

Lessons learned

- Centralized governance systems are predominant, but ... stakeholder involvement becomes crucial for effective protected area management.
- PAs under centralized governance - conflict situations especially when land is owned by various actors. Even in relatively clear and 'easy' situations (Finland), the need for stakeholder involvement is considered more and more important and beneficial.
- right-holder / stakeholder participation have to be stimulated by educating key target groups
- key aspect: building trust between PA management authorities/bodies and stakeholders i.
- limited communication capacity, skills and abilities of the PA staff limit the effectiveness of new governance approaches.
- main success factor for improved governance: open-minded, motivated people, with good communication and facilitation skills can do more than the best laws
- the will of non-governmental actors, even if not recognized by the legislation, are 'forcing' changes in governance patterns through bottom-up approach.
- delegation: actors that could be eligible to take over this responsibility don't have the sufficient resources and capacity and are not supported by the state,
- participatory governance processes lead to delays in the planning and management processes.
- Sharing management responsibilities with non-governmental actors is beneficial to protected areas. PA governance systems that involve non-governmental actors have to be based on very good coordination and monitoring, as well as control systems to help improve coherence and convergence.
- Coordination between different sectors of activity is most of the times difficult, impacting on the protected area management effectiveness. In some countries, the inter-sectoral integration is facilitated by the
- In some countries, where several authorities/agencies have protected area management responsibilities, the coordination role of the MoE is not obvious or clearly defined; therefore the PAs managed by other actors (which sometimes don't even
- In most countries key economic sectors and major players for the PA governance system as well as at the PA level are not properly informed about the importance of PAs and their involvement and support is limited or non-existent. Except Finland, none of the countries have a functional information and coordination system at the national level for the various actors/sectors relevant for PA governance.

Recommendations

General recommendations

- Coordination of the actors involved in PA governance and management at the national level should be improved, given its importance: it enables a coherent approach, continuous monitoring and improvement of governance and increase of PA management effectiveness.
- National and regional PA authorities should acknowledge the staff and resource needs for improved PA governance, by providing financial and technical support on governance and considering specific requirements when recruiting the staff.
- Management bodies of government governed PAs should develop stakeholder participation plans based on thorough stakeholder analysis¹ and should develop mechanisms to ensure transparency and to provide opportunities for consultation and involvement.
- Establishing multi-stakeholder platforms (at national, regional and/or local level) should be considered as an important step for improving PA governance throughout the region, especially in areas where land and resource-use rights are diverse and stakeholders have an important role in securing efficient management. Specific recommendations for these platforms are presented separately.
- Governance quality should be monitored at the PA and national level by defining and using at least a few key indicators (see examples in Annex 4)
- Legislation should provide a flexible framework for governance, allowing for different governance types to be implemented in any category of PA. Even if the existing legislation is not yet so open, solution should be found to at least allow for strong participatory mechanisms, especially in category V protected areas, where biodiversity conservation objectives are doubled by objectives supporting sustainable community development.
- In participatory decision making processes, taking decisions by consensus should be considered, whenever possible, over voting. Such approach gives a proper influence for groups with limited representation, i.e. equal weights to the voices of those who are not properly represented.

National/regional level

1. Develop a framework in which any governance type can be adopted and implemented. This is especially recommended in the countries where bottom-up approaches - like the ones presented in the study - proved to be successful.

¹ Guidelines were developed by WWF Danube Carpathian Programme for the Carpathian Ecoregion: IONIȚĂ, A. STANCIU, E. Participatory Management of Protected Areas in the Carpathian Ecoregion Part II:

Guidelines for stakeholder involvement in protected area management, WWF DCP 2011, <http://www.propark.ro/en/publicatii/>

2. The legislation should have provisions that allow more flexibility in PA governance and thus a more active involvement of stakeholders and better coordination framework at the national and regional level.
3. Develop a management assessment system that reflects the connection between the management efficiency on long term and the various governance types.
4. Raise awareness and promote benefits of different governance types, especially to target groups like decision-makers, PA managers, right-holders and active stakeholders, local authorities, with the aim to gain their support and involvement;
5. Develop financial mechanisms to support implementation of different governance types – i.e. financial easement policies, subsidies, grants, etc., in support of the non-governmental actors taking the responsibility to develop participative governance types and in support of stakeholders who are impacted by the PA restrictions.
6. Build capacity of national level decision-makers to improve governance and participatory management in PAs.
7. Ensure mechanisms/procedures for involvement of different sectors and authorities in PA coordination and management and for coordination between the different sectors and institutions, so that they start to actively support PA strategies and objectives and reflect much better PAs and their objectives in sectorial policies and legislation.
8. Fundamental laws of EE countries should properly consider the importance of responsible management of land and associated natural resources (e.g. forest, meadows, wetlands) for the stability and health of the society. This would entail balancing land ownership rights and public interests through a framework that makes compensation payments compulsory to owners who are managing their land by considering public interest (e.g. securing environmental services), which is the case especially in PAs.

c. Protected Area level

1. Follow a step by step approach to improve PA governance, by adopting measures and mechanisms to help implementing new types of governance, for example by improving the capacity and skills of the PAMB to involve/support stakeholders and establish internal regulations requiring PAMB to engage more actively with stakeholders (see example from Hungary in Box 1) and by establishing voluntary multistakeholder consultation bodies (see example from Croatia Box 15 and the example of Slovakia)
2. Start to allocate time, resources and specialized staff to involve stakeholders in a professional manner in PA decision making and management by taking up an active and well performed facilitation role.
3. Improve capacity of all relevant team members to implement good governance, to encourage stakeholder participation, develop innovative solutions for functional decision-making systems;

4. Improve transparency of the management system at all levels: PAMB, consultative and decision making bodies.
5. Increase efforts to identify direct and indirect benefits deriving from the PA to local stakeholders and find efficient ways to communicate them.
6. Learn how to demonstrate to stakeholders that efficiently managed PAs are a key interest not for nature, but to the society that depends entirely on the resources and services provided by nature.
7. Build stakeholder involvement platforms even if not requested by the legislation and build it based on open communication and trust.
8. Establish PA management teams that are recognized leaders in their region, facilitating important economic and social events associated to the biodiversity conservation work.