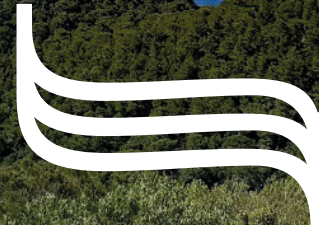




SUSTAINABLE, TRANSPARENT & PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS





SUSTAINABLE,
TRANSPARENT
& PARTICIPATORY
MANAGEMENT OF
PROTECTED AREAS

PARTNERI
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CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	5
CLASSIFICATION OF PROTECTED AREAS IN CROATIA AND SWITZERLAND	7
GOVERNANCE OF PROTECTED AREAS IN CROATIA AND SWITZERLAND	12
INCLUDING STAKEHOLDERS IN THE GOVERNANCE OF PROTECTED AREAS	18
REGIONAL NATURE PARK - A NEW MODEL OF NATURE PROTECTION IN SWITZERLAND	19
CASE STUDIES	22
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	29
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	31
PUBLISHING INFORMATION	32



Vallon de Nant, Pro Natura's reserve / photo: Adrien Zeender



Lučica & Mihajla (Lastovo island) / photo: Ante Gugić

INTRODUCTION

The publication in front of you is one of the main results of the “Partners for Nature” project that lasted from 1 April 2019 until 28 February 2021 and was financed through the Swiss-Croatian Cooperation Programme. The project’s general objective was building capacities of civil society organisations and public institutions for managing nature protection areas in Croatia through the cooperation and partnership with Swiss civil society organisations and public institutions, in a way that ensures sustainable socioeconomic development of local communities.

The project was coordinated by Zelena akcija / Friends of the Earth Croatia and it was carried out in partnership with: Public Institution Green Ring, Public Institution Nature Park Lastovo Islands, Međimurska priroda – Public Institution for Nature Protection, and the Swiss NGO Pro Natura / Friends of the Earth Switzerland.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature – IUCN defines a protected area as: “a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.”² Therefore, to ensure long term conservation of natural and cultural features, it does not suffice to declare an area as protected, but it must also be effectively managed³.

In terms of biodiversity, Croatia is one of the top ranking countries in Europe, which is also reflected in the fact that about a third of its territory is covered by protected areas (national categories) and/or included in the Natura 2000 network⁴. Managing these areas

¹ <https://cutt.ly/akzbWbk>

² <https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/about>

³ Managing an area implies implementing a range of measures and activities needed for long-term conservation of natural and other values of the area.

⁴ Hereinafter the term “protected area” will also refer to the ecological network areas (including the Natura 2000 network), unless otherwise indicated.

in a sustainable way is challenging, which creates a need to increase the capacities of public institutions founded to manage them, as well as to encourage and facilitate communication between different stakeholders⁵ who are active in these areas to avoid potential conflicts and ensure local community support to the efforts of protecting these areas.

The question of including stakeholders in managing protected parts of nature is especially relevant considering a large area of Croatia is under some type of protection and the number of people working and living in these areas. The importance of having support from the local community for effective long-term area protection therefore cannot be stressed enough. Also, numerous overlapping jurisdictions between the nature protection sector and other sectors relevant for managing of natural resources and/or various economic activities permitted within protected areas (e.g. agriculture, forestry, water management, tourism...) make some type of cross-sectoral cooperation necessary.

Of course, an important element in ensuring local community support for nature protection is to demonstrate that it does not necessarily need to be just a limiting factor, but that it can also be an opportunity for sustainable local/regional socio-economic development.

Although in the recent years, there has been increasing awareness in Croatia regarding the importance of including the local community and other stakeholders in managing protected areas sustainably and transparently, and many public institutions governing protected parts of nature are trying out various models of cooperation with stakeholders, we believe that there is still plenty of room for learning from colleagues from other countries who have made more significant progress in these processes.

During this project, we have focused on the example of Switzerland, a country known for its federal

⁵ In the context of managing protected areas, a stakeholder is any person or organisation interested in the topic and whose activities may influence or be influenced by the measures taken in order to protect these areas.





Conference “Sustainable and participatory management of protected areas”, trip to the Tepec-Palačnik and Straznik Forest Park, July 2019

structure⁶ and a rich democratic tradition of engaging its citizens in direct decision-making on various matters, including nature protection. Historically, the decentralised nature of the Swiss state and culture that encourages grassroots initiatives has also made an impact on the development of the protected area system in the country. Nowadays, the system therefore displays protection and management models that are much more diverse than they would be in a relatively centralised system, like the one in Croatia. Switzerland is also interesting because in the past years, it started experimenting with new protection models which will be discussed in further detail later on.

Cooperation with the Swiss partner – Pro Natura – has given the project special value. Founded back in the year 1909, Pro Natura has over 160.000 members that are today organised in 23 regional branches. The organisation is one of the founders of IUCN and as of 1995, it is the Swiss member of an international network of environmental organisations which also includes the Croatian partner Zelena Akcija – Friends of the Earth. In the context of this project, it should especially be emphasised that Pro Natura was also one of the pioneers in establishing protected areas in Switzerland⁷, and is managing a network of several hundred “private” protected areas today (that partially overlaps with the federal/cantonal network and partially complements it), which will also be discussed later on.

⁶ The Swiss Confederation is a federal republic consisting of 26 cantons that have a high level of autonomy (each canton has its own constitution, parliament, government, police and judiciary).

⁷ The organisation was originally founded for the purpose of advocacy and collecting funds to establish the first national park in Switzerland, which was finally established in 1914.

The first part of the publication provides a general overview of the network of protected areas in Croatia and Switzerland (with the emphasis on categorisation and governance models) while using IUCN’s classification to analyse the similarities and differences between the two systems. The focus is then shifted towards the matter of including the local community and other stakeholders in the management of protected areas, with special emphasis on the relatively new protection model in Switzerland – the regional nature park. Finally, conclusions will be drawn from the Swiss experience and certain guidelines will be suggested for a more sustainable, more transparent and more participative governance of protected areas in Croatia.

This publication is intended for all stakeholders who are in any way interested in successful management of protected areas, whether they be public institution representatives for the governance of protected parts of nature, competent institutions (various ministries, county administrative departments, ...), environmental organisations, local community representatives living in or near protected areas, local producers and all other interested individuals.

CLASSIFICATION OF PROTECTED AREAS IN CROATIA AND SWITZERLAND

The first part will provide a short overview of the network of protected areas in Croatia and Switzerland with an analysis of their similarities and differences. This will offer a broader context for considering the possibility of applying some elements of the Swiss system onto protected area management in Croatia.

The Nature Protection Act of the Republic of Croatia (Zakon o zaštiti prirode Republike Hrvatske – ZoZP)⁸ defines a protected area as „a geographically clearly defined space intended for the protection of nature and managed for the purpose of long-term conservation of nature and associated ecosystem services“ (Article 9, paragraph 1, point 54). The same act also defines nine national categories of protected areas: strict nature reserve, national park, special reserve, nature park, regional park, natural monument, significant landscape, forest park and monument of park architecture (Articles 111–120). Data on national categories of protected areas in Croatia, their approximate categorisation according to IUCN, the number of protected areas in each of the nine categories as well as their total surface areas and the percentage of territory of the Republic of Croatia they are covering are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 National Categories of Protected Areas in the Republic of Croatia

National category	IUCN category	Number of protected areas	Surface area (ha)	% Croatian territory
Strict nature reserve	Ia	2	2.413,57	0,03
National park	II	8	97.958,72	1,11
Special reserve	IV	79	40.780,24	0,46
Nature park	V	11	432.048,48	4,91
Regional park	V	2	102.556,31	1,16
Natural monument	III	79	203,76	0,00
Significant landscape	V	82	138.427,58	1,57
Forest park	N/A	27	2.866,10	0,03
Monument of park architecture	N/A	120	999,58	0,01
TOTAL		410	818.254,33	9,29
TOTAL (without overlap)			764.494,66	8,68

Data on total surface areas “without overlap” is obtained by eliminating the multiple addition of surfaces that are protected into more than one category. (source: Web portal of the nature protection information system <http://www.biportal.hr/gis/>, accessed 2 February 2021)

In the case of Switzerland, it is unfortunately impossible to display the national categorisation and number of protected areas in a comprehensive way. This is because the nature protection system is much more decentralised and the legal basis for declaring an area protected is a lot more diverse. Along with the so-called protected areas of national

importance with a relatively uniform categorisation at federal level, in Switzerland there is a whole parallel system of areas protected by decision of the canton, municipalities, environmental (and other) organisations, private land owners, etc., that do not have uniform categorisation nor a central database that would list all of those areas. Therefore, no one can be certain of the exact number of protected areas in Switzerland, nor of their total surface area. Different official authorities and organisations offer different estimations, but what complicates the matter further is that certain sources consider some protection categories as protected areas, while others leave them out from such lists. Table 2 provides data according to the Federal Office for the Environment of the Swiss Confederation – BAFU/OFEV⁹ (as at 2017).

The Swiss law doesn’t define the term “protected area” explicitly, but the legal system allows the area to be formally protected by an act of the public authority, which must clearly define its scope and correctly formulate the protection objectives.¹⁰

Protected areas of national importance, according to BAFU/OFEV, include the Swiss national park, the national park’s and nature discovery park’s core zones, habitats of national importance¹¹, reserves for waterbirds and migratory birds of international and national importance, and federal hunting reserves. The legal basis for the first three categories

⁹ Bundesamt für Umwelt (BAFU) / Office fédéral de l’environnement (OFEV), <https://cutt.ly/pk2mTi>

¹⁰ Office fédéral de l’environnement OFEV, Fiche d’information: Aires consacrées à la protection et à la promotion de la biodiversité en Suisse, 22 September 2017. <https://cutt.ly/bk2mZiH>

¹¹ This includes five types of habitats whose locations are specified in the respective federal regulations: high and transition marshes, low marshes, amphibian reproduction sites, alluvial zones, meadows and dry pastures.

Table 2 National Categories of Protected Areas in Switzerland

National category	IUCN category	Number of protected areas	Surface area (ha)	% Swiss territory
Swiss national park	Ia	1	17,033	0,41
Nature discovery park's core zones	Ia		442	0,01
Habitats of national importance:			78,824	1,91
- High marshes	Ia	551	1,524	0,04
- Low marshes	IV	1268	19,218	0,47
- Amphibian reproduction sites	IV	929	13,886	0,34
- Alluvial zones	IV	326	22,639	0,55
- Meadows and dry pastures	IV	3631	21,557	0,52
Waterbird and migratory birds reserves	IV	35	22.770	0,55
Federal hunting reserves	IV	42	150.889	3,65
TOTAL - federal level			269.958	6,52
TOTAL - federal level (without overlap)			258.008	6,24
Habitats of regional and local importance	N/A		51.518	1,25
Cantonal forest reserves	N/A	2895	99.988	2,42
TOTAL - cantonal level			151.506	3,67
TOTAL - cantonal level (without overlap)			127.749	3,09
TOTAL - federal + cantonal level (without overlap)			385.757	9,33

Data on total surface areas “without overlap” is obtained by eliminating the multiple addition of surfaces that are protected into more than one category. (source: the website of the Federal Office for the Environment of the Swiss Confederation (BAFU/OFEV) <https://cutt.ly/ak3XpuR>, accessed 29 September 2020)

is constituted by the Federal Act on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage (LPN)¹² (Articles 23f, 23h and 18a) and the Federal Act on the Swiss National Park in the Canton of Graubünden¹³, while the last two are being declared under the Federal Act on Hunting and the Protection of Wild Mammals and Birds (LChP)¹⁴ (Article 11).

As previously indicated, along with protected areas of national importance, Switzerland also has areas that are protected by the cantons or the municipality. According to BAFU/OFEV, this category includes habitats of regional and local importance and cantonal forest reserves¹⁵. The legal basis (at the federal level) for the first group is constituted by Article 18b of the Federal Act on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage (LPN), while the second group is declared on the basis of

the Federal Forest Act (LFo)¹⁶ (Art. 20, paragraph 4). Apart from that, areas put under protection by the decision of the canton or the municipality are also subject to cantonal and municipal laws.

The categorisation of areas protected at the cantonal and local level is extremely complex. As part of a recent analysis of 54 databases (covering 21 out of 26 cantons), Pro Natura identified 68.502 objects defined by the authorities as important for the protection of nature, while as many as 328 different titles (280 of which are used only once!) were used for their description (i.e. categorisation).¹⁷ Apart from the differences in categorisation, cantons also differ widely in the way they collect data, as well as in their quality and public availability. The number of objects itself, and consequently the amount of work that needs to go into analysing the protection objectives for each of these areas, renders their classification and comparison according to IUCN categories virtually impossible. Perhaps the specified numbers are most helpful in illustrating why it is currently impossible to get the full picture of the total number and surface areas of all protected areas in Switzerland. In this sense, the numbers that BAFU/OFEV and other sources specify for the cantonal/local level represent only estimations.

Except for the categories specified in Table

¹² Federal Act on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage (LPN), <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19660144/index.html>

¹³ Federal Act on the Swiss National Park in the Canton of Graubünden, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19800379/index.html>

¹⁴ Federal Act on Hunting and the Protection of Wild Mammals and Birds (LChP), <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/19860156/index.html>

¹⁵ Cantonal forest reserves are additionally divided into three groups: 1.703 natural forest reserves (IUCN category Ib), 1.642 special forest reserves (IUCN category IV) and 180 mixed reserves. <https://www.bafu.admin.ch/bafu/fr/home/themes/biodiversite/info-specialistes/mesures-de-conservation-de-la-biodiversite/infrastructure-ecologique/reserves-forestieres.html>, table at the bottom of the page.

¹⁶ Federal Forest Act (LFo), <https://cutt.ly/Vk2mg8C>

¹⁷ Urs Tester, Céline Richter, Martina Birrer (2020): Vue d'ensemble sur les aires protégées de Suisse, Basel.



Participants of the conference “Sustainable and participatory management of protected areas”, Samobor, Croatia, July 201

2, there are additional (national) categories/ protection mechanisms in Switzerland. Although official sources often don't indicate them in lists of protected areas, many of these areas can be compared with particular IUCN categories with regards to protection objectives. Among the most significant ones in this group (at least because of the surface area they cover) are regional nature parks that roughly correspond to IUCN category V. More on this type of area will be discussed below.

At federal level, there are three more protection instruments (most similar to IUCN category V): The Federal Act on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage (LPN, chapter 3a) provides for the protection of mires and mire landscapes of outstanding beauty and national importance, as well as the protection of landscapes, sites and natural monuments of national importance (the IFP list)¹⁸, while the 1995 ordinance (OCFH)¹⁹ allows the Confederation to compensate the cantons and municipalities for losses suffered from opting out of using hydropower, and by doing so (signing a 40-year contract), it protects the landscape further.

The Federal Act on Hunting and the Protection of Wild Mammals and Birds (LChP, Art. 11) allows the cantons to declare their own hunting reserves and reserves for the protection of waterbirds and migratory birds (IUCN IV), as well as zones where it is prohibited to disturb wild animals (Ordinance on hunting and protection of wild mammals and birds OChP, Art.

¹⁸ Federal Inventory of Landscapes, Sites and Natural Monuments (IFP), <https://cutt.ly/Wk2Quzr>

¹⁹ Ordinance on Compensation of Losses in Hydropower Generation (OCFH), <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/19950373/index.html>

4^{ter})²⁰, while the Federal Fisheries Act (LFSP)²¹ (Art. 4, paragraph 3) allows the declaration of protected zones for fish (IUCN IV). Cantons and municipalities can also use mechanisms provided by the Federal Act on Spatial Planning (LAT)²² to include special measures for the protection of certain areas in their spatial plan.

Finally, there is a special category of protected areas in Switzerland that consists of so-called “private reserves”. Those are areas that aren't protected by an act of the public authority, whether at the federal or cantonal/municipal level, but by the action taken by various non-governmental actors (most often environmental NGOs). The protection of the largest number of such areas (740 according to data for 2019²³) was initiated by Pro Natura.²⁴ These areas cover a total of around 270 km²²⁵ or 0,63% of the Swiss territory, and they partially overlap with areas protected at federal, cantonal and/or international level. In Croatia, for the time being there are still no protected areas that would fall into this category.

²⁰ Ordinance on hunting and protection of wild mammals and birds (OChP), <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/19880042/index.html#a4ter>

²¹ Federal Fisheries Act (LFSP), <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/19910137/index.html#a4>

²² Federal Act on Spatial Planning (LAT), <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19790171/index.html>

²³ Urs Tester, Céline Richter, Martina Birrer (2020): Vue d'ensemble sur les aires protégées de Suisse, Basel.

²⁴ Environmental organisations BirdLife Switzerland and WWF Bern also have their own protected areas in Switzerland, but the number of areas managed by them is considerably smaller as compared to Pro Natura. There are also no aggregated data available on all “private reserves” in Switzerland. See *ibid*.

²⁵ *Ibid*.



Conference "Sustainable and participatory management of protected areas", media statement, Samobor, Croatia, July 2019

Apart from national categories of protection, both countries also have areas protected under different supranational regulations and international conventions. The most important among them are ecological network areas. In Croatia, the first ecological network was proclaimed in 2007²⁶ and in 2013²⁷ it was integrated into the European ecological network Natura 2000, with its area somewhat reduced.²⁸ The Croatian ecological network comprises of 36.67% land area and 16.26% coastal waters²⁹, or almost 30% of the total state territory. It currently consists of 745 areas of conservation significant for species and habitat types (declared under the Habitats Directive)³⁰ and 38 areas of conservation significant for birds (declared under the Birds Directive)³¹. A significant share of the Natura

26 Regulation on the proclamation of the ecological network (Official Gazette 109/2007), https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2007_10_109_3182.html

27 Regulation on the ecological network (Official Gazette 124/2013), https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2013_10_124_2664.html. This Regulation was amended in 2015 by the Regulation amending the Regulation on the ecological network (Official Gazette 105/2015), <https://cutt.ly/8kzQRDW> and the Regulation on the ecological network and the jurisdiction of public institutions for managing ecological network areas (Official Gazette 80/2019), https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2019_08_80_1669.html.

28 Natura 2000 is a coherent European ecological network comprising of areas that have natural habitat types and species habitats of interest to the European Union and which enables the conservation or restoration of those habitat types and species habitats to a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

29 <http://www.haop.hr/hr/tematska-podrucja/odrzivo-koristenje-prirodnih-dobara-i-ekoloska-mreza/ekoloska-mreza>, accessed 3 February 2021.

30 Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, <https://cutt.ly/RlhX7Ef>

31 Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (codified version) <https://cutt.ly/UlhCQIB>

2000 network's surface area (26.86%) is already protected in one out of nine national categories of protected areas, while as much as 90.80% of the total surface area of areas protected in national categories belongs to the Natura 2000 network.³²

Although Switzerland isn't a member of the European Union and is therefore not subject to EU legislation, an ecological network has been established there under the Bern Convention³³. The parties to this convention are encouraged to declare the Emerald network³⁴ to protect rare and endangered species and habitats specified in Resolutions 4 and 6 of the Standing Committee of the Convention. Until now, Switzerland has declared 37 emerald areas on its territory, with a total surface area of 64.245 ha, which constitutes just 1.56% of the national territory. As much as 30% of the network's surface area overlaps with areas protected in some of the national categories³⁵.

Apart from the ecological network, both countries have territories that are additionally protected under other international conventions and programmes. In Croatia, Plitvice Lakes National Park and Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe (in Croatia they can be

32 Institute for Environmental and Nature Protection (2019): Report on the state of nature in the Republic of Croatia for the period 2013-2017. Ministry of Environment and Energy, Zagreb, <https://cutt.ly/vkzWclw>

33 Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention), <https://rm.coe.int/1680479eb9>

34 More information on the Emerald network can be found here <https://www.coe.int/en/web/bern-convention/emerald-network>

35 Office fédéral de l'environnement OFEV, Fiche d'information: Aires consacrées à la protection et à la promotion de la biodiversité en Suisse, 22 September 2017. <https://cutt.ly/CkzW9uY>

found in Paklenica National Park and the Northern Velebit National Park) are on the UNESCO World (Natural) Heritage list³⁶, while in Switzerland the areas Monte San Giorgio, Swiss Alps Jungfrau-Aletsch and the Swiss Tectonic Arena Sardona belong to the same list. Apart from that, both countries have two areas on the Biosphere Reserve list³⁷ (UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere programme³⁸) – Velebit mountain and the cross-border biosphere reserve Mura-Drava-Danube in Croatia and Val Müstair-Parc Nazional and Entlebuch in Switzerland. Five areas from Croatia can be found on the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance list³⁹, and 11 areas from Switzerland. Finally, Croatia has two areas (Papuk Geopark and the Vis Archipelago Geopark) on the European⁴⁰ and World⁴¹ Geoparks Network list, while Switzerland currently doesn't have any areas on those lists.

Based on the given data, several general comparisons can be made between the two nature protection systems. Firstly, it can be stated that the national categorisation system for the protected areas in Croatia is simpler and more consistent (only 9 national categories), while the Swiss system is a lot more complex and less uniform, especially at cantonal and local level (over 300 different "categories"). Also, the data on Croatian protected areas is a lot more organised and easier to access, which makes the system more transparent.

If we compare the total protected surface areas in the two countries, from Table 1 it can be observed that in Croatia, 8.68% of state territory is protected in one of the national categories. If we add the areas from the ecological network Natura 2000, about a third of the Croatian territory is under some type of protection. This is also where the Swiss situation is more complicated because different sources provide different numbers, depending on the criteria for the selection of areas that are to be considered protected. According to the BAFU/OFEV data for 2017 (Table 2), 6.24% of the Swiss territory is protected in one of the categories of national importance, but that number increases to 9.33% if areas of cantonal and local importance are added. Apart from these two main categories, BAFU/OFEV also mentions "other" areas (that include areas protected by international convention, such as Ramsar and Emerald sites) and specifies the total of 529.078 ha or 12.72% of state territory as the total area dedicated to the

36 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

37 <https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/wnbr>

38 UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, <https://en.unesco.org/mab>

39 <https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/sitelist.pdf>

40 http://www.eurogeoparks.org/?page_id=168

41 <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/earth-sciences/unesco-global-geoparks/list-of-unesco-global-geoparks/>

protection of biodiversity in Switzerland.⁴² Pro Natura's analysis⁴³ also indicates a figure of 12.463 km² (or 30.24% of state territory), which also includes different instruments of landscape protection that correspond to IUCN category V (such as regional nature parks).⁴⁴ If this last figure is compared to the data for Croatia (including the ecological network), which considers IUCN category V to be a protected area, it turns out that the two countries are protecting a similar percentage of state territory.

While there are 410 areas protected in one of the national categories in Croatia, in Switzerland this number currently can't be determined accurately, but based on the available data, it is safe to say that it totals several tens of thousands. Such a huge number of protected areas in Switzerland points towards their smaller average surface area⁴⁵ and larger geographical fragmentation/weaker connectivity of its network of protected areas in comparison to the situation in Croatia.

The two countries can also be compared according to the representation of particular IUCN categories. If we consider the areas protected in national categories and we take a look at the surface area in Croatia, those that clearly dominate are the areas that approximately correspond to IUCN category V (nature park, regional park and important landscape – in total, these make up just over 80% of the surface area of all areas protected in one of the national categories). Natura 2000 areas cover by far the largest surface area among the protected areas in Croatia, but they are not officially classified in one of IUCN's categories. According to the establishment goals, these areas would perhaps be most similar to IUCN category IV, but in terms of governance, most Natura areas would probably be more likely to correspond to IUCN category V.⁴⁶

At federal level in Switzerland (the only one for which BAFU/OFEV specifies categorisation according to IUCN), IUCN category IV clearly dominates (federal hunting reserves, waterbird reserves and habitats of national importance, excluding high marshes – over 90% of areas protected at federal level). If we also consider other instruments for landscape protection that BAFU/OFEV doesn't consider as protected areas

42 Office fédéral de l'environnement OFEV, Fiche d'information: Aires consacrées à la protection et à la promotion de la biodiversité en Suisse, 22 September 2017, [Table 4. https://cutt.ly/CkzW9uY](https://cutt.ly/CkzW9uY)

43 Urs Tester, Céline Richter, Martina Birrer (2020): Vue d'ensemble sur les aires protégées de Suisse, Basel.

44 It is important to note that, as is the case with BAFU/OFEV, Pro Natura doesn't consider these categories as "real" protected areas, i.e. Pro Natura believes that they shouldn't be included in the 17% of land surface area that Switzerland needs to protect to meet Aichi Target 11.

45 For example, in Switzerland the average surface area of a wetlands type of protected area is just 2.8 ha, Urs Tester, Céline Richter, Martina Birrer (2020): Vue d'ensemble sur les aires protégées de Suisse, Basel.

46 Of course, important parts of the Natura 2000 network in Croatia spatially overlap with areas that could correspond to other IUCN categories (e.g. national parks).

(e.g. regional nature parks), then IUCN category V is also the most represented category in Switzerland.

It is also interesting to note that Switzerland protects considerably more territory in IUCN's "strictest" category Ia, which presupposes the free development of nature without human interventions (19.000 ha or 0.46% of territory compared to 2.400 ha or 0.03% of territory in Croatia). On the other hand, IUCN category II, to which all Croatian national parks correspond and which occupies more than 10% of areas protected in national categories, is hardly at all present in Switzerland.⁴⁷

Finally, it should be noted that a comparison between two nature protection systems cannot be complete without an analysis of concrete measures taken in protected areas and their efficiency in achieving the set objectives. However, that type of analysis is beyond the scope of this publication.

GOVERNANCE OF PROTECTED AREAS IN CROATIA AND SWITZERLAND

A distinction should first be made between the terms "management" and "governance", since the two terms are often confused. The term "management" denotes activities carried out for meeting certain objectives (what is being done), while the term "governance" implies who is deciding on these objectives, how decisions are made, who has the authority, i.e. who has the jurisdiction. In this chapter, we mainly focus on the governance of protected areas in the sense of jurisdiction.

IUCN differentiates between four main types of governance, with several subtypes⁴⁸ (Table 3). Only type A can be currently found in Croatia, which means that the jurisdiction is held by the government at state, county (regional) and local level. This type of jurisdiction is "marked by a relatively centralised form of system organisation in which one or several authorities (e.g. the Government, ministries, counties, cities or municipalities) assume the authority, the responsibilities and the obligations for establishing PAs, for setting their conservation objectives and developing and implementing their management plans."⁴⁹

Nature protection tasks in the Republic of Croatia are handled by the ministry competent for the protection of the environment and nature as well as district (regional) self-government departments competent for the protection of nature, with the exception of those tasks transferred to the competence of another governing body under the Nature Protection Act or other regulation (Nature Protection Act, Art. 13).

Protected areas in the Republic of Croatia are governed by public institutions (PI) established for this purpose. Public institutions that govern national parks and nature parks are established by the Government of the Republic of Croatia, while public institutions for governing other protected areas and/or other protected parts of nature are established by representative bodies of district (regional) and local self-government units (Nature Protection Act, Art. 130).

Public institutions for national park or nature park governance also govern areas of the ecological network, where this network spatially overlaps with one of these two protection categories, while other parts of the ecological network are governed by public institutions for the governance of other protected areas and/or other protected parts of nature, according to the jurisdictions defined by

⁴⁸ Dudley, N (ed.) 2008, Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland, <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/PAG-021.pdf>

⁴⁹ State Institute for Nature Protection, Analysis of the state of nature in the Republic of Croatia 2008–2012, 2014. <https://cutt.ly/lk2EWAT>

⁴⁷ According to Pro Natura's assessment, the only protected area in Switzerland that could currently correspond to this category is the Sihlwald Nature Discovery Park.

Table 3 Types of PA governance according to IUCN

Governance type	Subtypes	Description
A Governance by government	Federal or national ministry or agency	"The state retains comprehensive control over the protected area and makes all major decisions but may delegate planning or day-to-day management tasks to other entities (e.g. NGOs, private entities or the community)."
	Sub-national ministry or agency	
	Government-delegated management (e.g., to an NGO)	
B Shared governance	Transboundary management	It is based on institutional mechanisms and processes by which jurisdiction and responsibility are shared between several actors, formally and / or informally appointed. It is a widespread model in the world with a wide range of mechanisms and processes, most of which have not been formally adopted.
	Collaborative management	
	Joint management (pluralist management board)	
C Private governance	Individual land-owners	Includes protected areas under individual, NGO or corporate control or ownership, which in addition to nature protection may also include profit motives (profit from ecotourism or controlled hunting or the realization of tax benefits).
	Non-profit organizations (e.g., NGOs, universities)	
	For-profit organizations (e.g., landowners)	
D Governance by indigenous peoples and local communities	Indigenous peoples	Areas preserved by the efforts of indigenous peoples and local communities in which the state participates only through its (eventual) recognition of protection.
	Local communities	

Adapted based on: Iris Beneš, Participation in managing naturally valuable areas in the Republic of Croatia – An analysis of advisory models in managing protected areas and methods of community management over natural resources, 2015. <https://rb.gy/m5yugl>

the Regulation on the ecological network and the jurisdiction of public institutions governing ecological network areas (Official Gazette 80/2019). Currently, there are 19 active public institutions in the Republic of Croatia at state level (8 national parks and 11 nature parks), 21 at county and 6 at local level.⁵⁰

Public institutions are headed by a director and their work is governed by an administrative council. The director and members of the administrative council that govern the national park and nature park are appointed and dismissed by the Minister, while the director and the administrative council members of public institutions that govern other protected areas are appointed and dismissed by the executive body of the founder (district (regional) and local self-government units) (Nature Protection Act, Artt. 133 and 135).

Protected areas in the Republic of Croatia are managed based on management plans that are adopted for a period of 10 years, with the

possibility of amending and/or supplementing them after five years (Nature Protection Act, Art. 138), while annual programmes for the protection, maintenance, promotion and use of a protected area are adopted annually (Nature Protection Act, Art. 134). Both documents are adopted by the public institution's administrative council in agreement with the Ministry or the executive body of local or district (regional) self-government units (Nature Protection Act, Art. 134). Public institutions must present the draft management plan to the public (Nature Protection Act, Art. 138, paragraph 6).

The Croatian legal framework currently does not provide for other internationally recognised governance models with different competences (models B, C and D from Table 3). Although the Nature Protection Act includes a mechanism for the partial delegation of management (subtype of model A) and although under certain conditions, the care for the protected area (including the areas of the ecological network) can be entrusted to a third person (Nature Protection Act, Artt. 149-150), the respective public institution remains responsible for

⁵⁰ For a list and links to public institutions' websites see <https://cutt.ly/4k2EHW8>



Mura-Drava Regional Park / photo: Davorin Mance

Table 4 An overview of the legal basis and competence over the implementation of various instruments of nature protection in Switzerland

	Instrument of protection	Legal basis	Contract with public partners	Contract with private partners	Cantonal ordinance / decree on the protection	Municipal ordinance on the protection	Authority responsible for the implementation	Guaranteed by the cantonal master plan	Guaranteed by the landscape plan	IUCN category
1	Swiss National Park (1914)	LFPN	x		x		CFPN	x	x	Ia
2	National park, core zone according to LPN (since 2005)	LPN			x	x	Municipalities	x	x	II
3	National park, peripheral zone according to LPN (since 2005)	LPN					Municipalities			V
4	Regional nature park according to LPN (since 2005)	LPN					Municipalities			V
5	Nature discovery park according to LPN (since 2005)	LPN				x	AG			II
6	High and transitional marshes of national importance (since 1991)	LPN	x				Cantons	x	x	I / IV
7	Low marshes of national importance (since 1990)	LPN	x				Cantons	x	x	IV
8	Alluvial areas of national importance (since 1991)	LPN					Cantons	x	x	I / IV
9	Amphibian breeding sites of national importance (since 1991)	LPN	x				Cantons	x	x	IV
10	Dry meadows and pastures of national importance (since 2010)	LPN	x				Cantons	x	x	IV
11	Mires and mire landscapes of outstanding beauty and national importance (since 1996)	LPN			x		Cantons	x		IV + V
12	Landscapes, sites and natural monuments of national importance (IFP list) (since 1977)	LPN					Confed.	(x)		III, V
13	Areas with ordinances on the compensation for losses suffered from opting out of using hydropower generation (OCFH) (since 1995)	LEaux	x				Confed.			V
14	Federal hunting reserves (since 1991 with new protection objectives)	LChP					Cantons			IV
15	Reserves for waterbirds and migratory birds of international and national importance (since 1991)	LChP					Cantons			IV
16	Forest reserves (since 1991)	LFo	x				Cantons			Ib / IV
17	Cantonal areas for the protection of wild animals	LChP					Cantons			IV
18	Zones in which the disturbance of wild animals is prohibited	LChP					Cantons			?
19	Fish protection zones	LFSP					Cantons			IV
20	Cantonal protected areas	Cant.			x		Cantons	x		I-V
21	Municipal protected areas	Cant.				x	Municipalities		x	I-V
22	Areas protected in cantonal master plans (in LAT since 1979)	LAT					Cantons	x		I-VI
23	Objects listed in cantonal master plans (in LAT since 1979)	LAT					Cantons	x		I-V
24	Areas protected in municipal master plans (in LAT since 1979)	LAT					Municipalities		x	I-VI
25	Areas protected under private law	CO		x			Privat.			I, III, IV, V

the management regardless. However, not even that mechanism has come to fruition *de jure*, although there is at least one example where it applies *de facto*. Specifically, the example in question is the Gajna significant landscape which, in agreement with the Public Institution for the Management of Protected Natural Values in the Brod-Posavina County, has been successfully managed by the non-governmental association Brod ecological society (Brodsko ekološko društvo – BED) for years.⁵¹ The reason why this is only a *de facto* example is because the relationship between the Public Institution and BED has not been legally regulated as delegated management.

The problem of overlapping jurisdictions, which stems from other laws relevant to the protection of nature, especially those regulating the management of natural resources, spatial planning and protection of the environment (e.g. air, water, sea, soil, forests), should definitely be mentioned in the context of analysing the governance of protected areas in Croatia. This kind of situation requires close cooperation between the nature protection sector and other relevant sectors in the Republic of Croatia and an active contribution in developing the legislation that regulates these sectors in order for nature protection measures to also be integrated into sectoral laws and to avoid provisions that might be in direct contradiction to the Nature Protection Act.

Just like the matter of categorising protected areas, the situation in Switzerland is in this case also more complicated due to the system being a lot more decentralised, the complex distribution of responsibilities between the federal and cantonal levels and the larger diversity of the types of jurisdiction over protected areas in comparison to Croatia. An overview of different nature protection instruments in Switzerland and the responsibilities for their implementation can be found in Table 4.

⁵¹ Gajna was protected in 1990 at the initiative of BED, who was then entrusted with supervision over the implementation of measures and requirements of nature protection in cooperation with inspection services. The PI for the Management of Protected Natural Values in the Brod-Posavina County has been formally governing Gajna since its founding in 2007. <http://www.bed.hr/EN/0%20onarna.html>

According to Article 78, paragraph 1 of the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation⁵², the cantons are responsible for nature protection. Later in the same Article, however, it is stated that the Confederation will take nature protection into account in performing its duties, that it will protect places of interest for nature protection and preserve them in intact form if required to do so in the public interest (paragraph 2), that it can support the efforts taken for nature protection and acquire ownership over or preserve areas of national importance (paragraph 3) and that it shall legislate on the protection of animal and plant life and on the preservation of their natural habitats and their diversity (paragraph 4). Article 79 of the Constitution states that the Confederation shall lay down principles on fishing and hunting and in particular on the preservation of the diversity of fish species, wild mammals and birds.

The main responsibility for the implementation of the Federal Act on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage (LPN, Art. 24f) lies with the cantons (unless implementation is assigned to the Confederation), which are also responsible for introducing all other necessary regulations. The Confederation's role is to supervise the implementation of the Act and to coordinate between cantons and relevant federal bodies (LPN, Art. 24g). Criminal prosecution in the event of the infringement of the Act also falls under the competence of the cantons (LPN, Art. 24d).

According to the Ordinance on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage (OPN, Art. 23, paragraph 1)⁵³, the main federal body having competence over the protection of nature and landscapes is the Federal Office for the Environment (BAFU/OFEV). The Federal Council (the Swiss government), according to the Federal Act on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage (LPN), is also to appoint one or more advisory commissions for the protection of nature, while cantons designate

⁵² Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19995395/index.html>

⁵³ Ordinance on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage (OPN), <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19910005/index.html#23>

LFPN = Federal Act on the Swiss National Park in the Canton of Graubünden, <https://cutt.ly/mk3V9MB>
 CFPN = Federal National Park Commission, <https://cutt.ly/Ck3VZed>
 LPN = Federal Act on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19660144/index.html>
 AG = Canton of Aargau
 OCFH = Ordinance on Compensation of Losses in Hydropower Use, <https://cutt.ly/uk3BoGu>
 LEaux = Federal Act on the Protection of Waters, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19910022/index.html>
 LChP = Federal Act on Hunting and the Protection of Wild Mammals and Birds, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/19860156/index.html>
 LFo = Federal Forest Act, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19910255/index.html>
 LFSP = Federal Fisheries Act, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/19910137/index.html>
 LAT = Federal Act on Spatial Planning, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19790171/index.html>
 CO = Federal Act on the Amendment of the Swiss Civil Code, <https://cutt.ly/8k3BQGF>
 Confed. = responsibility of the Swiss Confederation
 Cant. = cantonal legislation
 Privat. = responsibility of the nature protection organisations and/or private persons

Table according to: Urs Tester, Céline Richter, Martina Birrer (2020): *Vue d'ensemble sur les aires protégées de Suisse*, Basel.



Common terns (*Sterna hirundo*), Natura 2000 area Sava kod Hrušćice / photo: Tomica Rubinić

their own expert bodies (LPN, Art. 25). The full title of the advisory commission at federal level is the Federal Commission for the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage (ENHK/CFNP) (OPN, Art. 23, paragraph 4), while its members and president are elected by the Federal Council (OPN, Art. 24, paragraph 1). Except for advising various federal and cantonal bodies in relation to matters of nature protection, the Commission's role is also to prepare and revise inventories of sites of national importance, as well as to prepare expert opinions related to projects that might have a harmful effect on such areas (OPN, Art. 25).

Cantons are obliged to inform BAFU/OFEV on the establishment of their own expert bodies for the protection of nature (OPN, Art. 26), adopting their own laws on nature protection, and on various types of decisions, especially if they can affect areas of national importance (OPN, Art. 27). BAFU/OFEV is responsible for monitoring the overall biodiversity status, for evaluating the implementation of legally required measures, as well as for assessing their suitability (OPN, Art. 27a).

The Confederation also has a role in financing the protection of nature. Therefore, it can also provide financial assistance to cantons as well as various environmental organisations for site protection (LPN, Art. 13, 14, 18d, 23c). Apart from this, the Confederation may also purchase or safeguard an area of national importance, whereby it may assign responsibility for administration to cantons, municipalities or organisations (LPN, Art. 15), while in the event of immediate danger, federal bodies may temporarily place an area under federal protection and order the implementation of emergency measures for its protection (LPN, Art. 16).

To put it more simply, it could be said that cantons (but also municipalities and environmental organisations) are responsible for implementing the majority of the concrete protective measures on-site, while the Confederation's role is to ensure the adoption of necessary regulations at federal level, to coordinate and oversee their implementation, and to provide professional, financial and other assistance to other actors involved in nature protection. Apart from this, lower levels of government (cantonal, municipal), but also various non-state actors, have been granted considerable autonomy in taking additional nature protection initiatives at regional and local level. This distribution of roles mostly also applies to protected areas of national importance.

For example, the Federal Council, after consulting with the cantons, compiles lists of habitats of national importance⁵⁴ (in form of special ordinances, including their locations and conservation objectives), but the protection and maintenance of these habitats is also the cantons' obligation (LPN, Art. 18a). Cantons agree with BAFU/OFEV on the measures to be taken for the protection of habitats of national importance and on the amount of federal funding necessary for them to be carried out (OPN, Artt. 17 and 18).⁵⁵

Something similar also applies to waterbird and migratory bird reserves of national and international importance and to federal hunting reserves declared under the Federal Act on Hunting and the Protection of Wild Mammals and Birds (LChP).

⁵⁴ These lists are not exhaustive, but they get revised regularly and complemented if necessary.

⁵⁵ All of the above also applies to mires and mire landscapes of outstanding beauty and national importance (LPN, Artt. 23a-23c and OPN, Art. 22).

The main responsibility for the enforcement of this law is again borne by the cantons (OChP, Art. 15), while BAFU/OFEV is responsible for monitoring its enforcement (OChP, Art. 18). Reserves of national and international importance are defined by the Federal Council (LChP, Art. 11, paragraphs 1 and 2) in agreement with the cantons, while cantons can declare additional reserves (LChP, Art. 11, paragraph 4). The Federal Council adopts provisions for the protection of reserves of national and international importance and grants cantons fees for monitoring the condition of these reserves on the basis of program agreements (LChP, Art. 11, paragraph 6).

In the context of the distribution of competence over protected area management, it is also interesting to mention the example of the Swiss national park. The Federal National Park Commission (CFPN) has the highest authority for decision making within the park and its members are appointed by the Federal Council (i.e. the government). CFPN elects the members of the park's administrative body and is also responsible for ensuring the funding for its activities. The structure of CFPN's membership is especially interesting because it includes representatives of various stakeholder groups whose cooperation is important for the sustainable management of the area. Thus, 3 members represent Pro Natura (as the organisation that initiated the founding of the park and a regular donor), 2 represent the Swiss Confederation, 2 represent the Swiss Academy of Science, 1 represents the canton of Graubünden and 1 represents the municipalities in the park's area.⁵⁶

Finally, it could be concluded that the Swiss nature protection system is a lot more complex and diverse in comparison to the Croatian one in terms of jurisdiction over the management of protected areas. Even though IUCN jurisdiction type A (governance by government) also dominates in

⁵⁶ <https://cutt.ly/6zXjbBC>

Switzerland, the majority of the nature protection responsibilities are borne by regional and local levels of government (even in the case of protected areas of national importance). Apart from that, lower levels of government have great autonomy in adopting their own regulations in the field of nature protection and declaring their own protected areas. Also, it is common practice in Switzerland to delegate management over protected areas to lower levels of government and non-governmental organisations.

As already mentioned, apart from the areas protected at federal, cantonal and local level, there is also a network of private protected areas in Switzerland that is not negligible despite being considerably smaller in size.⁵⁷ Those areas correspond to IUCN governance type C – private governance.

The fact that an area can be simultaneously protected in several different categories through the work of different levels of government and/or non-governmental actors (private owners, NGOs...), and the resulting complex overlaps, this often leads towards the need to coordinate the various stakeholders' efforts of nature protection through a number of formalised bodies and procedures for reaching joint decisions. Therefore, many protected areas in Switzerland could maybe also correspond to IUCN governance type B – shared governance.

⁵⁷ Such areas are mostly managed by Pro Natura, whether as direct land owner or via long-term contracts with other owners. Pro Natura manages some of these areas directly, while in other cases, management is delegated to other associations. For as many of its areas as possible, they are trying to create management plans with clearly set objectives, measures necessary for meeting them and monitoring of what has been achieved.



A dead arm next to the river Mura, Zabnik / photo: Davorin Mance

INCLUDING STAKEHOLDERS IN THE GOVERNANCE OF PROTECTED AREAS

Except in the case of the strictest protection categories (which usually represent only a small share of a country's protected area network), the fact that a natural area is protected does not mean that all human activities are prohibited there. In fact, it is not uncommon that the features due to which an area was declared protected are a direct consequence of specific human activities and the traditional way of space management. Therefore, management of protected areas mostly comes down to managing human activities in these areas, whether by prohibiting or limiting activities that are detrimental to the long-term preservation of the area's features, or by fostering those that improve it.

This is often not an easy task at all because of the, in many cases, complex structure of the users of the space (local community, public companies that manage certain natural resources such as forests and waters, other economic entities, hunters, fishermen...), complex ownership situations as well as overlaps in jurisdiction and regulations between nature protection and other sectors. This is why the successful protection of areas can only be achieved by actively engaging all relevant stakeholders, especially the local community that lives in that area.

Engaging stakeholders in the management of protected areas has long ago been recognised worldwide as key for ensuring long-term sustainability of these areas, and the awareness on this matter has also been increasing in Croatia in recent years.

There are multiple advantages of such engagement. Firstly, it allows for the collection of data from locations to be more successful and for it to circulate between individuals and institutions faster. It also allows for particular problems to be viewed from several different perspectives, while the inclusion of experts from various fields increases the quality of the decision making. Furthermore, including stakeholders in the decision making increases the legitimacy of these decisions in the public eye and contributes to an easier and improved implementation on-site. Finally, such practices play an important educational role in the sense of increasing the (local) community's interest for nature protection, while also contributing to the overall democratisation of society and larger transparency of the institutions.

Of course, including stakeholders in the governance of protected areas also carries certain disadvantages and risks. Every form of public consultations requires time and may slow down the decision making process. There is also a possibility that some stakeholders may abuse the process to block the decision making for particular decisions and/or participate in it just to acquire information of personal interest. Including

stakeholders also requires certain human and financial capacities that may pose a problem, primarily to smaller public institutions. Based on the existing on-site experiences however, the vast majority of Swiss and Croatian institutions in charge of nature protection that were consulted during this project still tend to conclude that the advantages of including stakeholders after all outweigh the disadvantages.

The public can be included in the decision making on the management of protected areas in various ways – from setting up polls, focus groups, public discussions and including stakeholders in the creation of planning documents, up to organising more permanent consultative bodies such as collaborative councils.

The trend of ever-greater involvement of stakeholders in the governance of protected areas is also getting more pronounced in Croatia, and this was also confirmed by the results of the survey⁵⁸ conducted within this project among public institutions governing the protected parts of nature. The research was carried out between November 2020 and February 2021, and it involved 40 out of 46 public institutions (including all 8 national parks, 10 out of 11 nature parks, 20 out of 21 county public institutions and 2 out of 6 local public institutions).

60% of the surveyed public institutions stated that they are allotting funds for engaging the public in protected area management, while 77% of public institutions have a person appointed for informing the public. Regarding the protected area management plans, 55% of public institutions stated that they included the public in their creation, while the vast majority of the rest didn't do so because the plans still don't exist or they have just started creating them and intend to include stakeholders in due time.

An especially interesting model of structured involvement of the local community and other stakeholders in protected area management that has been gaining popularity in Croatia in the recent years is the founding of collaborative councils. These are (more or less) formalised bodies that meet periodically and include the representatives of stakeholders relevant to the sustainable use and management of a protected area. This model of including stakeholders is currently used by 25%⁵⁹ of surveyed public institutions, while 70% of those that still don't use it are considering its implementation⁶⁰.

⁵⁸ For detailed survey results see: <http://zelena-akcija.hr/hr/s/anketapzp>

⁵⁹ The surveyed public institutions with more or less active collaborative councils include: The Lastovo Islands Nature Park (2 councils, 1 active, 1 inactive), the Lonjsko polje Nature Park (3 councils), the Telašćica Nature Park (2 councils), the Zumberak-Samoborsko gorje Nature Park, the Public Institutions of Brod-Posavina, Istria, Karlovac, Zadar and Zagreb (2 councils) Counties and the local Public Institution of Cave Park Grabovača. The collaborative council founded by Medvednica Nature Park is no longer functional, but there are plans for founding a new one and the public institution is engaged in other bodies' stakeholder councils.

⁶⁰ Those public institutions that are not interested in implementing this model name the following as the main reasons: insufficient capacities, the lack of interest by stakeholders, assessments that conclude that there is no real need to form such bodies, but also the lack of a legal framework which could regulate the council's activities.



Lonjsko polje Nature Park's public institution was the pioneer of using this model in Croatia and it formed its collaborative council back in 2004 (Lonjsko polje Nature Park also holds the record for the highest number of formed councils – with a total of 3), while the large majority of other collaborative councils were founded after the year 2012. 80% of the surveyed public institutions with functional collaborative councils regulated the work of their councils using some form of statute/guidelines. Among the surveyed public institutions that don't have functioning collaborative councils, 83% stated that they occasionally organise some other types of meetings with stakeholders, mostly revolving around a specific theme, but sometimes also general ones.

As many as 97% of the surveyed public institutions stated that they organise joint activities with local communities and NGOs. Some of the most commonly mentioned ones are various volunteer actions (e.g. waste cleanups, track maintenance, etc.), various educational programmes, including school and kindergarten activities, organising various public discussions, round-table discussions and workshops, celebrating important environmental dates, participating in various events and fairs and joint projects with NGOs, including the cooperation in collecting data on species and habitats.

60% of the surveyed public institutions stated that they have formed some type of cooperation with local family farms, craftspeople and other local producers. This mostly refers to the promotion and sale of local products in the public institution's premises, making souvenirs, organising fairs and other events, joint projects in the field of ecotourism, supplying restaurants and hotels within the protected areas with local products and educating the local population on ecological production.

Although these numbers point towards numerous positive developments in this area, it should be noted that this practice isn't uniform and the level of stakeholder inclusion in protected area governance still depends greatly on the capacities and willingness of individual public institutions (or even its current administrative council). In that respect, there is still plenty of room for these local examples of good practice to become more commonplace, as well as for learning from colleagues from other countries. We will therefore provide several examples from Switzerland in the following chapters, with special emphasis on the regional nature park model which we had the opportunity of acquainting ourselves with during the study visit organised as part of this project.

REGIONAL NATURE PARK – A NEW MODEL OF NATURE PROTECTION IN SWITZERLAND

In the last ten or so years, Switzerland has seen a real boom in new parks dedicated to nature protection. The 2006 amendments to the Federal Act on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage (LPN) formed the legal basis and the incentive for this turn of events⁶¹. Article 23e of the said law defines three types of “parks of national importance” – the national park, the regional nature park and the nature discovery park.

The national park is defined as a large area that provides unspoiled habitats to the indigenous flora and fauna, and which allows the landscape to evolve naturally. Apart from that, the national park also serves a recreational, educational and scientific purpose, and it is subdivided into a core zone with limited access for the general public and a transition zone, where the landscape is managed in a near-natural manner and is protected against detrimental interventions (LPN, Art. 23f).

The regional nature park is a large, partially inhabited area characterised by rich natural and cultural heritage, whose facilities and other infrastructure harmoniously blend into the landscape. The development of sustainable economic activities and the promotion of goods and services produced in that manner are encouraged within the park (LPN, Art. 23g). There is no zoning in regional nature parks, i.e. there are no strictly protected core zones.⁶²

Finally, a nature discovery park is an area located in the vicinity of a densely populated territory (it mustn't be more than 20 km away from the centre of an agglomeration and it has to be easily accessible by public transport⁶³) that offers unspoiled habitats to the indigenous flora and fauna and allows the general public to experience nature. It is also subdivided into a core zone with limited access and a transition zone (LPN, Art. 23h).

Most newly-founded parks of national importance

⁶¹ The amendments came into force in 2007.

⁶² However, there can be areas within the borders of the regional nature park that are protected in other categories and to which different stricter protective measure could apply. The management of such areas is not under the jurisdiction of the park, but of the canton (or of the NGO/individual owners in the case of private protected areas).

⁶³ Ordinance on Parks of National Importance, Article 22, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/20071162/index.html#a22>

belong to the category of regional nature parks⁶⁴, which is why the following part will focus on this particular park category, the other reason being that they are drivers of sustainable regional development.

It should be emphasised that the establishment of new parks of national importance is based on a deeply democratic process. The initiative for the establishment of a park must come from the region itself and for the park to be established it must be supported by the majority of that area's population. It is interesting to note that the majority of the responsibility and authority for the implementation of the park project lies with the included municipalities, while the cantonal role is in most cases secondary. Again, the role of the federal level comes down to adopting the legal framework (including defining the criteria for obtaining the status of a park of national importance), supervising its implementation and providing professional and financial assistance.

If the park meets certain criteria, the Federal Office for the Environment (BAFU/OFEV) awards it the label "Park of National Importance" which is valid for 10 years and, among other things, opens the possibility of federal financing⁶⁵. One of the requirements for receiving the label is the adoption of a charter/statute (including a 10-year management plan) with clearly set objectives for the park and measures for meeting them⁶⁶. It is also important to prove the capacities for professional and effective park management.

As already mentioned, due to the relatively mild protection regime⁶⁷, most official sources don't even consider regional nature parks as protected areas. Still, in terms of their purpose and objectives, regional parks approximately correspond to IUCN category V of protected areas.

Pütz and associates⁶⁸ have identified tree main

64 Out of 16 parks of national importance founded after 2006, as many as 15 fall into the category of regional nature park (two out of those – Val Müstair and Entlebuch – have been protected as UNESCO biosphere reserves even before the law was amended and were subsequently also awarded the status of regional nature park), and only one (Wildnispark Zürich Sihlwald) into the category of nature discovery park. For now, Switzerland has only one national park, founded in 1914. The most intense period of founding new parks was between 2010 and 2013 when a total of 14 parks were founded. Currently (as at February 2021) two more areas are waiting for their status to be awarded – one in the category of regional nature park and the other in the category of nature discovery park. Information source: https://www.parks.swiss/en/the_swiss_parks/

65 After 10 years, municipalities can reconsider if they want to take part in the park project and new municipalities can also be included (the park can also be abolished if there is no sufficient interest among the municipalities).

66 Each regional nature park has three statutory missions: the conservation of nature and landscape and the improvement of their status, boosting the local economy based on sustainable development and raising environmental awareness through education (Ordinance on Parks of National Importance, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/20071162/index.html>).

67 There is no limitation of human activity within the park and the preservation of the area's value is primarily ensured through recommendations and awareness-raising by working with the local community.

68 Pütz, Marco & Gubler, Lena & Willi, Yasmine. (2017). New governance of protected areas: regional nature parks in Switzerland. *eco.mont.* 9. 75-84. DOI: 10.1553/eco.mont-9-sis75.

types of regional nature park organisation: (I) parks organised as associations (most parks), (II) parks affiliated to single municipalities and (III) parks associated with regional development bodies. The membership of parks organised as associations can include municipalities, local companies, NGOs and individual members.

The regional nature parks established thus far exhibit substantial variability in surface areas (136–548 km²), population (1.200–41.500), number of municipalities included in the park project (1–30) and in the number of members in the association (79–633).⁶⁹

The sources of funding for regional nature parks include payments from federal and cantonal governments, membership fees (municipalities contribute the most⁷⁰), donations from foundations and economic entities and their own sources (organising sightseeing tours, educational programmes, the sale of souvenirs and publications, certifying products, etc.). For the majority of parks, the largest part of the budget comes from the federal level (around one third on average)⁷¹, the cantons contribute around one fourth and membership fees yield around 10% revenue on average. Of course, there are major differences between parks in the importance of their respective funding sources (e.g. Entlebuch Park generates almost 60% of its revenue from its own sources and donations). The absolute budget size can also vary considerably depending on the park's size and activities (in 2014 the range was 620.000–2.830.000 CHF).⁷²

As already mentioned, most regional nature parks are organised as associations of a larger number of stakeholders. The main governing bodies consist of a board, which has a key role in setting the park's strategic orientation, and a management body which holds the executive power. The park's board consists of representatives of the municipalities involved in the park project (which, according to the law, always have the majority in the board), but it can also include representatives of other local stakeholders, for example, of agriculture, forestry, tourism, environmental NGO-s, unions, cantonal authorities (rarely) and others. The park's executive management body consists of employed qualified professionals who may or may not be members of the park (i.e. of the association).

69 The information source for the surface areas, population and number of municipalities (as at February 2021): https://www.parks.swiss/en/the_swiss_parks/; for the number of members in the association Pütz et al. (2017).

70 In the case of Jura Vaudois Regional Nature Park, the municipalities pay an annual membership fee of 6 CHF per capita.

71 Federal funding is awarded in four-year cycles and in order to apply for funding at national level, apart from 10-year management plans, parks are required to prepare 4-year plans. According to Pütz et al. (2017), the Confederation's planned financing for all parks of national importance for the period 2016–2019 amounted to 67.9 million CHF with 37.2 million CHF dedicated to regional nature parks.

72 Pütz et al. (2017).

Except for these formal structures, parks also use an array of other platforms and mechanisms for including stakeholders⁷³. Some of them are (more or less formal) consultative bodies open for all interested individuals, referendums that are carried out within the park, consultative bodies that are convened by the park's board or permanent thematic working groups⁷⁴. Elected local politicians (representatives of municipalities) holding seats on the park's board also ensure an additional channel of indirect participation for the local population.

Considering its bottom-up structure, the efficiency of the regional nature park in achieving its set goals depends largely on the level of support the park receives from the local population. This in turn depends on how successfully the park's initiators communicated the purpose of the park's establishment and the benefit it holds for the entire region to the local stakeholders, and on their success in including the stakeholders in individual phases of the park's establishment and motivating them to participate in various consultative bodies and activities once the park was established. There is a certain degree of variability between different regional parks in this matter as well.⁷⁵

During the study visit to Switzerland which was organised in October 2019 as part of this project, we could acquaint ourselves with concrete examples of how this model is implemented in practice. The following chapter will set out the experiences of the two regional parks collected during that visit.

73 Including the local population and other interested stakeholders in the establishment and management of the park is a legal obligation in Switzerland laid down in Article 25, paragraph 3 of the Ordinance on Parks of National Importance, <https://cutt.ly/3zXIPql>.

74 In some parks, permanent working groups also have their representatives in the park's board.

75 Pütz et al. (2017).

PRODUCT CERTIFICATION

Apart from the possibility of federal funding, by acquiring the status of a park of national importance, the park's management body also gains the right to certify products and services produced by local companies (LPN, Art. 23j).

The main criteria for awarding a certificate is the product's origin – at least 70% of the product's ingredients must be produced within the park's borders. Through this (national) system, only products can be certified and not producers, but some parks have also developed their own certificates intended for producers.

Just like the status of a park of national importance itself, the product certificate is awarded only for a limited time, with the possibility of extension.



La Pierreuse (Pro Natura's reserve inside the Gruyère-Pays d'Enhaut Regional Nature Park) / photo: Antoine Burri

CASE STUDIES

GRUYÈRE-PAYS D'ENHAUT REGIONAL NATURE PARK

With its surface area of 503 km², Gruyère-Pays d'Enhaut Regional Nature Park is one of the larger regional parks in Switzerland. 13 municipalities with around 14,500 inhabitants are involved in this park project⁷⁶. What is also interesting is that the park is situated on the territory of two cantons – Fribourg and Vaud – which additionally emphasises its regional character.

The park was awarded the park of national importance label from the federal authorities for the period 2012–2021 and the project for the period 2022–2031 is being drafted, which should include two additional municipalities.

The park is organised as an association whose assembly consists of 650 members.⁷⁷ The park is governed by a council with 13 representatives of the municipalities and 12 “private persons”. The park's other bodies include the committee

76 <https://cutt.ly/CkzREp8>, <https://www.gruyerepaysdenhaut.ch/en/>

77 As at October 2019.

(4 representatives of the municipalities and 4 private persons) and various (thematic) commissions⁷⁸. Apart from that, the park uses so-called “platforms” as forums which assemble various stakeholders to discuss and express their opinions and ideas on a particular topic.

The park's staff has increased from four to 11 employees⁷⁹ and it includes 2 park coordinators, a bookkeeper and 8 project leaders and collaborators. The park also employs 2–3 interns.

A maximum of 50% of the park money comes from the federal state, the cantons contribute 22–30%, municipalities 10–12%, while the rest of the revenue is provided by the park itself (projects, product sales, etc.). An especially interesting feature of the budget are items for the so-called “adaptable projects” which can be used flexibly, depending on the real needs, interests and wishes of the local population at a given moment.

The projects in which the park is trying to include the local community are diverse, such as educational programmes for local schoolchildren (including not only the theoretical part, but also the implementation

78 According to the park's current project, three commissions are statutory (agriculture, tourism, nature protection), but there are also others (forestry, energy, mobility, communication, product labelling, work with schools).

79 As at March 2019.

of practical on-site projects, such as building insect hotels), work with local farmers to encourage them to accept biodiversity increasing practices, and activities targeted at the conservation of particular species, habitats and landscape features.

This last group includes, for example, the project of encouraging the planting of fruit trees whose number has been decreasing in the region in the last 50 years and that are important habitats for birds and other organisms.⁸⁰ The amphibian protection programme is also being carried out in the park, which includes placing barriers next to roads, and there is a two-week period every spring when around 10 volunteers transport frogs across the road. Another important example of mobilising the local community is the fight against invasive species. The park then sends out calls to action for including people in invasive plant species clearing actions which also include those who are doing civilian service. These are just a few examples from the park's wide array of projects, whose success directly depends on the engagement of the local community.

Considering that one of the three main missions of each regional park is, along with nature protection and education, the development of local sustainable economy, tourism plays an important role in the park's life. The park's tourist offer is mostly based on traditional production of cheese and historical heritage, and not so much on biodiversity.⁸¹ It includes thematic footpaths, cycling tours, organised children's and adult tours, etc.

80 The park sells seedlings to locals at half price and takes over the responsibility of pruning them for the first 10 years.

81 Historically, skiing also played an important role in the region's tourist offer (the park is situated 400–2550 m above sea level), but the reduction of snowfall due to climate change prompted them to rethink their tourism strategies.

Certified products of local producers play an important role in the park's tourist offer and the development of the regional economy. Currently, over 100 products are certified (cheese, meat, honey, syrups, herbal teas), and apart for the certificates awarded to the park by BAFU/OFEV, the park has also developed its own certificate which it awards to the producers.

What is interesting is that there isn't just one visitor centre, but several thematic centres (e.g. cheese production) which distribute brochures to visitors with site maps related to the respective topic. This diversifies the tourist offer and adapts it to various types of visitors. Building visitors centres and other tourist infrastructure is under the jurisdiction of the municipalities.

The park's staff is not authorised to prohibit the visitors' activities in the larger part of its territory, but it can provide certain guidelines on the correct behaviour in nature. Sites with habitats protected at national or cantonal level (as well as “private” reserves governed by Pro Natura⁸²) where a stricter protection regime applies are an exception. The park also isn't authorised to limit the number of visitors.

82 Pro Natura is historically a very important stakeholder in the region, owning a relatively large amount of land in the area. This also includes summer mountain pastures where local farmers are encouraged towards practices that protect biodiversity.



La Pierreuse (Pro Natura's reserve inside the Gruyère-Pays d'Enhaut Regional Nature Park) / photo: Antoine Burri



Creux-du-Croux, Jura Vaudois Regional Nature Park / photo: Gilbert Paquet

JURA VAUDOIS REGIONAL NATURE PARK

The park was founded back in 1973 at the initiative of the former president of Pro Natura's branch in the Vaud Canton by means of contract between the landowners, the municipalities and Pro Natura. The original park had a considerably smaller surface area⁸³ and apart from nature protection, it was also focused on traditional agriculture and forestry. Its main goal was to stop further construction of tourist infrastructure in areas of natural value. Following the 2006 amendments to the federal law, local municipalities decided to considerably increase the park's surface area prompted by the possibility to attract federal funding into the region. In 2009, the park became a candidate for a national recognition and in 2013, the Confederation awarded it the regional nature park label (for the period 2013–2022).

The park's current surface area is 531 km², making it the second largest park in Switzerland.⁸⁴ Park Jura Vaudois, however, holds the record for the largest number of included municipalities – a total of 30. Around 35.000 inhabitants live

⁸³ In 1997 the park's surface area amounted to 50 km².

⁸⁴ After Park Ela, whose surface area is 548 km².

in these municipalities⁸⁵, while over a million people live in the park's surroundings.

60% of the park's surface area is covered by forests (including mountain pastures), 30% by agricultural land and 10% is dedicated to the infrastructure. As much as 60% of the surface area can be found on various federal lists for sites of national importance (high and low marshes, alluvial areas, dry meadows and pastures, landscapes of national importance). Capercaillies, owls, lynxes, wolves, wildcats, deer and chamois inhabit the park's area, and ant colonies building huge anthills are especially interesting (the ant is also the park's mascot).

As already stated, Pro Natura started establishing its own reserves in the area even before the cantons and the federal state started protecting it and it now manages 4.7 km² within the park's border, out of which 2.5 km² is in Pro Natura's direct ownership, while for additional 2.2 km² they have contracts with landowners. The areas managed by Pro Natura include forests, wetlands, peatlands and pastures.

The park's responsible authorities consist of the general assembly, the committee (Comité), the bureau (Bureau) and the operational team (Structure opérationnelle). The general assembly,

⁸⁵ <https://cutt.ly/zkzRVhm>, <https://parcjuraudois.ch/#>

consisting of all members of the park's association, adopts a statute and a ten-year programme and elects the president and committee members.

The committee consists of 8 representatives of the municipalities, 5 representatives of different sectors (e.g. agriculture, environmental and nature protection,...), 1 representative of the local population and 1 representative of the canton⁸⁶. All members of the park's association can run for a seat on the committee. The committee's jurisdiction includes defining the park's development strategy and supervising its implementation, suggesting amendments to the statute, proposing a 10-year programme and nominating the bureau. The members of the association do not have direct control over the members of the committee between the two assemblies, but they can remove them at the next assembly.

The park's bureau consists of 3 representatives of the municipalities, 2 representatives of sectors and 1 representative of the canton.⁸⁷ The bureau's tasks include monitoring and controlling the implementation of projects, preparing annual reports on the park management and making decisions in urgent situations.

Finally, the operational team consisting of the park's management body and associates is responsible for the implementation of projects as well as for all the other park's daily activities.

⁸⁶ The representative of the canton only has a consultative vote.

⁸⁷ The representative of the canton only has a consultative vote in the bureau as well.

The general assembly meets once per year, the committee twice per year (with a tendency of that increasing to 4 times per year) and the bureau once per month.

Except for these formal decision making bodies in which stakeholders are represented in different ways, the park also organises annual "forums" on a particular topic and invites all relevant stakeholders (municipalities, institutions, NGOs, companies, private persons) who don't even have to live/work on the park's territory. These forums don't have the power to make decisions, but the information and opinions collected during these discussions are included to the maximum possible extent in the management plans.

The park also strives to be as inclusive as possible when it comes to planning and implementing the so-called participative projects which are often developed in cooperation with tourist boards, renters and local producers. Apart from that, the park delivers newspapers with news on the park's activities to all of the area's inhabitants.

As part of the four-year financing cycle (2020–2024), the park carries out 10 groups of projects: 1. landscape heritage, 2. natural heritage: biodiversity, 3. agriculture, local products and the local economy, 4. tourism, leisure and sustainable entertainment, 5. energy and sustainable mobility, 6. raising public awareness and education on sustainable development, 7. regional identity, 8. joint work and planning, 9. communication and marketing, 10. management and quality. Additional topics to be included in the next cycle are climate change and forest protection.



Rivière Orbe, Jura Vaudois Regional Nature Park / photo: Gilbert Paquet



La Grande Cariçaie

LA GRANDE CARIÇAIE

Another interesting governance model we had the opportunity to acquaint ourselves with during our study visit to Switzerland was the model of the association “La Grande Cariçaie” that governs the wetland area of the same name by Lake Neuchâtel’s southern shore. Grande Cariçaie isn’t actually a single protected area, but it forms a mosaic of areas protected by decisions of the cantons, listed in various inventories of sites of national importance, and also often internationally recognised by being included on the Ramsar list (it is the oldest and biggest Ramsar site in Switzerland).

The first initiatives for the protection of Lake Neuchâtel’s southern shore date back to the 1940s, and one of the turning points in the protection of the area was the campaign led by Pro Natura and WWF Switzerland in the early 1980s, against the construction of a highway that was supposed to pass next to the lake’s shore. The campaign resulted in the road being moved away from the shore, while in 1982, the cantons of Vaud and Fribourg adopted an inter-cantonal spatial plan for the lake’s southern shore, signed a management contract for the area and founded the Study and management group (Groupe d’étude et de gestion – GEG) as the body responsible for taking care of the area. To somewhat simplify and systematise the complex situation that arose since

different sites were protected using various cantonal, federal and international instruments, the area was divided into 8 nature reserves during 2001 and 2002. In order to increase inclusivity, GEG was transformed into the association „La Grande Cariçaie“ in 2010.

The founding of the association was actually an attempt to gather all landowners in that area (cantons, municipalities, environmental NGOs, private owners) and to develop a functional platform for managing the area in a way that the majority of stakeholders would find acceptable, while simultaneously meeting its protection goals.

The Association’s main bodies are the general assembly, the management board (Comité directeur), the executive board (Bureau exécutif) and the scientific commission, while cantons, municipalities, NGOs and private persons/landowners are eligible for its membership.

The general assembly is the Association’s supreme body and it consists of active members and advisory members. The voting rights are defined as follows: the Canton of Fribourg 15 votes, the Canton of Vaud 15 votes, the Canton of Bern (membership under discussion) 5 votes, the Canton of Neuchâtel (membership under discussion) 2 votes, each municipality 1 vote, each NGO 1 vote, private landowners a total of 3 votes.

The management board is in charge of the project’s strategic direction and it consists of the representatives of the cantons of Vaud, Fribourg and Neuchâtel, a delegate representing the municipalities from the Canton of Vaud, a delegate representing the municipalities from the Canton of Fribourg and a delegate representing environmental NGOs. In its operations, the management board may seek advice from the scientific commission (advising the management board on scientific matters) and is accountable to the Association’s general assembly for its actions.

The majority of the Association’s operational tasks are delegated to the executive board. It consists of 9 employees responsible for organising the maintenance of non-forested wetlands, scientific monitoring of the flora and fauna, for working with visitors and informing the public, as well as for administrative and financial management. There are also two rangers working within the area who have the right to impose fines in cases of violation of the prescribed rules of conduct.

The area has a management plan for the time period 2012–2023 and an annual funding of CHF 1.7 million has been ensured for its implementation through the programme agreement set out between the Confederation and the cantons.



La Grande Cariçaie



Participants of the study visit to Switzerland, October 2019

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, the question arises as to which conclusions and recommendations are to be drawn from the Swiss experiences for a more sustainable, more transparent and more participative governance of protected areas in Croatia? Before we attempt to provide any answers, it should be reiterated that there are considerable differences in the historical development (including the evolution of the protected area network), the institutional set-up, democratic traditions, as well as the human and financial resources of the nature protection sector between these two countries. Therefore, any direct replication of the Swiss experiences and models to the Croatian situation is in most cases impossible.

On one hand, Croatia has a more unified and simpler system of categorising protected areas when compared to Switzerland, and its data is much easier to access considering there is a unique, publicly available register⁸⁸. Croatia has also declared a considerably larger ecological network and its system of protected areas is generally less fragmented and better connected than the Swiss one.⁸⁹

On the other hand, the Swiss nature protection system is characterised by greater openness towards different models of governing protected areas⁹⁰ and far more developed mechanisms of including stakeholders in the governance than is the case in Croatia. We therefore find that these areas in particular offer most leeway for learning from our Swiss colleagues.

It is important to stress how, along with all positive aspects of the participation of the local community and other stakeholders in nature protection decision making, the Swiss experience also points towards certain risks that represent the flip side of these processes. In that sense, despite the wave of founding regional nature parks following the amendments to the law in 2006, all initiatives for founding new national parks have failed at the referendum. This is because the founding of a national park imposes much greater limitations to the local communities' activities than in the case of regional nature parks.

Another reason why the regional nature park has shown to be such a successful model is because it provides an opportunity for regional economic development. Although the role of

⁸⁸ <http://www.haop.hr/hr/baze-i-portali/upisnik-zasticenih-podrucja>

⁸⁹ It is also worth mentioning within this context that the state of biodiversity in Croatia is generally better than in the case of Switzerland, but this is more likely the consequence of the delayed industrialisation in relation to the Western countries (as well as the deindustrialisation that followed in the 1990's) than of particularly successful and innovative managerial practices in Croatian protected areas.

⁹⁰ This is partially due to the very historical development of the Swiss protected area network and the role that respective actors played in different "waves" of founding protected areas (e.g. the NGOs and private owners played a pioneering role in founding the first protected areas).

protected areas as drivers of sustainable local/regional development is extremely important in ensuring the support of the local community and, consequently, their long-term protection, there is a risk that these areas' primary role (nature protection) gets neglected and that they are primarily perceived as a source of income. These tendencies, unfortunately, can be found in both countries.⁹¹

It is therefore clear that in the protection of the most valuable and most endangered constituents of biodiversity, scientific criteria should still be decisive. At the same time, the society must justly⁹² indemnify people whose activities and livelihoods are in such cases considerably limited, and additional efforts must be put into communicating the (biological/ecological) value of a particular area and the necessity of its protection to the local community and other stakeholders.

Despite these remarks, we consider that there is no alternative to further democratising the governance of protected areas because there can be no effective long term area protection without the active cooperation with the local community and other stakeholders. Certainly, democratisation in itself is no silver bullet, but systemically encouraging stakeholders to cooperate paves the way for at least some of the existing problems to be solved or at least openly discussed.

Bearing in mind the aforementioned remarks, we offer the following recommendations for sustainable, transparent and participative governance of protected areas in the Republic of Croatia:

- Continue strengthening the financial and human resources of public institutions in charge of governing the protected areas of nature, including the education of employees on the importance and potential models for engaging the local community and other stakeholders in the governance of protected areas. The results of the survey conducted among public institutions in charge of governing the protected areas of nature showed that 65% of the respondents believe that their institution does not have sufficient financial and human capacities to successfully inform and engage the public in the governance of protected areas, while 55% stated that the person in charge of informing the public in their institution is not specifically trained for this role.
- Ensure transparency in the public institutions' activities by publishing planning documents, activity reports and information on the possibilities of engaging stakeholders on the

⁹¹ For example, Pro Natura has, on a number of occasions, publicly criticised the fact that many Swiss regional nature parks focus primarily on the development of tourism and the promotion of local products and has requested that the 10-year extension of the park of national importance status be granted only to those who made genuine effort to protect the nature and the landscape.

⁹² At least equal to the total economic loss incurred.

institutions' official websites (and via printed materials where there is dedicated funding).

- Apart from state governance of protected areas (IUCN jurisdiction type A), enable other internationally recognized models (IUCN jurisdiction type B – shared governance, type C – private governance and type D – governance by local communities, including the so-called ICCAs areas⁹³) within the Croatian legal framework. Examples such as the Gajna significant landscape show that on-site conditions are already favourable and that there is sufficient interest for the implementation of such models.
- Encourage the structured involvement of stakeholders in the early stages of developing PAs management plans in order to collect all relevant information and detect potential conflicts at the very beginning of the process. Although the Nature Protection Act already imposes the obligation of making the draft of the management plan available to the public, including the public at such a late stage poses a risk of attracting many negative comments that could be prevented by earlier engagement, and unnecessarily doubles the work.
- Encourage the founding of collaborative councils and similar platforms for including stakeholders in those protected areas that still don't have them. The role of these bodies should be to exchange information and opinions on various topics relevant to the sustainable management of the area, to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation, but also to educate the stakeholders (both representatives of other sectors and the local community) on the importance of the conservation of nature. It is also particularly important to emphasise the need to elaborate the model of continually financing the work of such bodies, since previous experience in Croatia showed that their founding is often related to concrete projects, and once these are completed, the bodies are shut down or their activities are at least considerably reduced.
- Develop participative projects in protected areas while involving the local community in their planning and implementation (local NGOs, local companies, "regular" citizens).
- Open the public institutions' administrative councils to environmental NGO

⁹³ ICCAs - Indigenous peoples' conserved territories and community conserved areas. For a discussion of potential ICCAs areas in Croatia see: Iris Beneš, Participation in managing naturally valuable areas in the Republic of Croatia – An analysis of advisory models in managing protected areas and methods of community management over natural resources, 2015. <https://rb.gy/msyugl>

representatives, independent experts⁹⁴, local community representatives and other stakeholders. This is where the Swiss models, some of which are included in this publication, may serve as inspiration.

- Systematically develop cooperation between public institutions and local producers. The goal of this cooperation should be, on one hand, to ensure nature protection by educating the local population on sustainable production practices, and on the other hand, to ensure the local community's support by actively promoting local products that are produced in this manner. In this context, and modelled after Switzerland, the option of implementing and promoting a unique certificate for products produced in protected areas should also be considered, which would ensure a better market position for these products⁹⁵. In this regard it is important to emphasise that the product's geographical origin should not be the sole criteria for awarding a certificate, but that the sustainability of the production processes, which should not be harmful to people and the environment, should be taken into consideration.

Finally, it should be noted that, considering the complexity of the topic of protected area governance, even if we focus on only one country like Switzerland, this project has barely scratched the surface. We therefore believe that there is still plenty of room for exchanging experiences and studying different governance models, and we hope that this project will represent merely a first step towards developing the cooperation between Swiss and Croatian public institutions and environmental NGOs around this topic.

⁹⁴ 19 out of 40 surveyed public institutions stated that they have representatives of non-governmental organisations and/or independent experts (not nominated by political parties) in the composition of the administrative council. 7 of those cases were representatives of non-governmental organisations, 16 were independent experts, while 4 public institutions declared that they have both representatives of the non-governmental sector and independent experts in the composition of their administrative council.

⁹⁵ In Croatia, there are some sporadic examples of certifying products produced within the protected areas (e.g. the sheep's milk cheese from Učka with the label "Produced in Učka Nature Park"), but at the moment there is no unified system or certification criteria for all protected areas in Croatia.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAFU/OFEV – Bundesamt für Umwelt / Office fédéral de l'environnement (Federal Office for the Environment of the Swiss Confederation)

CH – Swiss Confederation

CHF – Swiss Franc

IIFP – Inventaire fédéral des paysages, sites et monuments naturels (the Federal Inventory of Landscapes, Sites and Natural Monuments)

IUCN – The International Union for Conservation of Nature

LChP – Loi fédérale sur la chasse et la protection des mammifères et oiseaux sauvages (Federal Act on Hunting and the Protection of Wild Mammals and Birds)

LPN – Loi fédérale sur la protection de la nature et du paysage (Federal Act on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage)

NP – national park

NGO – non-governmental organisation

OChP – Ordonnance sur la chasse et la protection des mammifères et oiseaux sauvages (Ordinance on Hunting and Protection of Wild Mammals and Birds)

OPN – Ordonnance sur la protection de la nature et du paysage (Ordinance on the Protection of Nature and Cultural Heritage)

PA – protected area

PI – public institution for the management of protected areas and/or other protected parts of nature

ZoZP – the Nature Protection Act of the Republic of Croatia

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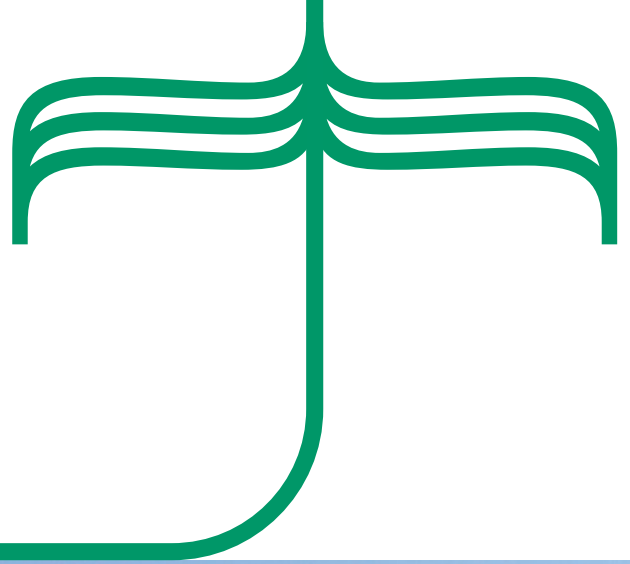
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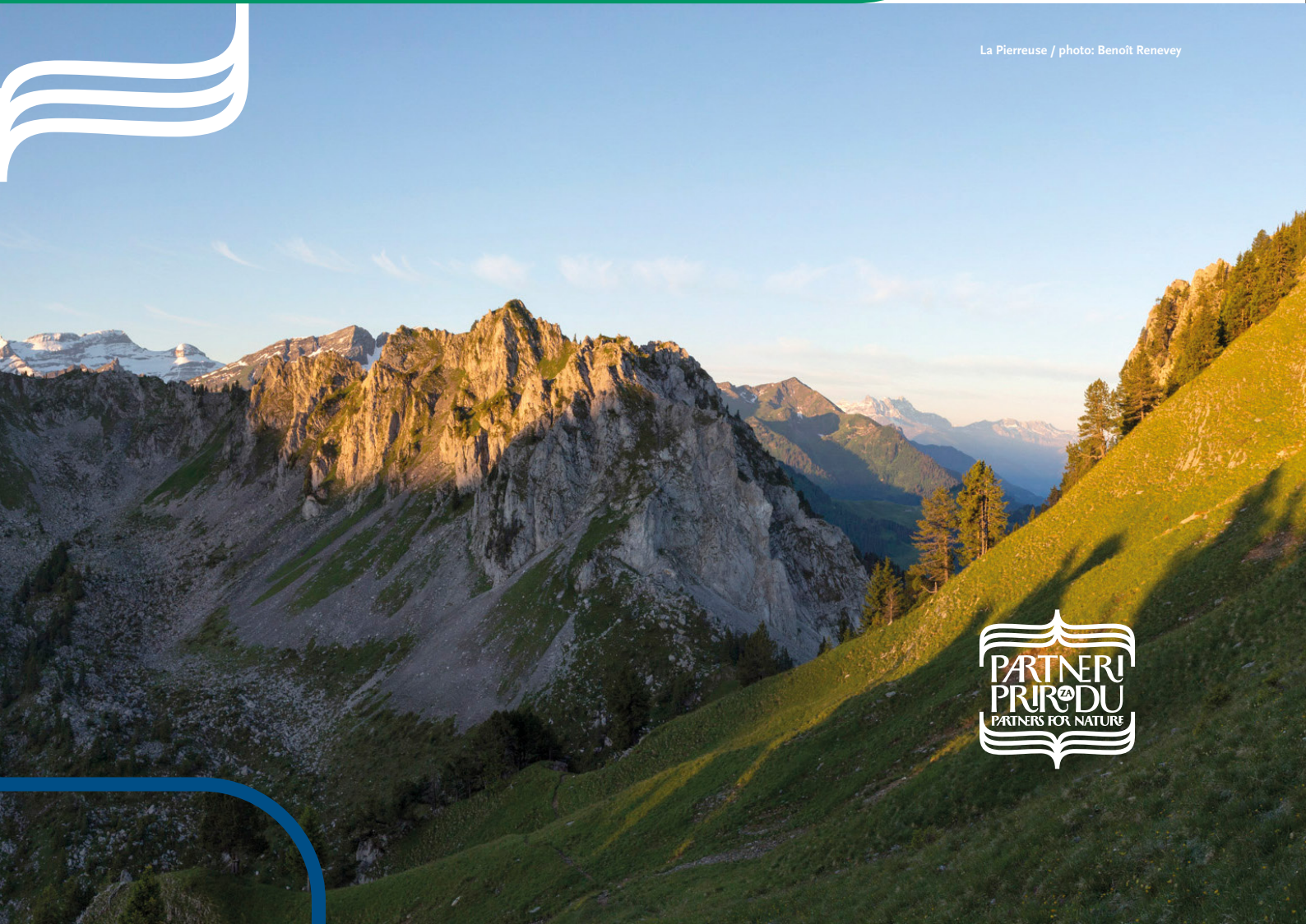
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La Pierreuse / photo: Benoit Renevy



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