

Pilot project: Šumava Biosphere Reserve



Šumava
Biosférická rezervace

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Project partner working team:

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Name of the area:

Šumava Biosphere Reserve

Pilot project name:

Pilot project: Šumava Biosphere Reserve - platform to facilitate communication between nature protection and local stakeholders

Size:

1 670 km²

Location:

South West bordersland of the Czech Republic mountain range

Geographical specifics:

ca. 25.000

Population:

Dominant land-use:

forest and meadows

Dominant economy:

forestry, tourism, agriculture

Administrative division:

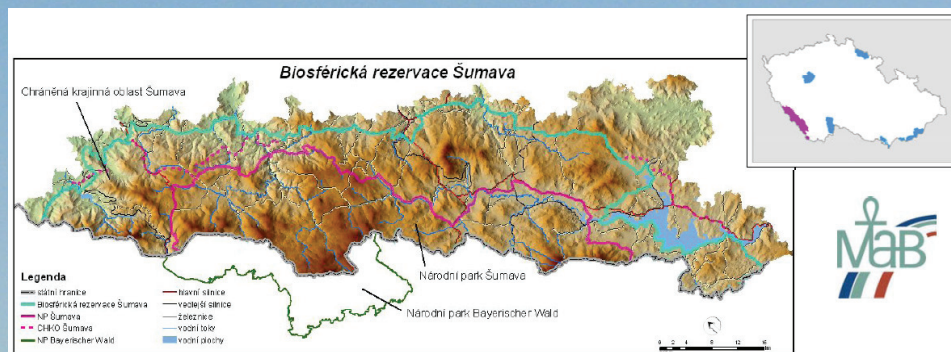
42 municipalities

Legislated protection:

Biosphere reserve internationally; national park and protected landscape area nationally

You can hardly find a better case than the Šumava Mts., if you search for a region where to study ways of how to work with the local people. It is a mountain range, situated on the Czech-Bavaria-Upper Austria borderland, for centuries inhabited, but still retaining valuable nature. The history of the region was rather dynamic, particularly in the post war period.

Military troops went through the deep forests in both directions many times in the past; the locals on both sides of the border however stayed aloof from those events living their hard everyday lives. All was changed by the World War II. Czechs before and Germans after the war were forced to leave the area, most of them for ever. The Iron Curtain, established on the Czech side, not only confined the Czech people physically to the territory, it also imprisoned their minds.



General map of the pilot area



Political changes in the nineties of the last century brought new opportunities for people living in the area. Were they prepared for these changes? Most of them were not. Declaration of the Šumava National Park on the large part of the area in 1991 promised new job opportunities and a better life for the local population. What is however the present reality? Forestry, the traditional economic activity, has been limited by specific regulations applied within the National Park. Tourism has generally prevailed as the main source of job opportunities. Money generated by it however, obviously flows outside the region. Is it not a perfect situation to start doing something with it? The concept of UNESCO Biosphere reserve appeared to be an appropriate way of how to structure activities aimed at mobilising local people to realise potential of the territory. It is a long distance run. The first steps we are currently making mean we are on the right track.

background: Horska Kvilda - winter fairy tale

Outcomes:

- Existing institution ready to work
- Presentation of The Šumava Biosphere Reserve as a tool for sustainable life in the region
- Creation of functioning management structure as a platform for communication in the region
- Start of communication with use of face to face dialogues, workshops and a web-site
- Organization of a photo competition and exhibition on the topic "The place where I live, yesterday and today"

The project has opened the chance for the Czech team to continue in the process of practical implementation of the UNESCO concept of biosphere reserve. The concept is being applied worldwide. At this moment biosphere reserves form a network composed of 598 sites located in 117 countries. Each of them is used to test in situ the chance of finding a way in which local people can live in a peace with nature. Territories having a status of a biosphere reserve are supposed to have three missions – protection of biological diversity, enabling research and education while supporting sustainable economic activities. Hence, biosphere reserves are called learning sites for sustainable development. To achieve this ambitious goal, communication and cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders is necessary, facilitated and institutionalised somehow.

Negotiations between the Šumava National Park Administration² and the Šumava Regional Development Agency was initiated as to the cooperation. In summer 2011 the Memorandum of Understanding between both parties was signed.

By doing so, parties formed a regional platform where interests of nature protection and regional development could be communicated. The regional Development Agency was agreed to as an institutional representative of the Šumava Biosphere reserve. It made a solid base for our next steps. Firstly, by the use of interviewing local key personalities expectations, local community was identified as to the biosphere reserve and its role in the region. Consequently, a workshop key personalities, including mayors, entrepreneurs and representatives of the Šumava National Park, was organised in the pilot region with the aim to jointly specify biosphere reserve activities. On this basis, the biosphere reserve was mandated to facilitate communication among already existing projects and activities, and support a sense of attachment of local people to the region. Following the line in more practical terms we designed a biosphere reserve webpage (www.br-sumava.cz) as an information channel in the first stage and communication base prospectively. The photo-

WEBSITE - PLATFORM FOR REGIONAL COMMUNICATION

time frame: May – November 2012

stakeholders: local representatives, cultural workers, BR management

target group: local stakeholders, local people, visitors, broad public

intention: Providing information on BR, promoting natural and cultural aspects, support of local development (e.g. local products), creation of local platform for regional discussion.

outputs: Active website www.br-sumava.cz, new BR logo.

long-term outputs: Promotion of BR, creation of platform for regional communication being visited by local people in common usage.

competition was launched to address school children from the biosphere reserve to get to know the history of the place they live in. The information as to the activities of the newly established biosphere reserve has been spread within the region by the use of two issues of a local newspaper "Doma na Šumave" (summer and winter 2012), and by the use of radio (broadcasting) events which are planned to be realised during the 2012 summer holidays. The Šumava biosphere reserve is thus promoted on a local level. As well activities are communicated on a national level within the framework of regular Czech MaB Committee meetings. We also plan to build on international experiences. Therefore we are going to organise a workshop in the region for Central European biosphere reserves operators, in cooperation with the Austrian MaB Committee in the spring of 2013.

photos to the right:
top: Lenora bread celebration
middle: Miracle of hands
bottom: Kettle in National park Knizeci Plane



PRESENTATION OF THE BIOSPHERE RESERVE POTENTIAL

time frame: May – December 2012
stakeholders: BR management
tagret group: local authorities, local people, tourists, students.

intention: To address as large as possible group of people from the region. To refresh ideas of biosphere reserve. To indicate the potentials of the biosphere reserve for a sustainable way of life in Šumava.

outputs: Summer and winter issue annex of a local newspaper Doma na Šumave (At home in Šumava) distributed to all municipalities and the majority of households in Šumava. (6 pages, 40000 copies).

long-term outputs: Local people involvement, raising awareness especially among mayors in Šumava foothills.

FACE TO FACE DIALOGUES WITH KEY PARTNERS

time frame: July – November 2012
stakeholders: BR management, local mayors, local businessmen, museum workers
participants: 34
tagret group: local representatives, regional key-players.

intention: To refresh ideas of BR among local representatives, to find out their expectations of BR. To discover potential key partners for further cooperation.

outputs: Structured answers to questionnaires summarized in a final report.

long-term outputs: Knowledge of regional expectation, identification of the first list of potential co-operators.

SEARCHING FOR OPTIMAL STRUCTURE - BASE FOR REGIONAL NETWORKING

time frame: May 2011- December 2012
stakeholders: local representatives (mayors, tourism operators, farmers, foresters), scientists, cultural workers, regional politicians, BR management
tagret group: people living in BR.

intention: To find an optimal structure of BR coordination to allow the use of BR potential. Use of BR structure as a communication platform bringing new (job) opportunities for local people.

outputs: Mutually approved and declared structure of BR, schemes, list of contacts, working groups, start of work.

long-term outputs: To contribute to sustainable life of local people in their BR. To keep young people in their Šumava home region.

PHOTO COMPETITION: LANDSCAPE AND SOCIETY CHANGES

time frame: May 2012 – November 2012
stakeholders: pupils of local primary and high schools, teachers, directors, respected local photographers (committee)
tagret group: broad public of BR.

intention: To challenge the young generations to think about changes in landscape use. To focus attention of young people to labour, mostly today forgotten, and to search for connections with the present days.

outputs: Sets of photos comparing human activity back then and today. Descriptions of stories related to photos.

longterm outputs: Strengthening of historical knowledge of their region among young people and support of their long-term relation to the home region.

USE OF POTENTIALS OF THE BIOSPHERE RESERVE - REGIONAL WORKSHOP

time frame: February 2012
stakeholders: local representatives, local businessmen, BR management
participants: 15
tagret group: local mayors, local businessmen, politicians.

intention: To introduce results of a field survey, to sketch the first draft of the future strategy, to communicate common topics.

outputs: Presentation, ideas, tables, charts. Recommendations of participants for further steps.

long-term outputs: The base for next steps in development of BR management, list of people willing to co-operate.