biodiversity campaign ‘Natura Trails’ run by Naturefriends International (another ‘Natura Trail’ is found in the Wachau in Austria). The main touristic activities in Sf. Gheorghe are annual festivals (e.g.

the film festival), but the visitor centre does not foresee e.g. information desks directly at the festival spot, as “the centre is central enough”.

More tourists than in most of the other visitor centres reach **Sulina**, mainly in spring and summer. The autumn audience are often sport- and fishermen. Sulina offers walking excursions focusing mainly on the history of the place – the usual lectures for schools, but also activities in the library and ecological clubs.

The centre in **Crisan**, which is currently under reconstruction, lies on the opposite side of the Danube than the village, near an abandoned hotel complex. So in future tourists need to find a way to cross the river to visit the centre. The rangers here recommend locals for excursions by canoe and the new ‘canotca’, a mixture of canoe and traditional fishermen boat. Those excursions by locals usually start or at least stop at the visitor centre. The activities for the schools more often take place in their locations (Crisan, Mila 23, Caraoman, ...). Presentations in hotels are organised by the DDBRA on special request, on the occasion of different events.



The visitor centre in **Tulcea** is planned to be redesigned and extended with a multi-optional room for documentary movies, presentations, etc.

### Natural Science Museum Complex, Galati

The Natural Science Museum Complex is rather new (2003), not all parts and exhibitions are yet finished. Only some parts are directly or indirectly related to the Danube. It has both permanent and temporary exhibition, as well as laboratories, lecture halls, an aquarium and an astronomic observatory and planetarium inside and a botanic garden around the buildings. 50.000-100.000 visitors come to the museum per year; statistics about nationalities do not exist, but estimated 10% from abroad.



The legends in the museum are Romanian only; brochures are produced in Romanian and English.

The educational work is based on an approved strategy. Tools should be interactive, using touch screens, etc., different guided tours are offered. The museum pays training courses in didactics, as most of the guides have a scientific background.



There are no financial capacities for deeper surveys concerning quality assurance, but there is a guest book and employees observe what visitors do, how long they stay where, etc.

The building is wheelchair-accessible, except the last floor with the planetarium. Different cooperation and project application also focus on mentally handicapped.

The museum also cooperates with projects in the Lower Prut area e.g. in environmental education for children, advocacy or awareness raising activities. Projects are based on interviews with children and their analysed needs. Events take place on the diverse 'festival days'.

Another project application together with nine municipalities focus on a 'campaign of assessment of aquatic ecosystem health.'

Galati as capital of the county has good public transport access.

### **Lower Prut Natural Park<sup>5</sup>**

Administrated by the Association of Galati County Fishermen. Seven rangers and five other employees do protection work, but also environmental education – based on projects.

The Natural Park has a Management Plan that is not yet approved.

Guided tours are offered by guides that have practical, but no theoretical experience.

In 2011 with scholar assistance from Galati the association published practical educational material for kindergartens and schools. In 2012 a project for riparian people at the Prut, Siret and Danube took place: a campaign focusing on children and mass media. Projects are often based on cleaning the environment and discussing health issues.

More trilateral projects with Moldova and the Ukraine are in the pipeline.

## **1.9 Moldova**

### **Lower Prut Nature Reserve<sup>6</sup>**

The Ecological Counselling Centre Cahul is a public, non-profit, non-governmental and apolitical organization that exists since 1999. The work of the Ecological Counselling Centre is based on project finances and focuses on the Prut River and biodiversity in general. Several projects, financed by interna-



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<sup>5</sup> This site was not visited.

<sup>6</sup> According to the weather conditions the site visit of the assessment tour could not be finished with an interview. A DANUBEPARK trainee added the interview by phone some weeks later.

tional institutions, could have been implemented in the last decade.

No written mission statement concerning the environmental education exists, but “it could be formulated as follows: ‘make local children aware and provoke them to act in this direction about nature’”.

There is no special centre or educational building; a room in a school could be used for lectures, exhibitions and similar activities. The Ecological Counselling Centre employs two persons, sometimes volunteers from the university (with a focus on tourism) help in the implementation of the projects.

Target groups are mainly school kids in the age of 13-16, but also the population in general. 10 schools in the area are visited regularly and together with the teachers there environmental programs are developed.

The director has an education as forester; the second employee participated in seminars and workshops and made several practical experiences.

The Ecological Counselling Centre has no experiences with people with special needs, neither the school buildings would fit, not the outdoor programs. Feedback is collected in the direct contacts with the teachers; other assessment methods do not exist.

Public transport is weak in Moldova, for field trips cars and (rented) busses are used.

## 1.10 Ukraine

### Danube Biosphere Reserve

The Ukrainian Danube Biosphere Reserve operates a visitor centre in Vilkovo that is visited by approximately 2000 persons per year, whereas approximately 25.000 tourists per year see the ‘km 0’ point (which was an invention of the director). Today the main clientele are tourists from UA, MOL and RUS (80%), very often day-trippers coming from Odessa.

Environmental education activities are based on the conception of eco-education in the Masterplan (from 1998), which is also defining target groups and methods.

The centre offers summer camps for children from the region and lectures as well as excursions for the local schools. Information is distributed in Ukrainian, Russian and English to the passengers of the boats going to km 0.

Six persons can offer excursions in different specialisations; all are trained in courses for eco-education for children (offered regularly by the ministry of ecology). All speak a bit English but lack of practise.



The centre is implementing educational projects (mainly for schools, e.g. 'We want to live in a healthy region') in cooperation with e.g. the WWF.

Not many experiences are given with persons with restricted mobility, "for them whole Vilkovovo is very difficult". Sometimes blind people visit together with a specialised guide. Mentally handicapped children from a nearby summer camp do come regularly for some interactive games and a short excursion.

The centre had a quality assessment in cooperation with a college till 2011, since then only guestbook and website feedback is available.

Vilkovo is accessible by several bus lines (from Kilia, Odessa, Kiev), in the 80ies there was a boat line from Odessa, which was no economic success.

## 1.11 Additional Telephone Interviews<sup>7</sup>

### **BUND Environmental Centre, Ulm (DE)**

The BUND Environmental Centre is a regional office of the BUND association, and therefore no environmental education centre per se, but environmental education is an important activity of the association.

A mission statement exist, "but is not written down", the main target group are clearly children.

The association maintains a nature trail at the Danube, which is easily accessible also for people in wheelchairs and offers excursions, which are done by 4-5 volunteers without special training.

Additionally there are connected guidebooks in different versions for parents / adults and children. A former audio guide is not used anymore, as there was too little request.

Due to the small environmental education offer there is no quality assessment in place.

### **Danube Station Munderkringen (DE)**

The Danube Station is a project of the local BUND group, which was established in 2002. The station has no employees, 2 persons work voluntarily, receive only fees for guided tours.

A mission statement was written in the preparation phase, but never actualised.

All activities take place outside; there is no building or other facilities – mainly due to a lack of financial possibilities. For bad weather the organisation could use one room.

Main target group are children (pre school and primary school), seldom also adults or companies doing a work outing.

Four topic areas could be combined according to wishes or situation of the groups to 3h excursions. Important aspect is the multiplication, e.g. no expensive analyse tools

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<sup>7</sup> All interviews in chapter 1.11 were done on phone by the DANUBEPARK trainee Mandy Wosch end of June 2013.



are used. Currently the topics are the following: water animals, beavers, analyses of water bodies, hiking from spring to mouth (which is the conjunction with the Danube). Additionally an annual program provides some expert inputs or participation in local or regional festivities. Training measures for social workers in training are offered as well.

Within the last years only two groups with mentally challenged persons used the offer of a special program. Once also a group in wheelchairs was here – but physically very fit, so that they could use spoon nets. But those offers are not actively marketed. Both persons are educated and/or trained both in content and didactics.

No quality assessment methods are used, dissatisfaction is “usually communicated, earlier or later”.

Public transport access is possible hourly by train from Ulm, the train station is 5-10 minutes away from the common meeting point.

### **WWF Austria (AT)**

Several parts of the WWF are active together in the Danube Basin – WWF Danube Carpathian Programme, WWF Austria, WWF Romania.

Internationally, WWF is a well-known conservation organization and environmental education provider. In Austria and Danube Carpathian Region, under the program heading "Education for Sustainable Development," WWF offers innovative educational programs for youth and young adults both in and out of school such as school excursions and visits, summer camps, online and printed educational resources, and various trainings. A long running program, European Schools for a Living Planet, trains teens and their teachers from across Austria and nine Eastern European countries on a variety of topics such as project management, protection of the Danube River and active citizenship to take action on environmental issues. WWF Austria has also started a non-formal youth leadership and empowerment program. This program, which works with youth from Central Eastern Europe over a series of years, uses a participatory approach to developing program goals, themes and projects. The youth are truly involved in decision-making and developing and offering trainings through peer-to-peer workshops.

The WWF Education for Sustainable Development Vision is to educate and empower youth to take action for conservation and environmental protection and live more sustainable lives.'

Educational offers are often based in National parks or other PA and use education methods such as science based learning, environmental education with minds and hands on activities, youth empowerment and active citizenship.

Examples for projects are the water truck (a mobile tool), "European Schools for a Living Planet" Project (International academy of 1 year for teachers and students from up to 11 countries), Youth Empowerment Programme "Youth Taking Action for the Earth", e.g. the Danube-Clean-Up Day, Kids Camps "Young Panda" (for kids of 8-13 years in a PA), projects for schools and teachers.

Offers for people with special needs are only offered by request.

A special training of ecological pedagogics, secure the implementation of all WWF ESD projects. Eco pedagogues are facilitators; trainers, coach and mentors of all offered WWF ESD projects, such as camps project days etc.

This WWF Eco pedagogue curriculum includes a 30 day training distributed over 6-9 month, and is organised and developed by the WWF ESD Team. The length is important as nature changes over the year and different aspects of different seasons should be integrated. The training takes place every 2-3 years and is of high quality, but not on European Credit Level certified.

Quality assessment is done by questionnaires and surveys before and after all activities, which are used for a monitoring and evaluation program.

The use of public transport is an important principle within the WWF activities. WWF works on packages for sustainable tourism to be offered for all programs.

### **Kismagos Environmental Education and Ecotourism Centre (HU)**

The Kismagos Environmental Education and Ecotourism Centre (KEEEEC) operated by Magosfa Foundation offers different programs. The Foundation has five employees, of which three do educational work and additionally several volunteers.

The work is often done in the context of Hungarian Forest schools, and the programs are hold mainly outdoor, in mountain area or related to the Danube. It is based on the mission statement of the organisation: 'Assist the protection of local values, the renovation of settlements and local society in region of the Mountain Börzsöny and Danube-Bend through development of the eco-tourism, as well as to exhibit the possibility of a more supportable style of living for the local habitants, students attending school in this region and the visitors by means of the environmental education.'

The main target group is children and schools from the region and Budapest. But also adult programs exist. Long-term and multi-faceted cooperation with schools is characteristic.

Those programs in relation with the Danube are canoeing, cycling tours along the Danube (both approx. 3 hours, more fun then environmental education), flora and fauna analyses and microscoping. The KEEEC offers those programs also in summer camps that are ~~often~~ sometimes organised by other organisations.

Actually there are no offers for people with special needs.

A special education is no preconditions for the staff or volunteer recruitment.

Quality assessment by questionnaires is done for the forest school programs, not for the summer camps.

The Environmental Education Centre is accessible by bus from the next train station (Kismaros), from where hourly trains operate to Budapest.

### **Göncöl Foundation (HU)**

Göncöl Foundation is a civic organisation, the work consists out of three elements: Nature, conservation and environment. The main core that combines them is education.

To the Foundation belong two educational centres, a community house (with cyclist centre, boat house, events and camps), a forest school, a research institute, a geo-

logical museum and a library. The work is based on the following statement: 'Preserving and engendering nature, social and human values and to transform society to a more sustainable one as it is now, based on the cooperation of small, human sized communities.'

The main target group are children and students, but also families and single adults. Aside the educational centres the foundation has field education facilities, e.g. a 500m long boardwalk inside the flood plain with approximately 60.000 visitors a year. The foundation also has programs for schools and people who are interested in ecotourism. Ten different offers for school-groups focus on topics like water, the Danube's ecosystem and flooded areas but also other activities like visiting important regional buildings and monuments like the house of the foundation itself.

The Foundation also has two exhibition (environmental health and geological) with additional textbook for children but also suitable for adults. In the geological exhibition they also have some Danube-related material.

They offer camps, which are usually one week long and usually 1/3 of the programme is Danube-related. In 2012 the foundation initiated a national competition among 2000 schools in Hungary about nature and environment.

Both educational centres are wheelchair-accessible and the foundation also has experiences with mentally handicapped persons. Guided tours could also be offered in English.

The staff is trained by the Göncöl Foundation but they also have volunteers from universities (e.g. Degrees with environmental education). Generally they work by the Method 'inquiry teaching' which means they work with every kid individually and there is no study plan that needs to be fulfilled. They follow the interest of each person (same thing with handicapped).

No quality assessment for visitors and participants is used. Re-visits are seen as positive feedback.

Access by public transport is possible by train, bus or boat.

The organisation has currently rather severe financial problems and therefore an unsecure future.

### **Supernatural Park (SER)**

Supernatural Park is the peninsula Ada Huja, which was transformed by this project from a waste landfill to an environmental education project. Today the peninsula offers a green classroom, a greenhouse, an organic market, gardens, trees and a family playground.

For the environmental education activities Supernatural Park focuses on children, students and families. Five thematic areas are combined according to the participants; all of them are related to the Danube. The current topics are: Biodiversity of the Danube (includes water management, bird watching), medical & aromatic herbs, energy efficiency, cooking (esp. with fish and vegetables) and scuba divers.

The team from Supernatural Park also offers lectures and seminars, e.g. Green architecture seminar, lecture about waste management combined with art project (art made of waste), lecture on organic food, lecture about revitalisation of the island (de-



bate with students and top experts), eco-tourism on the Danube – the need to network and to connect.

For the time being most of the signs are in Serbian only, but everything should be signposted in English too. The peninsula is not accessible for wheelchairs; Supernatural Park has no offers for people with special challenges, except some festivals that are barrier free.

Quality assessment is not yet done.

Public transport is a bit difficult, the next bus stop is 1,5 km away.

## 2 Analysis and Good Practice

### 2.1 General observations

All visited Protected Areas do see environmental education as a very important task. All interviewed responsible persons and staff members show great enthusiasm in this field, as the direct benefit for the protection task is obvious – following the old standard by the guru of nature pedagogics Josef Cornell: “You will only protect what you love. And you can only love what you know.”

Commonalities were found in the focus of all Protected Areas on school classes and children and – starting from Hungary downstream – the public events on the special ‘festival days’, e.g. Danube Day, Earth Day, World Day of Water, etc.

But also obviously there are huge differences in the possibilities of offering environmental education for different Protected Areas, mainly due to given circumstances like finances and personnel capacities but also due to experience, freedom and time for creativity, etc. of the responsible persons and structures.

But generally spoken the variety of environmental education offers follows the overall economic East-West-divide of the Danube countries.

### 2.2 Content of the environmental education offers

Visitors can find all different content within the existing environmental offers by Protected Areas, Museums, local initiatives and NGOs: Obviously biodiversity is the main content, but also its connection to human activities, sustainable regional development is broached. Today's nature is set into relation to historic and societal development and seen from different perspectives.

The possibility to experience water and water related landscapes plays an important role in most of the Protected Areas, but not in all.

Having presented the variety of found educational offers one has to state also that the majority of the Protected Areas still does focus on a traditional knowledge transfer of plant and animal species combined with some information about the local ecosystems and biodiversity. The human use of and impact onto nature as well as societal reasons for this are exceptions.

#### **Good Practise: Environmental education offers about every-days environment, mooseum (DE)**

Although the focus of the content of the mooseum is wetlands and bogs, including human usages and its impacts, they also offer a very strong ‘every-day environment’ section, touching e.g. the history of washing and soaps, nutrition, etc..

In-door offers are on the one hand a touchable exhibition, games like ‘nature sudoku’, but also workshops for children, families and adults, e.g. broaching the issue of use of willows.

A new topic – mainly in the outdoor area is renewable energy (which is also used by the centre for its own energy needs). The centre offers as well practical courses (e.g. tree cutting), excursions and vacation activities (day programs) for children titled ‘touch the nature’.

[www.mooseum.de](http://www.mooseum.de)

**Good Practise: Duna-Drava national park: Out-door exhibition of historic and recent ways of fishing and fishing equipment (HU)**

The visitor spot at Boki-Duna presents a large outdoor exhibition of historic and recent ways of fishing and fishing equipment, all different types of nets, and catching methods.

During excursions visitors could actively learn about the cultural history of fishing and take part in net reparation and other related activities. After testing the fishing equipment guest can enjoy a Hungarian fish soup or other traditional fish dishes, cooked or fried together with the park employees.

[www.ddnp.hu](http://www.ddnp.hu)

## 2.3 Mission Statement / Guiding Principles

Most of the Protected Areas do have a chapter on environmental education within their Management Plans. Those chapters mainly describe plans for infrastructure (e.g. visitor centres) and activities (e.g. excursions, etc.), but what’s missing in most of the cases is something like a Mission Statement or Basic Understanding about environmental education.

Surprisingly a lack of theoretical background of the educational activities could be identified. Hardly any of the interviewees could define a theoretical approach of the respective PA to environmental education (in the range between nature education / environmental education / education for sustainable development / global learning). Often aims of the educational measures could not be explained, neither content wise (e.g. target groups – beside school classes - that should be reached, knowledge that should be imparted, ...) nor quantified targets were set (e.g. number of activities / visitors per year, ...).

**Good Practise: External cooperation of the Auenzentrum Neuburg-Ingolstadt (DE)**

The Auenzentrum has different cooperation with the academia. Together with the university Eichstätt-Ingolstadt a strategy and Guiding Principles were developed. The university also cooperated with interviews of visitors, hikers and cyclists when it came to the design of the current exhibition.

The university Würzburg supports the development of integrated packages for persons with special mental and physical needs. Knowledge transfer between academic



staff and active group works with students create not only content but has synergies for the 'marketing' of the Protected Area.

[www.auenzentrum-neuburg-ingolstadt.de](http://www.auenzentrum-neuburg-ingolstadt.de)

## 2.4 Target Groups

The by far most approached target group is school classes / kids. All interviewees stress their importance. A fact that might be related also with the rather easy access to this target group, as schools often approach the PA from their side with the request for activities (excursions, workshops, etc.).

Individual guests, e.g. tourists, day-trippers, cyclers, etc. are of changing importance, depending on the nearness of larger cities, the Danube bike trail, etc.. Interestingly Danube trail cyclists are – for different reasons – rather rarely a target group for environmental education offers. This could be a missed chance as cyclists very often share similar values like environmentalists and are open for nature (and culture) related information about their cycling region.

Surprising was the wide lack of examination with potential target groups and the development of tail-made offers or design of offers. Only one interviewee mentioned the use of sinus-milieus<sup>8</sup> for identification of appropriate environmental education offers.

### **Good Practise: Target Group Analyses of Haus am Strom**

The Haus am Strom was the only educational facility that designed its offer according to beforehand done analyses of the available target groups. The centre scanned the population within 100 km radius including the visitors and tourists using the method of sinus milieus.

[www.hausamstrom.de](http://www.hausamstrom.de)

### **Good Practise: BROZ approaches local villagers**

BROZ - Regional Association for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development offers actively lectures and discussions concerning controversial topics, e.g. voles. Those discussions create a deeper understanding for nature and natural processes and contributes to a common solution finding in controversial situations.

[www.broz.sk](http://www.broz.sk)

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<sup>8</sup> Sinus-milieus is a scientifically based, commonly used method (developed by the Sinus institute) to define target groups by the combination of demographic characteristics (education, jobs, income, ...) with their everyday life-worlds, their values and their changes, etc.

## 2.5 Marketing and Information

Depending on (financial and personal) capacities more or less afford is put into marketing of the environmental education offers.

Some PAs have their communication strategies containing also marketing and information measures for educational offers. Some other PAs base their offers mainly on repeated request – which is especially the case with schools as target group.

## 2.6 Methods

The use of different methods of environmental education is obviously often directly related to financial capacities. This is especially valid for standing in-door educational offers like exhibitions. Interactive tools, the use of monitors, sound, etc. makes on the one hand the content attractive for (not only) young people of our generation, but on the other hand is much more expensive than hanging pictures and placing stuffed animals. Everything in this wide range can be found along the Danube.

In the last years the standard for nature trails changed dramatically from placing plates with the (latin) names of trees and plants to a more complex view to the ecosystems. Nevertheless many nature trails still do present far too much text and too little attractive information that could be caught quickly. Of course also some good examples of possibilities for an interactive and interesting (and not too expensive) approach also for outdoor facilities can be found.

Only some of the Protected Areas are open to new media and technologies both for marketing and as tools for the educational programs. Whilst some started to use QR codes, Facebook etc. some others are ideological resisting against and try to communicate the “love for nature” only “by seeing, listening and touching”.

But although in some areas first careful use of ‘new technologies’ can be observed, one has to state that generally the use of ICTs as a modern tool of environmental education here is some steps behind the state of art.

### **Good Practise: Nature Trail in Naturpark Obere Donau (DE)**

The Naturpark Obere Donau recently opened a new nature trail that provides innovative stations. A watchtower with a spotting scope faces an old tree with hidden bird silhouettes on carton. Another stop shows the different types of wood by wooden weights showing the different denseness. A huge spider net explains the different relations within the natural food chains.

### **Good Practise: Bookable environmental education offers, mooseum (DE)**

The mooseum in Bächingen offers bookable mobile offers: For 250,- € / day anyone could book e.g. an ‘energy-day’ or a ‘Danube-day’, for local events, exhibitions, fairs, etc. Trained employees of the centre will come with respective material and offer ex-

hibitions, games, quiz, etc. Many PA do similar activities for schools, but this offer is mainly used for public events.

[www.mooseum.de](http://www.mooseum.de)

**Good Practise - planned: Danube App, Auenzentrum Neuburg (DE)**

The Auenzentrum Neuburg started to develop a multilingual audio guide for the indoor exhibition in castle Grünburg. This audio guide should then be further developed into a Danube Smartphone-App for outdoor excursions. The app should also give information about the whole Danube stretch in Bavaria – regarding cycling, nature and culture. This should be ready in April 2014.

[www.auenzentrum-neuburg-ingolstadt.de](http://www.auenzentrum-neuburg-ingolstadt.de)

**Good Practise: Futura Science Centre, Mosonmagyaróvár (HU)**

Not only the interactive, very playful approach of the whole science centre is the reason for presenting it as good practise, but also the different ways of interaction with the visitors:

Visitors have the options just to follow the written instructions (supported by a scientific ‘floor guide’), to have a personal guide from the centre or – mainly for teacher – to get a special training to be able to guide their school classes. Teachers are also actively involved in the further development of Futura, as the centre organises special days for teachers to get feedback, but also to introduce and discuss new ideas, test new tools, etc.

[www.futuramoson.hu](http://www.futuramoson.hu)

**Good practise: Abstinence of stuffed animals in the Nature Park Persina (BG)**

The Nature Park Persina has a small visitor centre, with a photo exhibition, a hydraulic landscape model, some games and a diorama with showing a wetland scene with birds and fish. But in contrary to other PA, which use – often old and rather shabby or poorly prepared – stuffed animals Persina is using fibreglass models of high quality and a very good look.

## 2.7 Qualification

A reason for this rather conservative use of educational tools (see chapter 2.6) is also to be seen in the skills and capacities of those that offer environmental education.

Protected Areas can influence the skills of their employees in three different stages:

- Criteria or consideration when it comes to job descriptions in announcements
- Basic education or training offered by the PA itself (or by national structures), e.g. comprehensive ranger education / training



- Regular trainings based on individual needs, organised internally or offered externally

Weight is generally put to the content knowledge (biodiversity species, ecosystems, etc.) but generally not to the didactical skills. Many PA have no guides or rangers that have any didactic, methodological or pedagogical training. A surprising fact, which would not be possible in e.g. museums, where it is self evident that (at least) those that design (interactive) exhibitions have a museum pedagogic background.

Only for a few PAs a special focus on the didactic skills of employees offering environmental education is important. In some countries didactics and environmental interpretation are part of the common national (basic) ranger training, but in many countries this does not exist.

Didactics is therefore often left to the personal engagement of the individual employee and not specially supported (or forced) by the PA management. Often heard was the – in the opinion of the author questionable – assumption that being a forester automatically qualifies for interpretation skills. It seems that often museums and private associations (NGOs) put more importance on the didactic skills of the guides and supervisors, especially also when it comes to the design and content of exhibitions.

Hence also qualification and personal development plans for the employees are missing in most of the PAs.

Only a few PA take advantage of an institutionalised cooperation with other organisations, e.g. NGOs like the WWF or institutions like environmental education centres to improve their offers.

### **Good Practise: Guided tour development and training for guides in Duna-Ipoly national park**

When Duna-Ipoly develops new guided tours, they check natural and cultural values and locally available guides. For the canoe and cycling tours external guides are used, they need a special license to stir a canoe. The national park organises trainings for internal and external guides for canoeing – including interpretation skills and didactics, nature and Danube related topics. The canoe guides have additionally one training day per year – presenting new rules on water transport, but also interpretation techniques, etc.

## **2.8 Language**

Providing information in different languages is the key for approaching foreign tourists and visitors.

Many PA can offer outdoor activities (guided tours, excursions, ...) upon request in different languages, but it seems that for associations (NGOs) working in the field of environmental education the use of foreign languages is often more self-evident and practically used than for PA administrations. On the contrary still many exhibitions are only mono-lingual in the local language and only for some of them English – or other language – explanations are available on paper.

Also websites and general information material are not always available in English (or another foreign language). Eye-catching is the fact that English information (leaflets, brochures, etc.) often was not translated or proofread by a professional translator.

#### **Good Practise: Slovak Guides in the Nationalpark Donau Auen (AT)**

The Austrian national park Donau Auen faces the border to Slovakia; therefore a lot of Slovak visitors come to the visitor centre, especially during some summer weekends and (Slovak) celebration days.

For those days the national park hires Slovak rangers, who have to pass the same training as their Austrian colleagues. Other PA do offer guided tours in foreign / neighbouring languages too, but the exception here is that especially natives from across the border are hired.

## **2.9 Accessibility**

No Protected Area focuses especially on persons with special needs, some do have experiences – more often with individual visitors with limited mobility, sometimes also with groups of mentally handicapped persons.

Buildings are often not barrier free, although most of the interviewees announce to include such criteria for the next reconstruction or new buildings. Although laws in several countries foresee barrier free websites for public institutions this is not a big issue in the PA so far. Most of the interviewees did not know if their website is barrier free (most of the sites are not).

Some outdoor activities do fit for persons with limited mobility, but rather by chance not on purpose of special design. Also no special marketing – of the appropriate offers - is found in any of the Protected Areas.

Staff of the PA is usually not specially trained for those target groups, not even in the cases of regular visits. It is argued that e.g. mentally handicapped persons are usually coming with special teachers or guides and the 'natural personality' of the ranger is sufficient enough.

With higher attention to this target group and specially designed offers the PA could definitely fill an existing niche.

#### **Good Practise: Persons with special needs in the Weltenburger Enge**

The Weltenburger Enge is one of the rare Protected Areas that does offer guided tours for mentally and physically challenged persons not only 'on request' (and complain about low demand) but does active marketing for this target group.

The result is that tours are regularly used both by physically and mentally challenged persons. The trail along the Danube coming from Kehlheim fits to wheelchairs, which is also announced in the programs.

## 2.10 Evaluation

Evaluation has the aim to find weak points in the current performance and enable the inquirer to improve the offer and the satisfaction of the visitors. Getting positive reply is of lesser importance than receiving (constructive) criticism.

As a logic consequence of the lack of exact aims (see 2.3) most of the PA also have rather insufficient evaluation methods. Many PA administrations use questionnaires for the visitors or participants in excursions, but often this is not done consequently:

- Questionnaires are only available in one language
- Questionnaires are distributed only during some days of the season
- When working with school classes questionnaires / feed-back only asked from teachers, not pupils
- Analysis of the answers is not done systematically
- Development of questionnaires and analysis is done without expert's support

Some Protected Areas base their evaluation on the question to participants if 'they liked the activity'. This is no sufficient evaluation method, as this question does not stimulate the respondent to give a critical feedback and mention weak points at all, neither brings suggestion for improvement. Neither is a guestbook an appropriate method for getting hints for improvement.

### **Good Practise: Mystery check in the Nationalpark Donau Auen (AT)**

The national park Donau Auen hired an external consultancy to develop and implement a mystery check. Mystery checker took part in all different forms of excursions (different target groups, different length and content, ...) and analysed the quality of the rangers.

Results were discussed within the team and led to improvements. The mystery check system was reflected very positively within the national park team.

### **Good Practise: Personal interviews in the National Park Kopacki Rit (HR)**

The National Park Kopacki Rit has not only guest books for the quality assessment of environmental education offers, but let volunteers do personal interviews of the visitors following specially developed interview guidelines. Additionally a systematic complaint management is in place.

## 2.11 Shops and Restaurants

The situation of in-house shops and restaurants in the different PA is very complex. Some do rent the facilities out (and have therefore limited influence on their performance), some are not allowed (by law) to run such infrastructure, ...



For the visitor the legal situation of a shops or restaurants is not visible, what is obvious is if or if not the facilities reflects the same philosophy as the whole PA – protection of nature and a value of regional sustainable development. Awareness of the consumers towards the origin of souvenirs and the sustainability of products (organic production and fair trade) is steadily increasing.

Most of the facilities of the PA along the Danube could increase their use of and information about regional products, e.g. agricultural products, local handicrafts and souvenirs, etc.

- Cooperation and contracts with local producers
- Preference of organic and fair trade products
- Visibility of the origin and quality of the used and sold products – within the shops, on menus, web-sites, leaflets, ...

### **Good Practise: Hungarian National Park Product Label (HU)**

The Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development has initiated the creation of the National Park Product Label, to support the local ventures, farmers, farming bodies, operating on lands within nature protected areas, as well as to help their market opportunities, and to raise the appreciation of their products.

The National Park Product Label is equally owned by the ten national park directorates in Hungary, covering the whole territory of the country. The ministry – together with the national park directorates playing a vital role in the smooth running of the labelling system – is expecting the raise in environmental awareness, the strengthening of the regional, nature protection, rural developmental and economical cooperation.

Today, many visitors from Hungary and from abroad are looking for the bio-products and local producers of a given region, the local craftsmen of the settlement, and seek those products, that represent traditional value. The unconcealed aim of the Label, apart from sustaining and preserving natural resources, is to contribute to the qualitative development of the regional ecotourism, by acquainting the public with local products, by utilizing local economic possibilities and by developing self-employment in villages.

The basic requirements to the products, which are being submitted for the appreciative title, are that they should firstly and mostly be made of or from local raw materials, and they should not contain derivatives of animals which are not native to the region or of plants, which are not native to the natural habitat. It is of high priority, that the product represents the natural, landscape and cultural peculiarities of the region with its quality, appearance or other exceptional character.

## **2.12 Public Transport & local mobility**

The nature of Protected Areas is that in most of the cases they are in a peripheral situation that leads to rather bad accessibility by public transport.

Only a few areas set active measures in the accessibility or even in the information of the visitors about public transport. Most of the websites don't provide information. Obviously the situation is different for PA in or near to cities with better public transport offers.

Most of the PA argue that contributing to a better public transport is out of the scope of a PA and see the responsibility in the transport companies, the tourism sector and not least in the local and regional authorities.

Some PA offer bike – and even canoe – renting, not only for groups, but sometimes also for individual tourists. But not all make direct use of existing cycling routes, e.g. by signposting the way to visitors centres (a simple measure, which the law in some countries does not allow).

#### **Good Practise: ‚Naturpark-Express‘ at Nature Park Upper Danube (DE)**

The Nature Park Upper Danube (Naturpark Obere Donau) is famous for the transverse Danube valley, which leads through the limestone mountain range of the Swabian Alb. The Nature Park aims to offer environmental friendly recreation for its guests, who mostly come from the agglomerations around Reutlingen, Tübingen and Stuttgart.

The ‚Naturpark-Express‘ was established as a means to create an environmental friendly alternative method of transportation to and within the Nature Park, decrease usage of individual transportation (cars) and create more transportation availabilities for bicycles (in trains). Additionally information about the nature park was presented in the coaches.

Financially covered mainly through the Nature Park Association with support of the Nahverkehrsgesellschaft Baden-Württemberg (Regional Transport Company) as well as sponsoring by local businesses the nature park managed to develop a combined transport and environmental education offer at train line of decreasing importance.

After more than 25 years of operation the project faces a steadily growing interest in the train, which results in the renovation of several train stops, improved cooperation with the tourism business and increasing usage of the whole train line.

<http://www.naturpark-obere-donau.de/npe/npe-start.htm>

## **2.13 Contribution to sustainable regional development**

A Protected Area in Europe always exists in relation to the surrounding region, its values are very often based on the historic development of regional culture and a cultural use and shape of the landscape and its natural resources. Furthermore is the protection of nature and natural values directly related to the acceptance of the local inhabitants.

Positive relation, synergies and contribution to a sustainable regional development are often not a direct issue in the environmental education content, but undoubtful

they have an important demonstration effect and contribute to an increased understanding of the principles of governance and sustainability for the visitors.

**Good Practise: Support for local identity in the Nature Park Lonjsko Polje (HR)**

Lojnsko Polje Nature Park has – together with the tourism association – on the one hand an important role in the (direct) marketing for regional products. A brand for products (cheese, honey, pork, hors meat, etc. ) is under development.

But more than that Nature Park has a very strong focus on regional architecture and life style. It contributes to the overall regional development by strengthening unique regional culture. Lojnsko Polje motivated private persons in traditional houses to start offering Bed&Breakfast – at the moment approximately 200 beds in 23 accommodations are offered.

This engagement contributes directly to the regional identity and creates indirectly income and increases the living conditions for local people.

[www.pp-lonjsko-polje.hr](http://www.pp-lonjsko-polje.hr)

**Good practise: Regional connections of National Park Djerdap (SER)**

The national park has a very close connection and cooperation with the local population. Once a month workshops with games, puzzles etc. are organised in the local kindergarten and schools to raise awareness for the PA. The older population is approached in stakeholder meetings with fisherman, hunters, etc. Aside environmental education (lectures) actual problems and new development is discussed.

[www.npdjerdap.org](http://www.npdjerdap.org)

**Good practise: Regional cooperation of the Natural Science Museum Complex, Galati (RO)**

Beside all work in the own facilities the Natural Science Museum Complex also cooperates with NGOs and communities in the Lower Prut area. Common applications and projects focus e.g. in environmental education for children, advocacy or awareness raising activities. E.g. a project application together with nine municipalities develops a 'campaign of assessment of aquatic ecosystem health.' Projects are usually based on interviews with children and their analysed needs.



### **3 Guidelines for Environmental Education in Protected Areas along the Danube**

The following 'Quality Guidelines for Environmental Education in Protected Areas (PA) along the Danube' are the result of discussions among the DANUBEPARKS partners, and integrate the knowledge and experience gained through the environmental education assessment tour in June 2013. They are NOT meant as obligatory rules for all environmental education activities of DANUBEPARKS partners, but as common visionary quality statement that is step-by-step implemented by the Protected Area administrations within DANUBEPARKS according to their different capacities. The DANUBEPARKS Network also agrees to develop joint projects that will support the implementation of these quality guidelines.

#### **3.1 Preamble**

The members of DANUBEPARK see environmental education as one of their core tasks. As the Protected Areas are related to the Danube (or its tributaries) water and water-influenced landscapes are one of the important thematic and experience focuses of the environmental education activities. This can be reflected both in content and methods.

The strength of DANUBEPARKS lies in the philosophy of partnership, which is reflected both in the common approach to steadily increase the quality of the environmental education activities as well as in the constant try to find common solutions for existing challenges.

Not only the content of the environmental education activities highlight nature, environment and the necessity for protection, but also the way of its implementation reflects this philosophy. Therefore any disturbance of nature or negative impacts on the environment through the educational activities is avoided. This means for example that also special VIP excursions do not lead into highly protected areas with prohibition to enter or no motorized excursion into highly protected areas or speedboat tours are offered.

Also the architecture of infrastructure and the (re)use of traditional or historic buildings underline the linkages of the PA to the sustainable development of the surrounding region.

To have environmental education activities do not necessarily mean to operate a visitor centre. There is a wide field of high qualitative activities from personalised nature interpretation and interactive out-door educational games without any infrastructure to high-tech, modern interactive museum type centres for individual visits with learning impacts. The importance lies in the quality, fitting to the circumstances, which is reached by the simple 'Knowing what to do, why and how!'

#### **3.2 Content of the environmental education activities**

PA activities should provide both direct knowledge transfer and the opportunity for the visitors to gain new competences by (inter)active dealing with subjects. The con-

tent ranges between nature and environmental education and education for sustainable development, addresses and enables responsible behaviour of the individual visitors and contributes to the protection of the area. Context of the respective area to the overall Danube river system should be provided.

Whilst on the one hand basic information on flora, fauna and habitats is essential, on the other hand also complex relations and a holistic approach are important. Therefore, environmental education should be grounded in critical and innovative thinking. Societal questions of use, management and protection of nature, as well as the role and possibilities of influence of each individual person, should be part of the content.

In this way, the close context of nature and culture within the region of the PA and the role of the PA in the sustainable regional development gives the frames for the education measures of the PA administrations.

### **3.3 Mission Statement / Guiding Principles**

Environmental Education of a Protected Area should always follow a mission statement (guiding principles) of this PA. Such a document should be developed in a participatory process with all those team members that are responsible and involved in its later implementation. A mission statement for environmental education in a Protected Area usually should start from the following points

- How do we define environmental education?
- What are the aims of our environmental education? What do we want to reach?

From here all other relevant aspects, like target groups, methods, detailed content, more specific aims could be developed and fixed. Often this mission statement is part of the Management Plan and / or the Communication Strategy of the PA and broken down in exact Plans of Action within the annual work programmes.

### **3.4 Target Groups**

Schools / pupils do often form the most important target group for environmental education of Protected Areas. Nevertheless P.A. should think about (and fix within its own guiding principles for environmental education) which additional special target groups (families, retired, companies, cyclists, tourists, etc.) or subgroups (schools of the region vs. schools of the next larger cities, children and families with migration background, etc.) the activities want to reach to be able to approach them with appropriate methods and timing and define specific educational aims for these groups.

Target groups will be different from one PA to another according to its geographical surrounding, nearness to larger cities, amount of tourists in the area, etc.

A special group to be considered are volunteers which are on a one hand a target for environmental education activities but could on the other hand be seen as part of the wider staff team, where questions of training, etc. should be taken into account.

### 3.5 Marketing and Information

Marketing for environmental education activities should be part of the PA communication strategy and should make use of instruments (e.g. posters, website, Facebook and other social media, direct mailings, ...) appropriate for the envisaged target group(s).

The Protected Area needs an access point for basic information, which is not necessarily a visitor centre. This access point should be easily found, carefully placed (best with public transport access) and well signposted. The access point should provide clear overview about the area and the activities for visitors.

Key factor of success for the local reputation of the PA are personal contacts of the staff members (and employees) to the local people. The PA management should provide some basic requirements for their communication (e.g. in case of discussions concerning delicate or controversial environmental issues).

### 3.6 Methods

Educational activities should be didactically elaborated and mix different experience-oriented, hands-on, interactive methods. The didactical methods should take the envisaged target group (age, societal background, ...) into account.

The set of methods as well as the flexibility to adapt methods to the individual needs and preferences of the visitors should be laid down in the guiding principles for environmental education of the PA.

### 3.7 Qualification

The staff that designs or leads environmental education activities should have not only an overall (theoretical and/or practical) Danube experience and relevant content knowledge, but also education or training in pedagogy/didactics. This didactic know-how can under some circumstances also be gained externally (e.g. through external consulting when designing a new exhibition or offer for a specific target group).

Staff that provides educational services (workshops, excursions, etc.) should be appropriately trained, both in content and in environmental education didactics. Respective trainings could be arranged in-house or externally; regular further trainings for permanent staff and personal development and qualification plans for the employees are recommended.

Not everything has to be done in-house. If regional institutions or organisations can offer benefits – e.g. higher qualification in environmental education or the access to financial means – the PA administration should take cooperation into account that can bring synergies for both sides.

DANUBE PARK members should use the network actively for staff exchanges programs.



### 3.8 Language

Written information in visitor centres should be available – either directly in the exhibitions or in separate leaflets – in the local language and at least in English, in the best case also in languages of the main foreign visitor groups. The same goes for websites that should be available at least in English (aside the local language).

Any written information provided in a foreign language should be checked by a native speaker.

Workshops, guided tours and other activities that are not specially designed for (local) school classes should be offered in the local language and at least in English, in the best case also in languages of the main foreign visitor groups.

### 3.9 Accessibility

If new buildings and infrastructure are planned (or old adapted) the PA administration should take full accessibility for people with special needs – be it physical or mental – into account. If possible the planning should be done in cooperation with associations specialised in this issue.

The following parts of accessibility should be considered:

- Accessibility of the facilities itself: e.g. avoidance of stairs, doors of enough width for wheelchairs, washrooms for wheelchairs, etc.
- Accessibility of the indoor and outdoor activities and offers: e.g.
  - Buttons, monitors, etc. in a height that they are reachable for short persons or persons in wheelchairs
  - Guiding systems and information also for blind people and people with visual impairment, e.g. by using braille, big letters and objects to be touched.
  - At least a part of the nature experience out door activities should be accessible for people with special needs
  - Written information should be provided wherever guidance, instructions, or information is given by audio-systems, so the relevant tools (videos, multimedia) can also be used by deaf people
- Websites should be barrier free or at least barrier reduced as far as possible, as it is already set in laws in several countries for websites of public institutions.

### 3.10 Evaluation

PA should have both a complaint management and regular monitoring and evaluation system in place. Methods and special studies could be developed together with experts, e.g. in cooperation with universities.

The regular evaluation should check

- The satisfaction of the visitors with content and methods of the offer, the involved staff, prior information and organization of the offer, etc.

- The implementation of the Guiding Principles / Plan of Action – i.e. reaching the planned target groups, the planned education goals, etc.
- This evaluation should be based on appropriate, scientific methods and could be done with external experts, e.g. in cooperation with a university.

### **3.11 Framework criteria**

Additional to the criteria focusing directly at the educational activities, some additional criteria look at the framework where those activities are embedded, as everything together should reflect the philosophy of the PA and its activities:

#### **A. Shops and Restaurants**

Shops and restaurants should contribute to the environmental education and education for sustainable development by using and selling regional products, if possible from organic production, and informing about its importance.

#### **B. Other activities**

In case the Protected Area has additional activities, e.g. touristic accommodation, they should be operated and maintained according to the basic principles and ideas of the PA concerning environmental protection and sustainable regional development. The fact of being in a Protected Area should be reflected in the whole atmosphere of the (e.g.) accommodation.

#### **C. Public Transport & local mobility**

In the best case all environmental activities of PA are reachable by public transport. The PA administration should use appropriate means

- to motivate visitors and customers to use public transport, e.g. through price reduction or other incentives
- to provide information (e.g. when marketing the environmental education activities) about available public transport
- to link – if feasible – the timing of activities to time tables of public transport
- to make use of existing nearby bike routes and cooperate with bike rentals, etc.

## 4 Annexes

### 4.1 Agenda of the Assessment Tour

- May 28<sup>th</sup>: Travel to starting point
- May 29<sup>th</sup>: Naturpark Obere Donau – Donauwiesen – Umweltstation mooseum
- May 30<sup>th</sup>: Auenzentrum Neuburg – Donaumuseum Ingolstadt – Weltenburg – Infohaus Isarmündung
- May 31<sup>st</sup>: Haus am Strom – NaturaTrail Rossatz – wien-lobAUhaus
- June 1<sup>st</sup>: Ringing station Auring – White-stork colony Marchegg – Castle Eckartsau
- June 2<sup>nd</sup>: Futura Mosonmagyaróvár – Summer school Lipót – excursion at Velký Lél
- June 3<sup>rd</sup>: Strásza hill nature trail – Duna Museum – Forest school Visegrad – Kisoroszi excursion
- June 4<sup>th</sup>: Sas-hill – Jankovich Mansion Racalmás – White-stork Museum Kölked – Boki Duna
- June 5<sup>th</sup>: Visitor center Kopacevo – Visitor center Tikves
- June 6<sup>th</sup>: Obedska Bara – Deliblatsko Pescara - Djerdap National Park visitor center Donji Milanovac
- June 7<sup>th</sup>: *Day off*
- June 8<sup>th</sup>: Djerdap National Park visitor center Plocé – Portile de Fier visitor center
- June 9<sup>th</sup>: Persina Nature Park visitor center – Ethnographic museum Danube fishing and boatbuilding Tutrakan
- June 10<sup>th</sup>: Nature trail Rusenski lom – Nature Park Comana
- June 11<sup>th</sup>: Ecotourism Museum Tulcea – Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Information centre Murighiol
- June 12<sup>th</sup>: Info centre Sf. Gheorghe – Info centre Sulina – Info centre Crisan – Info centre Tulcea
- June 13<sup>th</sup>: Natural Science Museum Complex Galati – Lower Prut Moldova nature trail
- June 14<sup>th</sup>: Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Info centre Vilkovo – Kilometre 0
- June 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>: Travel back home



## 4.2 Interview partners

Naturpark Obere Donau (DE)	Mr. <b>Bernd Schneck</b> , director	<a href="http://www.naturpark-obere-donau.de">www.naturpark-obere-donau.de</a>
Schutzgebiet Flußlandschaft Donauwiesen (DE)	Mr. <b>Andreas Stegmaier</b> Mr. <b>Kieferle</b>	
mooseum (DE)	Mr. <b>Sebastian Diederling</b> , director	<a href="http://www.mooseum.net">www.mooseum.net</a>
Auenzentrum Neuburg-Ingolstadt (DE)	Mr. <b>Siegfried Geissler</b> , director	<a href="http://www.auenzentrum-neuburg-ingolstadt.de">www.auenzentrum-neuburg-ingolstadt.de</a>
Donaumuseum Ingolstadt (planned) (DE)	Mr. <b>Alfred Lehmann</b> , 1st mayor of Ingolstadt Mr. <b>Peter Loreth</b> , designer Mr. <b>Thomas Schneider</b> , city of Ingolstadt	<a href="http://www.donaumuseum-foerdereverein.de">www.donaumuseum-foerdereverein.de</a>
Weltenburger Enge (DE)	Mr. <b>Hans Senft</b> , vice chairman Landschaftspflegeverband Kelheim VöF e.V. Ms. <b>Franziska Jäger</b> , area manager	<a href="http://www.voef.de">www.voef.de</a>
Infohaus Isarmündung (DE)	Mr. <b>Franz Schöllhorn</b> , director Mr. <b>Thomas Schoger-Ohnweiler</b>	<a href="http://www.infohaus-isarmuendung.de">www.infohaus-isarmuendung.de</a>
Haus am Strom, Passau (DE)	Mr. <b>Ralf Braun</b> , director Mr. <b>Andreas Sperling</b> , head of nature protection department of the region of Passau	<a href="http://www.hausamstrom.de">www.hausamstrom.de</a>
Donautal Erlebnispark / Der Gigant der Donau, Engelhartzell - (AT)	Ms. Silke Atteneder; Responsible: Karin Wundsam (municipality)	<a href="http://www.donaugigant.com">www.donaugigant.com</a> , <a href="http://www.donau-welt.at">www.donau-welt.at</a>
Arbeitskreis Wachau, Rossatz (AT)	Mr. <b>Hannes Seehofer</b>	<a href="http://www.nfi.at//index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=275&amp;Itemid=120">www.nfi.at//index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=275&amp;Itemid=120</a>
National Park Donau Auen (AT)	Ms. <b>Ursula Grabner</b> , head of visitor and communication department	<a href="http://www.donauauen.at">www.donauauen.at</a>
National Park Donau Auen – Lobauhaus (AT)	Mr. <b>Johann Berthold</b> , city of Vienna, forest department, head of visitor centre	<a href="http://www.wien.gv.at/umwelt/wald/erholung/nationalpark/haus/">www.wien.gv.at/umwelt/wald/erholung/nationalpark/haus/</a>
National Park Donau Auen, Eckartsau (AT)	Mr. <b>Thomas Neumair</b> , Austrian Federal Forests, head of visitor centre	<a href="http://www.schlosseckartsau.at/">www.schlosseckartsau.at/</a> , <a href="http://www.donauauen.at/?area=experience&amp;subarea=projects">www.donauauen.at/?area=experience&amp;subarea=projects</a>
Verein AURING, Hohenau (AT)	Ms. <b>Ute Nüsken</b>	<a href="http://www.auring.at">www.auring.at</a>

Info centre and watchtower of White Stork colony, Marchegg (AT)	Ms. <b>Karin Donnerbaum</b>	<a href="http://www.marchegg.at/system/web/default.aspx">www.marchegg.at/system/web/default.aspx</a>
Daphne - Institute of Applied Ecology (SK)	Ms. <b>Jana Menkynová</b>	<a href="http://www.daphne.sk">www.daphne.sk</a>
BROZ - Regional Association for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development, Veľkolélsky ostrov Island (SK)	Mr. <b>Pavol Surovec</b> Ms. <b>Karolína Sobeková</b> Ms. <b>Michalela Bartíková</b>	<a href="http://www.broz.sk">www.broz.sk</a>
FUTURA Interactive Science Adventure Centre, and Lipot Ecocentre run by Pisztráng Kör, Mosonmagyaróvár (HU)	Mr. <b>Zoltan Füzfő</b> , designer Futura, director Pisztráng Kör	<a href="http://www.futuramoson.hu">www.futuramoson.hu</a> <a href="http://www.pisztrangkor.hu">www.pisztrangkor.hu</a>
National Park Fertő-Hanság; Summer Camp Asvanyaro (HU)	Mr. <b>Attila Fersch</b> , director	<a href="http://www.ferto-hansag.hu">www.ferto-hansag.hu</a>
Duna Muzeum, Esztergom (HU)	Ms. <b>Györgyi Fehér</b> , museum pedagogue	<a href="http://www.dunamuzeum.hu">www.dunamuzeum.hu</a>
Pilisi Forest School (HU)	Ms. <b>Györgyi Békefi Andrásné</b> , head of forest school	<a href="http://www.mogyorohegy-erdeiskola.hu">www.mogyorohegy-erdeiskola.hu</a>
Duna-Ipoly National Park, Pulsatilla (Strázsa-hill) Forest School, Visegrad (HU)	Ms. <b>Jankainé Németh Szilvia</b> , leader of forest school Mr. <b>Ferenc Halász</b> , Duna-Ipoly National Park	<a href="http://www.dinpi.hu">www.dinpi.hu</a>
Duna-Ipoly National Park, Sas hill visitor centre, Budapest (HU)	Ms. <b>Réka Menráth</b> , head of ecotourism and environmental education department	<a href="http://www.sas-hegy.hu/english">www.sas-hegy.hu/english</a>
Racalmas - Jankovich Mansion Conference and Event Centre (HU)	Ms. <b>Petra Deimel</b>	<a href="http://www.jankovichkuria.hu">www.jankovichkuria.hu</a>
Kölked - Duna-Drava NP (HU)	Ms. <b>Eszter Buchert</b> , vice-director	<a href="http://www.ddnp.hu">www.ddnp.hu</a>
National Park Kopacki Rit (HR)	Ms. <b>Ružica Marušić</b> , head of education and tourism department	
Lojnsko Polje Nature Park (HR)	Ms. <b>Valerija Hima</b> , Mr. <b>Edvard Bogovic</b>	<a href="http://www.pp-lonjsko-polje.hr">www.pp-lonjsko-polje.hr</a>
Obedska Bara (SER) (Vojvodina Suma)	Ms. <b>Ivana Vastc</b> , senior officer for PA in the central unit of Vojvodina Suma Mr. <b>Slobodan Peter</b> , guide and ranger in the local unit of Vojvodina Suma	<a href="http://www.srpobedskabara.com">www.srpobedskabara.com</a>

	<p>Mr. <b>Slavisa Stjepanović</b>, guide and ranger in the local unit of Vojvodina Suma</p> <p>Ms. <b>Ivana Lozjanin</b>, senior officer for PA in the regional unit of Vojvodina Suma</p>	
Deliblatska Pescara (SER) (Vojvodina Suma)	<p>Ms. <b>Ivana Vastc</b>, senior of- ficer for PA in the central uni of Vojvodina Suma</p> <p>Mr. <b>Slobodan Radojević</b>, chief of forest unit Kovin</p>	<a href="http://www.deliblatskapescara.rs">www.deliblatskapescara.rs</a>
National Park Djerdap (SER)	<p>Mr. <b>Srdjan Stefanovic</b>, di- rector</p> <p>Ms. <b>Marija Milenkovic- Srbulovic</b>, DANUBEPARK project manager</p> <p>Mr. <b>Ivan Svetozarevic</b></p>	<a href="http://www.npdjerdap.org">www.npdjerdap.org</a>
Nature Park Persina (BG)	<p>Ms. <b>Stella Bozhinova</b>, direc- tor</p> <p>Ms. <b>Daniela Karakasheva</b> , communication officer</p>	<a href="http://www.persina.bg">www.persina.bg</a>
Ethnographic museum 'Danube fishery and boat- building', Tutrakan (BG)	<p>Ms. <b>Ekaterina Nikolova</b></p>	<a href="http://www.tutrankanmuseum.com">www.tutrankanmuseum.com</a>
Rusenski Lom Nature Park (BG)	<p>Ms. <b>Vasilka Petrova</b>, assis- tant</p> <p>Ms. <b>Tsonka Hristova</b></p> <p>Mr. <b>Milko Belberov, Direc- tor</b></p> <p>Mr. <b>Eberhard Undijan</b>, sen- ior expert</p>	
Nature Park Portile de Fier (RO)	<p>Mr. <b>Felix Baratky</b>, Respon- sible for local communities relations, education, aware- ness and tourism</p>	<a href="http://www.portiledefier.ro">www.portiledefier.ro</a>
Nature Park Comana (RO)	<p>Mr. <b>Valentin Grigore</b>, direc- tor</p>	<a href="http://www.comanaparc.ro">www.comanaparc.ro</a>
Ecotourism Museum Cen- ter "Danube Delta", Tul- cea (RO)	<p>Mr. <b>Viorel Cuzic</b>, director</p>	<a href="http://www.icemtl.ro/centrul_ecoturisti_c.html">www.icemtl.ro/centrul_ecoturisti c.html</a>
Murighiol, Information centre - Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, (RO)	<p>Ms. <b>Alina Codreanu</b>, DDBRA</p>	<a href="http://www.ddbra.ro">www.ddbra.ro</a>
Sf. Gheorghe, Information centre - Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, (RO)	<p>Ms. <b>Alina Codreanu</b>, DDBRA</p>	<a href="http://www.ddbra.ro">www.ddbra.ro</a>

Sulina, Information centre - Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, (RO)	Mr. <b>Florin Papadatu</b> , Ms. <b>Alina Codreanu</b> , DDBRA	www.ddbra.ro
Crisan, Information centre - Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, (RO)	Ms. <b>Monica Cacencu</b> , Ms. <b>Alina Codreanu</b> , DDBRA	www.ddbra.ro
Tulcea, Information centre - Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, (RO)	Mr. <b>Grigore Baboianu</b> , Ms. <b>Alina Codreanu</b> , DDBRA	www.ddbra.ro
Natural Science Museum Complex, Galati (RO)	Ms. <b>Gabriela Costea</b> , coordination department Mr. <b>Emil F. Strungsi</b> , director Mr. <b>Ion Stefan</b> , Lower Prut Natural Park	
Lower Prut PA (MOL)	Mr. <b>Artur Nebunu</b> , Ecological Counselling Center Cahul	
Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve - visitor centre, Vilkoovo (UA)	Ms. <b>Tatyana Balatska</b> , Scientific Research Team, resp. for Tourism and Education	www.dbr.org.ua
<b>Additional telephone Interviews</b>		
BUND Umweltzentrum Ulm (DE)	Mr. <b>Ralf Stolz</b>	www.bund-ulm.de
Donau-Station Munderkringen (DE)	Ms. <b>Katja Groner</b>	www.donau-station.de
WWF Austria	Ms. <b>Barbara Tauscher</b> , Head of Education for sustainable development Program Central Eastern European Region	www.wwf.at
Kisymaros Environmental Education Centre Magosfa Foundation	Ms. <b>Eva Neumayer</b>	www.magosfa.hu
Göncöl Foundation	Mr. <b>Kiszel Vilmos</b>	www.goncol.hu
Supranatural Park	Mr. <b>Srjdan</b>	www.supernatural.rs



### 4.3 Interview Guideline

The guideline was sent to the interview partners beforehand. Not all interviews did stick precisely to the guideline.

#### **DANUBEPARK Assessment of environmental education activities along the Danube**

##### Interview Guidelines

Has the PA / organisation a strategy or any guiding document for your environmental education activities?

- a. **If yes, could you pls. briefly introduce it.**
- b. **If no, could you briefly describe the concept behind your education activities?**

Which is / are the target groups of your environmental education activities? Do they target at all visitors you have in the PA / region?

- c. **Pls. describe briefly target groups of your environmental education activities and the visitors of your PA / region. What about handicapped / disabled?**
- d. **How do you deal with foreign visitors (language wise)?**
- e. **Is it possible to access the starting point / the site of the education activity by public transport?**

What types of environmental education activities do you offer?

- f. **Why those and not others?**
- g. **Could you briefly describe your environmental education activities – with differentiation in in-door / outdoor; guided / unguided; seasonal / all year; ...**
- h. **Is there any of your environmental education activities that you are very proud of? Why?**

Who designs / plans your environmental education activities? Do you have a design concept, content concept, corporate identity, etc.?

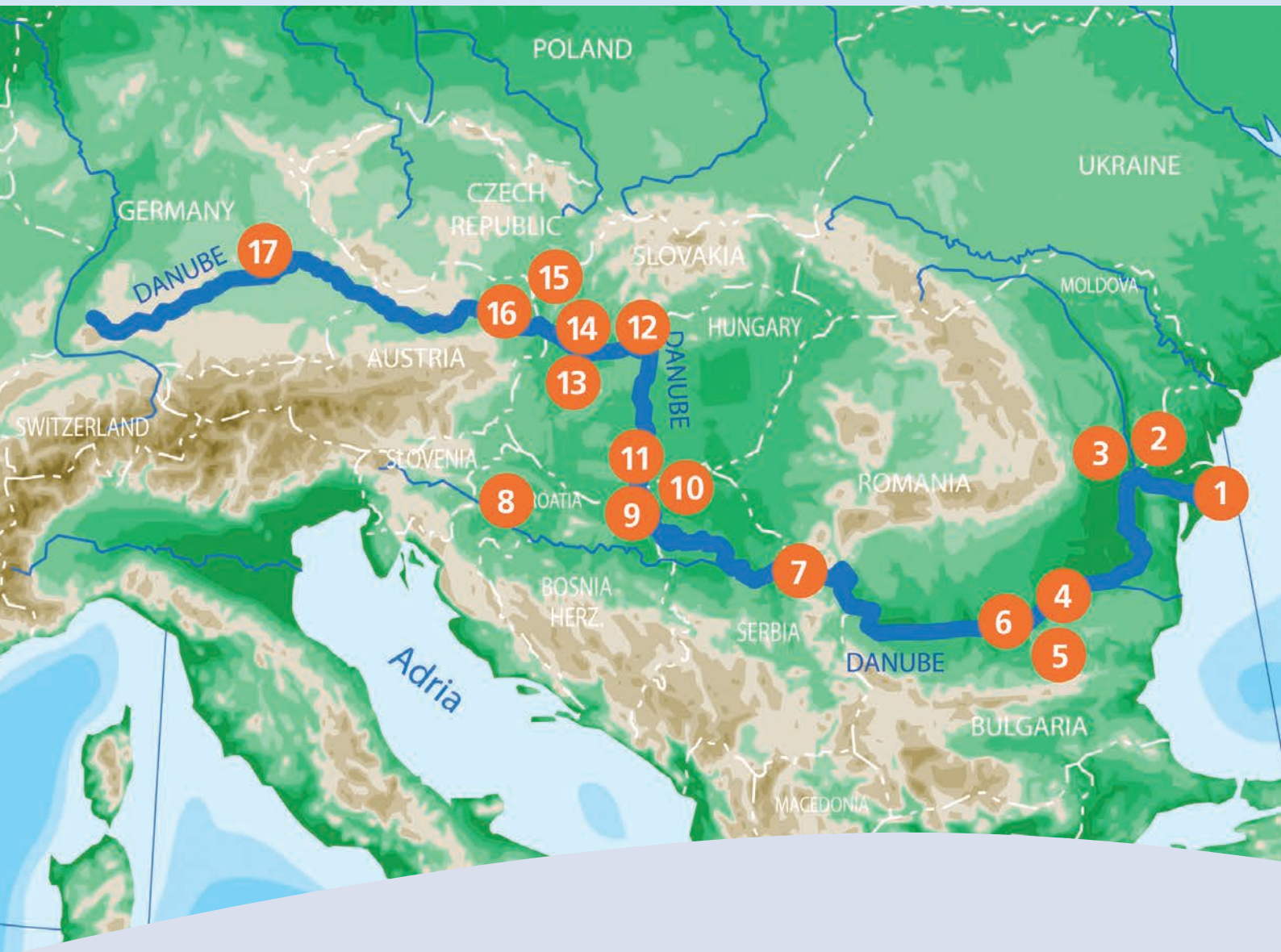
Is your staff specially trained for environmental education?

- i. **Who does the training, how does it look like?**
- j. **Any monitoring / evaluation of customer satisfaction?**

If you think about international support for your environmental education activities which of the following measures could be of help

- k. **Quality guidelines?**
- l. **Common label?**
- m. **Common training with other PAs – which topics?**
- n. **Common marketing on international level?**
- o. **Others? Which?**

- 1 Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve
- 2 Lower Prut Nature Reserve
- 3 Lower Prut Floodplain Natural Park
- 4 Kalimok-Brushlen Protected Site
- 5 Rusenski Lom Nature Park
- 6 Persina Nature Park
- 7 Đerdap National Park
- 8 Lonjsko Polje Nature Park
- 9 Kopački rit Nature Park
- 10 Gornje Podunavlje Special Nature Reserve
- 11 Duna-Dráva National Park
- 12 Duna-Ipoly National Park
- 13 Fertő-Hanság National Park
- 14 Dunajské Luhý Protected Landscape Area
- 15 Záhorie Protected Landscape Area
- 16 Donau-Auen National Park
- 17 Donauauwald Neuburg-Ingolstadt



c/o Donau-Auen National Park  
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 www.danubeparks.org

**DANUBEPARKS** 20  
 network of protected areas STEP