



Guidelines

To accompany the Memorandum of Understanding between The Local Action Group (LAG) of Albania and the Local Action Group (LAG) of Montenegro concerning cooperation in environmental protection, tourism, recreation and sustainable development in the territories of the two communities either side of the international border between Albania and Montenegro in the Bjeshkët e Namuna/Prokletije Mountains.





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Introduction

These guidelines are intended to supplement and explain the articles of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), providing suggestions for how the Local Action Groups can implement them in their own countries, and can collaborate to implement them across the Transboundary Area.

This MoU is not typical of transboundary MoUs, because it is between Local Action Groups and not official national or regional authorities. The LAGs do not have statutory powers of their own and therefore cannot require any particular action to take place (although some of the member organisations of the LAGs may have such powers). Furthermore the MoU cannot be legally binding in any way. Accordingly the MoU is constructed so that none of the articles are obligatory; the LAGs must rely largely on campaigning, persuasion, lobbying, information sharing, cooperation and consensus building to achieve their aims. It is hoped that the MoU will provide a framework for such actions. Although a strong level of cooperation between the LAGs is envisaged, this is inevitably limited by logistics, available resources and language differences. Consequently the guidelines provide suggestions for what the LAGs could do separately in their own countries and also suggestions for activities in which they could usefully and productively cooperate.

The MoU and guidance notes are derived from a range of sources, in particular:

- The results and conclusions of a joint workshop held in Shkodër, Albania on 12-13 September 2011, attended by members of both LAGs, representatives of other stakeholder organisations and international experts.
- Guidance on transboundary protected areas and cooperation produced by, among others, IUCN and the World Bank (see reference list).
- Personal experience of the author, other experts and colleagues.

The MoU was signed on 8 May 2012 within the “Environment for People in the Dinaric Arc” project implemented by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), WWF Mediterranean Program and SNV (Netherlands Development Organization), funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

Background

Objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

The Parties enter into this MoU with the following objectives:

1. To strengthen transboundary cooperation in the fields of nature protection and sustainable rural development, in particular the provision of transboundary tourism and its associated activities (e.g. recreation, service provision, marketing of local products).
2. To help empower the Parties to secure a high level of participation, transparency and equitable sharing of benefits in decisions made about the protection, management and development of the transboundary area.
3. To strengthen the capability of the Parties to protect and sustainably manage their environment and to maintain their culture and traditions.
4. To provide a basis for the cooperative development of community-based rural tourism in the transboundary area that will sustain livelihoods and the local economy.
5. To provide a foundation and organisational basis for the increased cooperation between the Parties.

Shared beliefs and values

The Parties enter into this MoU in recognition of the following beliefs and values:

- A shared commitment to maintaining peace, friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation between the Parties and their local communities.
- A recognition by the Parties that they share the same environment and natural heritage either side of the international border and that 'nature knows no boundaries'.

- A shared commitment to maintaining local cultures and traditions; those held separately and those held in common.
- Shared strong traditions of warmth and hospitality to visitors and guests, which make the area particularly attractive and welcoming to tourists.
- A shared commitment to protecting the environment, biodiversity and natural beauty of the transboundary area for the sake of nature, culture and human well-being.
- A shared commitment to building a thriving and sustainable local economy that sustains communities and enables people to remain in the area.
- A shared belief that, with good management, nature can provide benefits for people through sustainable use, harvesting and tourism.

Shared concerns

Furthermore the Parties enter into this MoU in recognition of the following shared concerns:

- That the costs to communities and their members of nature conservation should not outweigh the benefits it brings.
- That the benefits arising from tourism and development in and around the communities should primarily benefit those communities and should be shared fairly and transparently.
- That the establishment of legal protected areas and transboundary projects should not be planned and conducted without adequate consultation with local communities.
- That restrictions on border crossings and transboundary activity will limit the possibilities for cooperation and limit the potential for sustainable tourism in the areas.

Commentary and Guidelines on Articles of the MoU

ARTICLE 1. NATURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE USE

The Parties agree to:

1 Work within their communities and cooperate with responsible authorities to discourage and prevent illegal and or unsustainable exploitation of nature and natural resources.

Commentary and guidance

The LAGs could play a major role in preventing illegal and unsustainable resource use in the area. This can be achieved in a number of ways:

- *General campaigns of awareness about the value of natural resources, the consequences of degrading them and the need for protection and sustainability.*
- *Establishment of 'user groups' of natural resource users (e.g. graziers, honey producers, blueberry harvesters), that can discuss and resolve problems through dialogue and cooperation. In some countries regular (at least annual) meetings are held between protected area authorities and user groups.*
- *Employment of local people as guards and rangers in protected areas. This can provide alternative employment for those who may otherwise be involved in illegal activities.*
- *Working closely with protected areas administrations to achieve cooperation in preventing illegal activities.*

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

In the transboundary context a range of specific actions are possible:

- *Enabling protected area authorities to exchange information about transboundary problems. This can be achieved through, for example, identification of contact persons, exchange of telephone numbers and establishment of a common band on radio systems, to allow enforcement officers to communicate.*
- *Educating border guards about transboundary environmental crime and working with the guards to encourage cooperation in prevention and enforcement of relevant national laws. A recent project of UNDP for the border between Macedonia and Kosovo adopted this approach. It may be useful to contact UNDP in Skopje to learn more about the project.*
- *Sharing knowledge and information about problems and solutions between the LAGs and the communities they represent.*

2 Require the responsible authorities to ensure a high degree of stakeholder participation and transparency in protected area planning and management, by establishing formal consultative bodies and participatory mechanisms for current and future protected areas within the Transboundary Area.

Commentary and guidance

If protected areas established in the transboundary zone are to take into consideration the views, aspirations and livelihoods of local communities they should be designated and managed with a strong emphasis on local participation. Participation is a powerful and important tool for protected area managers, based on the fundamental belief that stakeholders who are informed, involved and empowered will make better choices themselves and will help managers and decision makers make better choices too.

The LAGs should take measures to ensure that:

- *Local stakeholders are identified, informed and consulted during the process of establishing, planning and managing protected areas.*
- *Protected areas openly share information with local stakeholders.*
- *Stakeholder consultative processes are formally established for all protected areas (for instance in the form of Consultative Councils). Such processes should enable stakeholders to meet with protected areas administrations on a regular basis, with an obligation on the part of the administrations to take their views into consideration.*
- *LAGs may also seek the establishment of Management Boards with decision making powers for protected areas or for certain zones of protected areas (e.g. buffer zones and sustainable use zones). If such Management Boards are created, the LAGs should ensure that they include adequate and appropriate stakeholder representation.*

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

The LAGs should share information and experience about the protected areas either side of the border and should encourage protected areas established on one side of the border to collaborate and build partnerships with protected areas on the other side. If there is a decision to establish a formal Transboundary Protected Area, the LAGs should ensure adequate representation on any joint advisory or administrative body that is established.

3 Work with responsible authorities to develop agreements for sustainable use of natural resources from specified zones of any existing or future protected areas. Such uses are likely to include grazing of livestock and gathering of wild herbs and berries.

Commentary and guidance

Representatives from both communities have expressed concern that the establishment of protected areas would restrict their traditional livelihood activities, in particular grazing and blueberry harvesting. Modern approaches to protected area management recognise that sustainable use can be a legitimate and often beneficial activity in protected areas, provided it takes place in agreed zones and is subject to regulations that ensure sustainability. In some cases such regulations are also designed to favour local users and prevent large scale commercial exploitation by outside interests.

The LAGs should encourage and if necessary lobby the responsible authorities to ensure that zonation and development of protected area regulations on both sides of the border includes:

- *Community based mapping of areas subject to traditional use by local people.*

- *Gathering information about use rights, products that are harvested, quantities and markets.*
- *Negotiation of sustainable use zones, and regulations, based on a compromise if required between human needs and biodiversity priorities.*
- *Agreement of mechanisms for monitoring and ensuring compliance with agreed regulations.*
- *Setting up 'user groups' for certain products or activities, such as blueberries, honey production or grazing.*

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

In the transboundary area it may be beneficial to ensure that the agreed regulations are similar either side of the border and to enable exchanges of ideas between both communities and protected area authorities. Communities should also cooperate to prevent illegal cross border harvesting, grazing and hunting, which are potential sources of conflict.

4 Encourage responsible authorities in Albania and Montenegro to cooperate in order to harmonize boundaries, zones and regimes of management in current or future protected areas either side of the border.

Commentary and guidance

Protected areas either side of the border must be compatible, in particular in terms of zonation. Otherwise establishment of common regimes of protection, tourism and sustainable use will be difficult, community cooperation could be complicated and the conservation effectiveness of both areas could be diminished.

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

Ideally, a jointly planned transboundary area would be established through a common process involving responsible authorities, the LAGs and other relevant stakeholders.

5 Contribute knowledge and skills held by communities to programmes of research, survey and monitoring of nature and the environment.

Commentary and guidance

Local people often have a wealth of knowledge about an area, its landscapes, environment, nature and culture. But locally held knowledge is often overlooked when scientists and other experts conduct surveys and monitoring of protected areas. Involving local people in such surveys is an excellent way to enable participation and collaboration between protected area authorities and local stakeholders. The LAGs should encourage and enable such participation, through involvement of school groups and students, resource users, and others who know the area well. The traditional knowledge of older people is often particularly valuable and, if not collected, may be lost forever. Such knowledge can also be used in the development of programmes for tourists to the area.

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

The LAGs could act as a means of exchanging local knowledge across the border, enabling researchers and experts to access information from both countries. This could be especially important for studies of wide ranging animals, migratory species and of ecological processes in the Transboundary Area.

- 6** Maintain a high standard of cleanliness and hygiene in the Transboundary Area, paying particular attention to responsible waste disposal and to protection of water courses.

Commentary and guidance

Eco tourists want to experience a clean environment and to know that people are caring for it. However an increase in tourism usually leads to an increase in waste, often to a level that cannot be handled by existing practices and systems. It should also be remembered that a waste problem on one side of the border will also affect the businesses on the other side. LAGs should work with local authorities and other groups to help ensure the following:

- *There is an adequate system of garbage collection and disposal for the communities.*
- *Trails and tourist facilities are kept clean. Adequate waste disposal places should be provided and regularly serviced in highly visited*

areas, but not in more remote areas. Visitors and hikers should be encouraged to take their garbage away with them and not leave it in the area.

- *Hotels, restaurants and other facilities have adequate systems of waste and waste water management. The increased use of toilets and water is often overlooked in tourist planning, and can lead to pollution of water courses and even water supplies. New hotels etc. should be required to install adequate waste management systems and not overload any existing systems.*

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

LAGs could arrange exchanges of knowledge, experience and good practice in waste management on both sides of the border. They could also encourage a sense of pride in communities in maintaining a clean environment, stressing that the success of tourism depends on cleanliness on both sides of the border.



Photo: © Ervin Karić

ARTICLE 2. DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE TRANSBOUNDARY AREA

The Parties agree to:

1 Identify and establish in the Transboundary Area a network of trails and long distance routes of varying lengths and difficulties that can be used within both countries and across the border.

2 Develop and establish a common or compatible system of trail identification and way marking.

Commentary and guidance

The trail system should be established to meet the needs of a wide range of users, from family groups wanting a small excursion, to serious hikers seeking a long distance, wilderness experience. The trail system of each country should be designed to operate independently (i.e. not dependent on border crossings), but should also be compatible so that when border crossings are opened, a set of new routes becomes available.

From the examples of Slovenia and Italy, waymarking systems do not necessarily have to be identical (there may be different national norms), but they should be compatible and readily understood. Waymarking should be very regular and clear on popular and shorter trails. For longer trails such waymarking can be intrusive and a lesser level of signage is preferable.

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

It is very important that the trails are coordinated between the two countries into a compatible and complementary network. The LAGs could take a leading role in organising this coordination.

3 Develop a common trail map that can be used in publications on both sides of the border and in joint publications.

Commentary and guidance

This map should be produced in both languages and in English (and other international languages if possible). It should be of a high quality and suitable scale and printed on durable material so that it can be used by hikers in the field. For the long distance trails, a good quality topographic map is required. Increasingly such maps also provide GPS tracks and waypoints.

One problem associated with providing a trail map, is that it may encourage inexperienced hikers to attempt walks that are too difficult for them. The map should include details of the code of conduct for visitors (see Article 2(7)), details of the difficulty and suitability of each trail, and general safety and security advice. As previously mentioned, waymarking should be much more regular and obvious on shorter, popular trails.

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

The LAGs should ensure effective collaboration over the production of the map.

4 Encourage responsible authorities in both countries to allow any modification of border controls that would facilitate transboundary movements of visitors and their local guides.

Commentary and guidance

Transboundary tourism requires relatively easy access across the international border between Montenegro and Albania. A range of options should be explored to enable this. These could include:

- *A system of registration of hikers who are crossing the border, including passing on their passport details to authorities on both sides of the border.*
- *An open border between (but not beyond) the adjoining protected areas, with border posts on the boundaries of the protected areas. Such an arrangement has been achieved on the border between Georgia and Azerbaijan.*
- *Requirement for transboundary hikers to report to authorities when they cross the border.*

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

The LAGs could play an important role in developing a common proposal for border crossings.

5 Encourage the development by national authorities, businesses and individuals of a range of appropriate infrastructure, designed to high environmental standards, that will facilitate the development of tourism in the Transboundary Area. Such infrastructure may include roads, utility supply and provision of accommodation and visitor attractions.

Commentary and guidance

It is important to remember that providing opportunities for tourists in a particular location does not guarantee that tourists will come. Providing essential facilities and infrastructure is important to enable people to gain access to the area without excessive difficulty. Local authorities and private sector should be encouraged to enable provision of at least basic infrastructure for access to the area; roads in reasonable condition, signage, provision of transportation services, electrical supply, sewage and waste treatment, water supply etc.

In some countries villagers have developed 'packages' for tourists, where they can hike from village to village with pre-booked accommodation in each village and with the option of transportation of their baggage is transported from pension to pension. It is increasingly common for villagers to use or rent donkeys or horses to carry hikers' bags.

It is important however that infrastructure is not excessive or inappropriate and is well designed (see Article 2(6) below).

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

The LAGs could work together to ensure that service infrastructure is compatible and at a suitable scale.

6 Ensure that the design, construction and location of infrastructure are sympathetic to local styles and traditions and to the environment.

Commentary and guidance

The unique attractions of an area can be quickly ruined by inappropriately designed, constructed and sited buildings and infrastructure. Typical problems include:

- *New buildings that are not consistent with local designs and styles.*
- *Use of building materials that are not typical or traditional for the area.*
- *Location of buildings where they have a major impact on the landscape (for example buildings that dominate the view, are located immediately adjacent to beauty spots, places of interest or historic buildings).*
- *Creation of new buildings when it would be possible to convert an existing building (for example for a visitor or tourist information centre).*
- *Road construction. Local communities often see road construction as a priority; roads allow improved access to markets and services and make it easier for tourists to access the area. Roads can also however lead to traffic congestion, pollution, 'ribbon development', and negative impacts on the landscape. They should be carefully planned and located.*
- *Inconsistent, unattractive and badly designed signs or excessive signage can confuse visitors and have a negative aesthetic impact.*

The LAGs should work with the authorities responsible for local planning and urbanisation to ensure high standards of design, and should encourage their own members to build in a sympathetic way. This does not mean that people should not have modern dwellings and amenities; it is quite possible to build in traditional styles and with traditional material while ensuring a good standard of construction, insulation and build quality.

Some protected areas have developed manuals of design guidelines for all structures, signage and materials to ensure a consistent and sympathetic image. The LAGs could work with authorities responsible for planning, infrastructure and urbanisation to prepare such a manual.

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

LAGs should cooperate to conserve the landscape and aesthetic values of the entire Transboundary Area, recognising that negative impacts on one side of the border will affect the image of the entire area. The LAGs could work together on a project to develop a unified system of signage for the Transboundary Area.

7 Develop a common code of conduct for recreational users of the Transboundary Area that includes elements related to behaviour, safety, environmental considerations and cultural sensitivity.

Commentary and guidance

Codes of conduct are important and should be widely used in all publications, trail guides, signboard etc. The modern approach is to create codes of conduct that include many positive messages encouraging correct behaviour, rather than just providing a list of forbidden activities. Codes of conduct should, if required, also include elements relating to cultural as well as environmental sensitivity.

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

Development of a common code of conduct (with some national variations if required) would be a good topic for a joint workshop by the two LAGs.

ARTICLE 3. PROVISION OF HIGH QUALITY TOURISM SERVICES

The Parties agree to:

1 Strive to provide a high level of services for visitors that conform to legal norms and requirements in the field of tourism and recreation, while maintaining a distinctive local character and maintaining long-held traditions of hospitality and friendship with visitors.

2 Train local service providers to develop and meet the standards of service required.

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

It is possible that the required standards may differ either side of the border and that the two LAGs may wish to develop their own standards that could apply to the entire Transboundary Area. This could be the subject of a joint workshop or working group.

3 Strive for a fair allocation of the benefits from tourism and recreation to and between the communities. This allocation will take into account the supply of accommodation and food, provision of tourism services and the use of local products.

Commentary and guidance

National tourist authorities usually have a set of legal norms and standards required for visitor accommodation (hotels, pensions and possibly camping grounds), restaurants and cafes etc. Local businesses and individuals may not be aware of these norms and it can be a challenge to enable them to achieve national standards and the standards expected by international tourists.

The LAGs could play an important role in publicising and promoting the required standards, training service providers to achieve the standards and mobilising funds to enable them to reach the standards. The use of small grants or micro loans can be particularly effective for this kind of work.

Commentary and guidance

One of the risks of developing community based ecotourism is 'leakage'. Leakage is the proportion of income earned locally from tourism that does not remain in the area. For example, leakage occurs if a hotel owner buys all or his/her supplies from a distant city, or employs staff who are not from the local community, or spends the profits from the business outside the area. Leakage tends to increase when businesses are owned by outside interests. Without care, once an area becomes a popular attraction, outside enterprises may see a good business opportunity, competing with local enterprises and even putting them out of business. Outside investors are not necessarily bad, they can bring investment and jobs to an area, but their activities should be designed to minimise leakage.

There is also a risk that protected area administrations will develop their own tourism

enterprises, which may benefit from hidden subsidies, enabling them to compete unfairly with local businesses. For example a protected area administration may obtain an international grant to build visitor accommodation that would compete with local pension owners.

The LAGs could have an important role to play in protecting local businesses and encouraging outside investors to minimise leakage. They could be involved in:

- *Seeking and mobilising support for local business, for example through business development advice or micro loans.*
- *Lobbying outside businesses to employ local people and source goods, services and supplies locally.*
- *Working with local government authorities and protected area administrations to secure exclusive guiding rights for locally certified tourist and mountain guides.*
- *Working with local government authorities to ensure protection of local businesses, especially small enterprises.*
- *Working with protected area administrations to ensure cooperation in tourism enterprises and recognition that the benefits from tourism should be shared with local communities.*

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

The two LAGs could act as a means for exchanging information and sharing experience in ensuring benefit sharing and fair treatment of local small businesses.

4 Provide visitors with useful, comprehensive, interesting and reliable information on the traditions, customs, culture, history and nature of the Transboundary Area and on the standards of behaviour expected of visitors.

Commentary and guidance

Visitors require reliable and well-presented information. The LAGs should work to ensure that all service providers provide such information. Activities might include:

- *Ensuring that hotels, guides and tour operators have a supply of brochures, leaflets and maps.*
- *Preparing 'browsers' for hotels and pensions; loose leaf files that can be filled with information about the area, leaflets, maps etc.*
- *Training service providers to provide essential information about the area.*
- *Use of signs and interpretation in popular areas.*
- *Establishment of visitor information points.*

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

For the Transboundary Area it will be important for the LAGs to exchange information and for service providers to be able to offer information regarding both sides of the border. The LAGs could work to ensure that information is available and is accurate, consistent and compatible.

The LAGs could also cooperate in providing translations of each other's information materials.

5 Encourage and assist, where possible, local production of traditional foods and handicrafts. Motivate service providers to stock and supply these local products in order to enhance appreciation of the area, maintain local traditions and help to sustain local economies.

Commentary and guidance

Part of the ecotourism experience should be for visitors to sample traditional local products. This supports the local economy and reduces the expenses and environmental impact of transporting goods over long distances. Local producers should be encouraged and supported to achieve required standards of quality, and local service providers should be strongly encouraged to serve only local products as far as possible. This may be slightly more expensive for visitors, but most will gladly accept this. Communities around the world have supplied, for example: fruit juices, herbal teas, honey, local seasonal fruits and vegetables, dried fruits, jams and preserves, wine and other alcoholic beverages, milk, cheese, yoghurt and other milk products, meat and fish.

Once they have tried these products visitors are likely to want to buy them as so called 'gift foods' to take away with them.

Similarly, visitors are likely to prefer good quality local handicrafts, offered at a range of prices. Shops should be encouraged to stock these and support the local economy, rather than buying in mass produced souvenirs, even if they are cheaper. In many countries, local entrepreneurs or NGOs have established 'open workshops' where visitors can observe local craftspeople at work and then buy their products.

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

The LAGs could encourage sharing of experience and ideas on promoting local products, but it may be preferable not to have common products, but to focus on traditional products from each country in each country.

There may be restrictions on movements of meat, honey and agricultural products across international borders. This should be checked.

6 Establish common standards for training of guides and other service providers in the Transboundary Area.

Commentary and guidance

Local guides should be trained to direct and accompany hikers in the more remote mountain areas. Training should cover knowledge of the area, map reading and navigation, safety and security and communication skills (including language skills if possible).

The LAGs may be able to organise a training curriculum and also coordinate a system of guide registration and certification.

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

The LAGs should work together to develop a common curriculum and standards for certification.

7 Cooperate to ensure a high standard of visitor safety and security and to put into place appropriate and commonly understood procedures and measures for responding to accidents and emergencies.

Commentary and guidance

Visitor safety and security is often overlooked in the development of mountain tourism, but it is important. International visitors are likely to expect a higher degree of attention to safety and security than local communities are used to. To a large extent, visitors should have responsibility for their own actions, but the communities should take steps to:

- *Identify what the risks are for visitors of all types.*
- *Identify what can be done to minimise those risks.*
- *Ensure that visitors are made aware of the most severe risks and the measures that they as individuals should take to minimise them.*
- *Ensure that local stakeholders are aware of the risks, take steps to minimise them and are prepared to deal with emergencies.*

Necessary measures might include:

- *Establishing a simple system of registration of people hiking in the area so that it can be known if they do not arrive at their destination when expected. This can be done through accommodation providers or through visitor centres or protected area offices.*
- *Training mountain guides and service providers in first aid and emergency techniques and supplying them with first aid equipment.*
- *Ensuring that visitor accommodation and infrastructure is safe, that fire risks are minimised and that equipment is available to deal with emergencies.*
- *Establishing a voluntary mountain rescue service.*
- *Discussing emergency procedures with hospitals, border guards, fire service etc.*
- *Identifying sources of help for emergency evacuation of casualties (helicopter companies, military etc.).*
- *Ensuring that all service providers have a set of emergency contact numbers and details of how to get help if required.*

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

The LAGs could work together to develop common standards and procedures of safety and security. There may also be a need to identify procedures and protocols for cross border evacuation of casualties (it may be easier to access a casualty from across the border).

8 Engage in fair, equitable and cooperative competition between service providers within and between countries, recognising that the common interest is as important as individual interest.

9 Cooperate to ensure that income earned from services provided in one community should remain in that community. A key element of fair, equitable and cooperative competition is that service providers on one side of the border should only sell services on the other side of the border through local suppliers.

Commentary and guidance (see also Article 3(3))

Competition is part of business, but unfair competition would undermine the principles of the cooperation. Very small businesses established by local people are particularly vulnerable to being outcompeted by larger enterprises with more investment and better marketing. The LAGs should strive to encourage a diversified tourism service economy that provides opportunities for businesses of all sizes, but which takes special care to protect small, local specialised businesses. Suitable measures might include:

- *Active promotion and marketing of local businesses by local authorities and protected areas.*
- *Holding special markets and fairs for local producers.*
- *Enabling cooperative marketing by small businesses. This involves groups of compatible businesses sharing the cost of joint advertising and promotion.*

- *Using the brand and logo of the Transboundary Area as a quality mark awarded to locally based, eco businesses.*
- *Tax relief for small local eco-businesses.*
- *Not allowing registration of disproportionately large businesses that might provide unfair competition.*

There may be a concern that a well organised and well-connected operator on one side of the border might start to market and profit from services supplied on the other side. This may lead to tensions between communities and service providers. The LAGs should establish a principle that transboundary operators buy services on the side of the border that they are provided and should come to an agreement over guides leading groups across the border.

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

The LAGs could exchange information and ideas about approaches for establishing fair competition.



Photo: © Ervin Kalaić

ARTICLE 4. MARKETING AND PROMOTION

The Parties agree to:

1 Work together to develop and agree on a common brand and image for the transboundary area that will be used alongside local and national brands (if required) in all local, national and international marketing for the Transboundary Area.

Commentary and guidance

Branding and image creation is an important part of marketing of a rural area for tourism and encouraging local enterprise. A common brand of the area can have a wide range of benefits:

- *Creating an attractive 'image' for the area and its unique values.*
- *Supporting consistent marketing of the area*
- *Creating a 'quality mark' for visitors and marketing tool for local businesses through use of the brand to endorse approved products and services of a high quality and local provenance.*

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

Developing a common brand and image is seen as one of the best ways to encourage transboundary understanding and cooperation. The two LAGs should hold a joint set of workshops and consultations, or perhaps a competition, to develop a common brand, logo and image. They should agree to use the brand, logo and image in all their publicity and promotional materials and to encourage other stakeholders to use them too.

The LAGs could also work together to establish common standards for allowing local businesses to use the Transboundary Area logo.

2 Conduct joint campaigns and activities for marketing the Transboundary Area.

3 Work together and with national tourism authorities, agencies, tour operators and protected area administrations to market and promote the opportunities for tourism in the Transboundary Area.

4 Establish a common website and/or Facebook page for the Transboundary Area.

5 Ensure that common publications and marketing materials are published in both national languages, in English and if possible in other international languages.

Commentary and guidance

In order to attract visitors, marketing will be essential. There are many mountain areas in Europe that international tourists could choose; the marketing of this area must stress its unique qualities and be designed to reach the intended audience.

The LAGs should play a wide range of important roles in this, including identifying the unique values of the area, developing publications and promotional materials and making use a range of media to publicise and promote the area.

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

The LAGs could organise a joint workshop to agree the unique qualities of the area and the main marketing strategies to be used. They could exchange information to ensure that the national marketing of both countries is compatible and

complementary. They should also ensure that materials are correctly translated into both national languages, into English and, if possible, into other international languages.

Developing a common web site may be complicated in terms of language and communication of information. It may be possible to develop a common portal that allows access to two national sites. The sites will also have to be available in English at least and preferably in other international languages. Facebook is increasingly used for marketing purposes and it is often quicker, easier and cheaper to set up and maintain a Facebook page than a website.



Photo: © IUCN/Tomasz Pezold

ARTICLE 5. COMMUNICATION, COOPERATION AND FUNDING

The Parties agree to

1 Establish a transboundary cooperation committee and meet at least twice a year in alternating countries.

Commentary and guidance/ Special measures for transboundary cooperation

The LAGs should establish a joint committee with the following main functions:

- *To plan and coordinate activities for implementing the MoU.*
- *To seek funding and support.*
- *To exchange information and experiences.*
- *To discuss common issues, resolve problems and identify and make best use of opportunities.*
- *To review progress on implementing the MoU.*

It is suggested that this committee should meet twice a year; more regular meetings would be ideal but logistical and resource issues may prevent this. The committee should include equal representation from both LAGs and meet in alternating countries, with meetings chaired by a member from the hosting country. An initial meeting and workshop should be held to agree membership and detailed terms of reference for the committee.

2 Ensure a continuous and open exchange of information of common interest between the two Parties.

Commentary and guidance/ Special measures for transboundary cooperation

Alongside the committee, there must be a mechanism to ensure the regular exchange of information and for LAGs to work together on common programmes linked to the MoU. This will require the two LAGs to acquire adequate communication facilities, ideally in the form of computers and internet connections to allow low cost Skype conversations and conferences. The LAGs should seek support from donors for this, which could be established as a community resource on both sides of the border.

Meetings of the cooperation committee should identify joint programmes of activity and responsible persons in each LAG who can then work together to implement the programmes.

3 Exercise transparency and openness in their activities and encourage and enable the involvement of additional stakeholders and stakeholder groups wherever relevant.

Commentary and guidance/ Special measures for transboundary cooperation

It should be remembered that the LAGs may not represent all the stakeholders. They should if required, extend their membership, identify and involve other stakeholders and make sure that opportunities are made available to all relevant local stakeholders (not just LAG members).

4 Improve communication between the communities by encouraging individuals to learn each other's languages and by enabling regular exchanges between the communities.

5 Identify and mobilise national funds and sources of support to enable implementation of activities specified in the MoU.

6 Cooperate to develop and apply for joint projects and grants to further the work of the Parties in relation to the MoU.

Commentary and guidance/ Special measures for transboundary cooperation

Language is a considerable barrier to working together. Bilingual/multilingual individuals in both communities should be identified and involved in helping with communication. Funding proposals should include budgets for use of interpreters and translation of project outputs.

As previously mentioned, the two LAGs could help each other to provide good translations of material prepared for tourists.

Service providers and guides may wish to learn other languages to help them communicate with tourists. The LAGs could help organise English language classes and even seek an international volunteer to teach English (or other desired languages).

Commentary and guidance

The LAGs should draw up a list of essential funds required to start to operationalize the MoU and should focus their local fundraising activities to support this. Many of the items of this MoU are likely to require further investments and should be developed into project proposals for presentation to local funding sources, to national authorities and to international donors. Training in proposal writing and project management may be required.

Special measures for transboundary cooperation

Care should be taken to ensure that the distribution of joint projects is fair between the two LAGs. It would be unfortunate if the majority of the resources were directed to one or other LAG, leaving the other one under-resourced. Achieving a perfect balance would be impossible, but proposals should, wherever possible, be for joint projects, with a fair balance of investments and activities.

ARTICLE 6. AMENDMENTS, INTERPRETATION, EXTENSION, AND TERMINATION

1. This MoU shall be effective on the date entered at the head of this MoU and will remain in force for a period of five years. Either Party may propose amendments at any time; amendments will be adopted if mutually agreed in writing by both Parties.
2. Any dispute between the Parties regarding the interpretation or implementation of this MoU shall be settled amicably by consultation or negotiation within the spirit of collaboration.
3. This MoU may be cancelled by mutual agreement of the Parties, in writing and signed by both Parties.
4. Either Party may withdraw from the MoU subject to providing notice in writing to the other Party of three months.
5. This MoU is non-exclusive and shall not restrict the activities of either Party outside of this joint programme of collaboration, where these do not have a negative impact on the terms of the MoU.
6. Co-operation under this MoU will be subject to the availability of funds and personnel to each Party, and to the laws and regulations of each country. The nature and extent of funding for each joint project or activity will be decided upon by the Parties before its commencement.



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