

NEWS LETTER

HUMANITA

Topics

Good-practice examples

Monitoring methods

Invasive Alien Species

Human – nature conflict management



Dear stakeholders,

we welcome you to our second newsletter! This is the second period in the project, and we are eager to share with you all news about our progress in **HUMANITA project** so far. We have been very active and have made important progress in all areas, from monitoring of environmental impacts of tourists inside PAs, current methods and best practice, to developing innovative monitoring methods and data sets to detect environmental impacts of tourists, and human – nature conflict management. **We hope you will enjoy this issue of the newsletter, and we invite you to contact us for all and any questions you may have.**

Monitoring of environmental impacts of tourists inside PAs, current methods and best practice

Report on good-practice examples

Within last period of the project, we achieved a significant milestone through our efforts in the **Interreg Central Europe HUMANITA project**. After the "Good-practice workshop on monitoring visitors and their impact on the environment" we focused on summing up our findings and released our inaugural publication – the "**Report on good practice examples to monitor environmental impacts of tourism inside protected areas**".

Throughout the project's duration, we seek insights from good-practice owners in protected areas and scientific institutions worldwide. Our quest involves comprehensive desk research and engaging workshops with practitioners experienced in monitoring visitor impacts on the environment.

The report offers a comprehensive overview of tourism in protected areas and the associated environmental impacts. We've delved into various activities aimed at identifying good-practice examples for monitoring these impacts. Our focus areas include visitor monitoring, wildlife monitoring, vegetation monitoring, erosion monitoring, and pollution monitoring.

This report represents the culmination of knowledge gathered from workshops and desk research conducted by our esteemed project partners. The practical insights shared by practitioners are thoughtfully presented within its chapters. Furthermore, the results of our project partner

research are summarized in a comprehensive factsheet at the report's conclusion.

We extend a warm invitation to all stakeholders, protected area managers, environmental enthusiasts, and anyone with an interest in preserving our natural treasures. Dive into this report and explore the wealth of knowledge it contains!

Report on impacts on pilot sites

Over the past few months, our dedicated project partners have been hard at work crafting the "**Report on environmental impacts of tourism**", tailored to each of our pilot sites. Our esteemed protected areas partners have been diligently collecting vital data, laying the groundwork for these comprehensive reports. The aim was to provide a detailed snapshot of each area's environmental status, monitoring efforts, and the volume of tourist activity.

These reports not only offer a broad overview of protected areas but also zoom in to our pilot sites, where various monitoring activities under the **HUMANITA project** are set to unfold. What makes these reports truly invaluable is their summary of past achievements and shedding light on ongoing efforts. They also pinpoint areas where additional monitoring is needed, paving the way for future project activities.



Reports from all five (5) participating protected areas are available on our website (or contact us for copy). This comprehensive resource will serve as a treasure trove of natural and touristic insights, guiding our collective journey towards sustainable environmental practices.



Developing innovative monitoring methods and data sets to detect environmental impacts of tourists

After the initial preparatory period of the **HUMANITA project**, all activities related to **Work package 2** are ready to start! With some short-term deliverables, and other tasks that are going to last until the end of the project, **Period 2** has seen the beginning of a wide range of different activities involving all partners and pilot sites.

Database construction

Given the amount and variety of monitoring activities planned for the three-year period of the project, having a dedicated space to collect and manage all data is a mandatory requirement. In fact, one of the deliverables planned for Period 2 involves the design and implementation of a relational database to provide a share platform for all partners to store their datasets. During this period, the structure of the database was defined, and upcoming developments will focus on integrating data samples from pilot areas to ensure operational functionality.

Pilot site activities

The heart of Work Package 2 lies in the development of innovative monitoring methods, which officially commenced in Period 2. Even if this activity is planned to officially start in Period 2, partners were eager to start these operations in their pilot sites since the beginning of the project, testing new instrumentation with on-site activities and producing preliminary results. **With the 2024 spring season approaching**, partners are going to apply the acquired knowledge and officially start on-site surveys, installation of new devices, and data sampling in all pilot sites.





Photos: Unesh Grabner

Participatory monitoring



Another objective of **HUMANITA** project is to design appropriate tools for **Citizen Science activities**, engaging tourists and visitors in the data collection process within protected areas. Work Package 2 includes a deliverable dedicated to this topic, aiming to develop and provide tool kits for participatory monitoring activities such as detection of trails use through GPS data, and identification of **invasive and non-native plant species**. As for the regular monitoring activities, outcomes of participatory monitoring are going to be integrated in the database to improve our knowledge on the interaction between tourists and protected areas. Partners will do different kinds of participatory monitoring. For example, participatory monitoring for invasive species will complement eDNA sampling in the **Karawanken-Karavanke UNESCO Global Geopark** done by **Carinthia University of Applied Sciences**, via **iNaturalist**.

As part of our **Interreg Central Europe HUMANITA** project, and in the context of participatory monitoring, we're diving into the world of citizen science to shed light on **invasive alien species** within our project partner Geopark Karawanken-Karavanke.

Citizen science is a research method that empowers volunteers, regardless of their scientific background, to contribute valuable data. Thanks to advancements in technology, participants can now easily get involved through their favourite mobile applications.

In collaboration with **Carinthia University of Applied Sciences** and the **Karawanken-Karavanke UNESCO Global Geopark**, we're harnessing this opportunity. Our tool of choice is the **iNaturalist platform** – a network where citizen scientists and biologists unite to document and share observations of biodiversity. For full input citizen scientists should upload pictures of the plant and surrounding environment, species name and location of their finding.

We invite you to be part of our iNaturalist project, where your observations can make a real difference. Your contributions will help us understand how invasive species spread along hiking trails in the area, guiding conservation efforts for years to come. **Our project will start by spring 2024 and today we invite you to join our community.**





Photo: Uros Gabner

Human – nature conflict management

Exploring tourists' perspectives on nature and protected areas: What is HUMANITA's work telling us?

The analysis that is being carried out on the questionnaires submitted to tourists in the five pilot areas of the project, especially between July and October 2023, is leading to interesting results on their habits and knowledge of natural environments by the public. The study aims to give a reading of the data provided by visitors, describing their habits and choices in dealing with and exploring the areas, awareness of the impacts to which the different natural contexts are subjected, and in general, the sensitivity with which the experience in contact with nature and its delicate balances is made sustainable.

We are aware that most participants predominantly engage in walking and hiking activities, often revisiting familiar protected areas and natural sites along well-known paths and trails. More than 80% of the participants in the questionnaire say that what they value most about the excursion is the beauty and magnificence of the natural heritage that the territories offer, and more than a third claim to be attracted by the possibilities of doing sports and recreational activities. The opportunity to meet or simply observe wildlife is also a reason to attract and interest a part of the public.

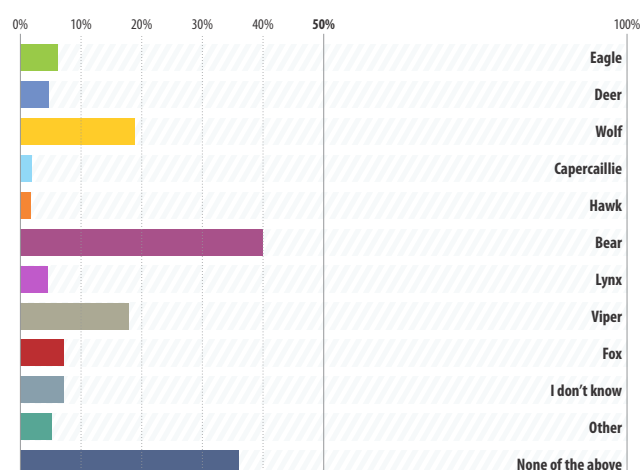
The perception and interaction between visitors and wild species are one of the topics on which specific insights have been built. What emerges is a starting point for interesting reflections on the objectives of the project as well as a measure of comparison with what the topicality of the issues on human-environmental coexistence calls us to deal with increasing attention and priority. In this specific topic, tourists were asked to indicate which species of wild animals, among those listed, could limit leisure activities in the area, referring to the one where the excursion and the survey took place.

Overall, the aggregate data shows that the visit of a natural environment is somehow conditioned by the presence of wildlife, and by man's awareness of its presence. A rather narrow circle of species is a reason for limiting activities and



for worrying about moving in the environment and being the head of it is without doubt the bear. Therefore, 40% of tourists say that the big carnivore that lives in some areas of Central Europe mountains is a presence according to which to adapt their movements and perhaps even limit them in natural environments.

Q19: Which one of these species in the wild would limit your leisure activities in this area?
Please select max. 3 answers



The data shows the general perception of concern towards the bear (40%) in all pilot sites. The bear is considered a threat in Mala Fatra National Park in Slovakia (80%), Bükk National Park in Hungary (37.5%), and National Park Appennino Tosco-Emiliano in Italy (30%). The significance of these data lies not only in documenting objective information but also in gauging the sensitivity and perception of tourists towards the environment of Protected Areas. This exploration aims to understand and facilitate sustainable coexistence among ecosystems.

STAY WITH US FOR MORE INSIGHTS!



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