

# GENERAL GOVERNANCE STRATEGY I

Activating and involving regional  
stakeholders in participatory  
planning  
processes

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## Content

1. Purpose of this governance strategy .....	2
2. Status quo: current participation in planning processes .....	4
2.1. Requirements for effective participatory planning in World Heritage sites .....	4
2.2. Existing mechanisms and procedures for participatory planning processes .....	4
3. Vision and objectives .....	6
3.1. Vision .....	6
3.2. Objectives .....	6
4. Strategic actions to activate and involve regional stakeholders .....	7
4.1. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 1 .....	7
4.2. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 2 .....	8
4.3. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 3 .....	9
4.4. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 4 .....	9
4.5. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 5 .....	9
4.6. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 6 .....	10
4.7. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 7 .....	10
5. Options for implementation of the governance strategy .....	11
6. Annexes .....	12
6.1. Annex 1: Common stakeholders at and around the component areas of the series ...	12
6.2. Annex 2: Template for stakeholder analysis .....	13



## 1. Purpose of this governance strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to support public authorities (here: responsible PA management entities and responsible federal/regional/national authorities, including relevant communities) in their efforts to ensure the **good governance** of the component parts of the UNESCO World Heritage series “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” (Beech Forests) for which they are responsible, by activating and involving relevant stakeholders in participatory planning and (other) management processes.

Good governance is a way of making and implementing decisions, which ensures that present and future needs of Society - in this case with regard to the component parts of the series - are met, by fulfilling the following criteria<sup>1</sup> (Figure 1):

- **Participation:** All stakeholders need to have the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes of management authorities in an adequate way, preferably directly or through legitimate intermediary institutions.
- **Consensus orientation:** Conflicts of interest are mediated in such a way that stakeholders develop and decide on proposals with the aim - or requirement - of acceptance by all.
- **Accountability:** Management authorities must be accountable to the public and particularly to those directly affected by their decisions.
- **Transparency:** Decisions on the management of the component parts of the Beech Forests need to be taken based on clearly stated rules and regulations. Information about the decisions themselves and the underlying rules and regulations must be freely available and communicated to stakeholders.
- **Responsiveness:** Decisions have to respond to the legitimate needs of all stakeholders, within a reasonable timeframe.
- **Effectiveness and efficiency:** The decisions of management authorities need to lead to the required management results by making the most efficient use of available resources.
- **Equitability and inclusiveness:** Decisions need to be taken in such a way that the costs of the resulting management are fairly distributed among stakeholders. No stakeholders shall be excluded from the decision-making process or the resulting balancing of costs and benefits.
- **Rule of law:** All applicable legal frameworks need to be adequately implemented. They also need to be improved where necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/good-governance.pdf>



**Figure 1.** Good governance criteria as relevant to stakeholder participation in the component parts of the Beech Forests.

Stakeholder participation is generally identified as one of the criteria of good governance. At the same time, it is a cross-cutting requirement because effective stakeholder participation is only possible if *all* good governance criteria are met. This strategy is therefore based on the assumption that all criteria are equally relevant for effective stakeholder participation in the governance of the component parts of the Beech Forests.

This strategy shall help the regional public authorities responsible for the management of the individual component parts to achieve more effective stakeholder participation. It does not address the integrated decision-making at the level of the entire series.

The strategy's particular focus is on the *planning* of management because this is when the main decisions in need of strong stakeholder participation are taken. At the same time, the need for participation and the principles of good governance also apply to the other stages of the adaptive management cycle of these component parts<sup>2</sup>.

The time horizon of the strategy is ten years.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/PAG-010.pdf>, pp. 23 ff., <https://conservationstandards.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/12/CMP-Open-Standards-for-the-Practice-of-Conservation-v4.0-English.pdf>



## 2. Status quo: current participation in planning processes

### 2.1. Requirements for effective participatory planning in World Heritage sites

General requirements for the good governance and particularly for the effective participatory planning of natural World Heritage (WH) sites and their component parts can be derived from the following principal sources:

- The World Heritage Convention (WHC): Refer to §§ 5, 27.
- The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (WHC OG): Refer particularly to §§ 12, 39, 40, 111, 117, 119, 123.
- Based on this, the World Heritage Committee has developed a more detailed policy framework for local stakeholder participation in planning and management of World Heritage sites. The relevant decisions are summarized in Section 6 of the World Heritage Policy Compendium<sup>3</sup>.
- Beyond this, UNESCO and the statutory advisory bodies to the World Heritage Convention have compiled further practical guidance on the participation of local people in the governance and management of natural World Heritage sites<sup>4</sup>.

Within the framework as described above, the integrated management system for the WH Beech Forests sets out further specific requirements for good governance and specifically stakeholder participation in the component parts of this series:

- The Integrated Management System of the WH Beech Forests is described in its nomination dossier<sup>5</sup>. For the level of individual component parts, it defines Integrated Management Panels (IMPs) as the main mechanism to achieve a balanced representation of the interests of all stakeholders willing to participate in the management of their component parts in line with the general objectives of the series. Stakeholder participation is particularly envisaged for issues relevant to local or regional development, such as forestry, ecotourism, label development or marketing.
- Decision 42COM 7B.71 of the World Heritage Committee (2018) reiterates the request to the management authorities of the component parts of the Beech Forests to hold consultations with relevant stakeholders through a participatory process, preceding key decisions on boundary changes (and presumably, by extension, on other relevant management issues)<sup>6</sup>;

### 2.2. Existing mechanisms and procedures for participatory planning processes

This strategy focuses primarily on the direct management of the individual component parts of the Beech Forests and the planning processes and implementation arrangements underpinning them, not at the

<sup>3</sup> [https://whc.unesco.org/en/compendium/?action=theme&id\\_theme=6](https://whc.unesco.org/en/compendium/?action=theme&id_theme=6)

<sup>4</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/managing-natural-world-heritage/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://e-c-o.at/files/publications/downloads/Dossier\\_Beech\\_Forest.pdf](https://e-c-o.at/files/publications/downloads/Dossier_Beech_Forest.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/7300/>



coordination mechanisms for the management of the entire series as set out in its Integrated Management System. This includes planning processes that are more broadly aimed at sustainable regional development and consider the component parts as part of their respective planning contexts.

The specific approaches and mechanisms for stakeholder participation in the management of the component parts of the series, and particularly in the process of management planning, depend on the national and regional context and hence differ between individual component parts. Within the framework of the Interreg-Project BEECH POWER, five component parts from Croatia, Slovenia and Germany were exemplarily analysed with regard to stakeholder involvement and participation:

- The **Grumsin** component part (Germany) has a project advisory board which meets regularly. There is also a yearly dialogue event for exchange with local stakeholders and three working groups for specific stakeholder segments. Other participatory processes are conducted if requested or required as in the case of the development of a framework for action for sustainable tourism development<sup>7</sup>. For additional and more constant stakeholder involvement, a regional strategy for this area was developed by the BEECH POWER project as the result of a participation process including two workshops with relevant stakeholders. This regional strategy includes information and participation of citizens to enhance ownership of and support to the World Heritage component area, the contribution of regional stakeholders to enhanced visitor experience, management and guiding, and cooperation between municipalities and the administration of the Biosphere Reserve (the management authority of the Grumsin) among its thematic work packages<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, a communication and marketing strategy was developed by the BEECH POWER project based on the results of a social survey, which was conducted with local residents of the surrounding communities. This strategy contains further measures to promote the involvement of and cooperation between stakeholders.
- In **Snežnik** and **Krokar** (Slovenia), the BEECH POWER project has initiated the establishment of sound stakeholder participation mechanisms, which are also included in the regional strategy for this component part<sup>9</sup>. These include strategies for informing local communities on the importance of World Heritage, promoting sustainable regional development for the benefits of stakeholders, stakeholder involvement to enhance visitor experience as well as guidance in the area, and communication/knowledge transfer. A current obstacle to broad stakeholder participation at this component part is the lack of an official area manager. The de-facto area manager - the Slovenia Forest Service - does not have the full mandate and necessary capacity to convene stakeholders and achieve all requirements of good governance and stakeholder participation. This will improve when the new Decree on natural Reserves will be finalised and agreed and an official manager is appointed and capacities have been developed.
- In the component parts **Suva draga-Klimenta** and **Oglavinovac-Javornic** (Croatia), the management authority **Public Institution Paklenica National Park** (Croatia) achieves successful cooperation with the local community and regional stakeholders in almost all segments of management. Many stakeholders are involved in consultative drafting procedures, and some in the implementation of documents, plans and programmes of the management authority. The National Park cooperates with local communities (Municipality of Starigrad), actors in tourism (Tourist Board Starigrad, Zadar

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.tourismusnetzwerk-brandenburg.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Bilder\\_Dokumente/Clustermanagement/Studien\\_Publikationen/Strategien\\_und\\_Planungen/Aktionsrahmen\\_Tourismus\\_BRSC\\_201214.pdf](https://www.tourismusnetzwerk-brandenburg.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Bilder_Dokumente/Clustermanagement/Studien_Publikationen/Strategien_und_Planungen/Aktionsrahmen_Tourismus_BRSC_201214.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Strixner et al. (2021)

<sup>9</sup> Varga et al. (2021)



County Tourist Board), and more recently with holders and coordinators of regional development project activities (i.e., LAG Bura and LAG Lika).

The management planning cycles of the individual component parts differ and are not synchronized with the serial World Heritage nomination. This means that planning processes for the main site management plans for each of these component parts have not been conducted in recent years, and that stakeholder participation mechanisms for core management planning have not been activated and tested. Participation therefore mainly focuses on specific thematic areas such as visitation or education.

## 3. Vision and objectives

### 3.1. Vision

A general vision for activating and involving regional stakeholders in participatory planning processes around each of the component parts of the WH Beech Forests - as a key part of participatory management in general - can be formulated as follows:

*Regional stakeholders around each of the component parts of the “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” contribute actively to the long-term maintenance of their Outstanding Universal Value<sup>10</sup> (OUV), and equitably share their benefits for human wellbeing and opportunities for sustainable regional development as well as community development. This is guided by a joint understanding of and vision for each of these component parts and the series as a whole, and ensured through inclusive, consensus-oriented, transparent and effective institutional arrangements and decision-making processes in line with applicable legislation and the WHC Operational Guidelines. The management authorities of the component parts respond to the needs of the stakeholders and are accountable to the public.*

### 3.2. Objectives

Based on the overall vision, the principles of good governance as listed in Section 1, the specific context of the component parts of the WH Beech Forests as reflected in the regional strategies of the focal component parts and the *Strategy for the Active Involvement of Stakeholders in WH Beech Forest Buffer Zone Management*<sup>11</sup>, this strategy identifies the following objectives:

1. All stakeholders of the component parts of the series have the opportunity to participate in their governance, including management planning. The level of their participation is transparently defined and agreed in line with national law and the provisions of the WHC Operational Guidelines.

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<sup>10</sup> Outstanding Universal Value is defined as cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and is of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. It includes the integrity of the attributes or features representing the OUV and their adequate protection and management (WHC OG 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Gorjanc et al. 2020





2. The participatory management of individual component areas and its coordination at the level of the entire series results in the long-term maintenance of their OUV and generates human wellbeing benefits and opportunities for sustainable regional development, which are equitably shared.
3. Participatory management at the level of individual component areas is fully in line with - or exceeds - the requirements of the WHC, WHC OG, other relevant international designations, relevant legal provisions and good PA management practice.
4. Participatory management of each of the participating component areas is based on a shared understanding of and vision for the respective areas, and the series as a whole.
5. The participation of regional stakeholders in planning processes and management is based on equitable, inclusive and transparent mechanisms and processes. Institutional stakeholders effectively coordinate their activities. Regional stakeholders are regularly and reliably informed about developments and feel incentivized to participate.
6. The management authorities of each of the component parts are accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders.
7. Management of the individual component areas and of the series as a whole is constantly adapted according to the results and lessons learned from participatory processes and knowledge exchange.

## 4. Strategic actions to activate and involve regional stakeholders

Strategic actions are derived directly from the objectives above, taking into account documented regional strategies, the *Strategy for the Active Involvement of Stakeholders in WH Beech Forest Buffer Zone Management* and the relevant guidance of the WHC OG, UNESCO and IUCN. For the implementation of the strategic actions, specific activities need to be defined by the component parts individually in accordance with the site-specific conditions and needs, and thus is not covered by this strategy.

### 4.1. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 1

**Objective 1:** *All stakeholders of the component parts of the series have the opportunity to participate in their governance, including management planning. The level of their participation is transparently defined and agreed in line with national law and the provisions of the WHC Operational Guidelines.*

#### **Strategic Actions:**

- Develop a participation concept for the involvement of local and regional stakeholders, which defines the scope and intensity of participation for the different management issues and identifies the target groups and appropriate participation formats to successfully address them.





- Use existing participation structures such as the integrated management panels at the level of individual component parts to increase the opportunities for participation. Ensure smooth operation in terms of stakeholder identification, invitations, etc., so that all stakeholder groups are adequately addressed.
- Offer information and education programmes about the component parts, their values and status to local people as well as concrete options to get involved.
- Consult with regional stakeholders in the run-up to all consequential strategic decisions on site management.
- Invite regional stakeholders to participate not only in management planning, but also during the implementation, monitoring and adaptation stages of the management cycle.
- Develop the institutional capacity and financial resources of management authorities for conducting effective participation processes, including related to conflict management.

## 4.2. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 2

*Objective 2: The participatory management of individual component areas and its coordination at the level of the entire series results in the long-term maintenance of its OUV and generates human wellbeing benefits and opportunities for sustainable regional development, which are equitably shared.*

### Strategic actions:

- Communicate and consequently implement decisions regarding the management including rules to regional stakeholders, so that a management regime conducive to maintaining the OUV of the component parts is ensured in the long term. Seek dialogue with stakeholders and offer support in order to achieve comprehension and compliance.
- Offer suitable formats for the different stakeholder groups to participate in management decisions where appropriate.
- Support the development and coordination of small businesses in the sustainable tourism and visitation sector around the component parts by regional stakeholders.
- Engage regional stakeholder for participatory visitor monitoring and management to ensure maintenance of OUV and at the same time generate local benefits from visitation.
- Establish visitor centres with participation of regional stakeholder, where they do not exist yet and are feasible. Enhance the quality of existing visitor centres or information points and professionalise the information offer.
- Provide regional stakeholders with privileges and advantages in relation to the component parts (e.g. exchange programmes, regular access to guided tours).



### 4.3. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 3

*Objective 3: Participatory management at the level of individual component areas and of the series as a whole is fully in line with - or exceeds - the requirements of the WHC, WHC OG, other relevant international designations, relevant legal provisions and good PA management practice.*

**Strategic actions:**

- Fully inform managers about all relevant legal and policy frameworks including those set by the WHC, the WHC OG and other relevant policies as listed in Section 2.1.
- Provide necessary consultancy support to managers to fully implement all requirements.
- Integrate the full compliance of the management of component parts into site monitoring systems, including participatory site monitoring systems where appropriate.

### 4.4. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 4

*Objective 4: Participatory management of each of the participating component areas is based on a shared understanding of and vision for the respective areas, and the series as a whole.*

**Strategic actions:**

- Conduct participatory situation analyses, vision development and strategic planning processes with regional stakeholders where these have not been conducted to date.
- Use existing or newly created stakeholder information mechanisms to widely share the understanding, vision and objectives as agreed in stakeholder consultation processes of the BEECH POWER project or similar processes.
- Develop - in a participatory manner - a shared marketing strategy for the component parts.

### 4.5. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 5

*Objective 5: The participation of regional stakeholders in planning processes and management is based on equitable, inclusive and transparent mechanisms and processes. Institutional stakeholders effectively coordinate their activities. Regional stakeholders are regularly and reliably informed about developments and feel incentivized to participate.*

**Strategic actions:**

- Make all relevant information on component parts and their management accessible to regional stakeholders, through websites, presentations, guided tours, etc.
- Develop external communication means such as newsletters.
- Proactively engage regional stakeholders to convey information, e.g. through regular exhibitions, events, competitions such as photo competitions, etc.



- Establish mechanisms and offers for knowledge sharing between the managers and the stakeholders of component parts. This could take the form of a common knowledge base, i.e., a platform with access to detailed, well-structured, understandable / user-friendly prepared information about the WH component part (including informative maps) and management (decisions) etc.
- Use non-judicial approaches such as mediation when necessary, to achieve stakeholder consensus on component part management.
- Establish clear coordination and cooperation mechanisms between national and regional stakeholders of each component part.

## 4.6. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 6

*Objective 6: The management authorities of each of the component parts are accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders.*

### Strategic actions:

- Keep public and regional stakeholders regularly and proactively informed about the activities and decisions of the integrated management panels of the component parts (also relevant to Objective 5 above).
- Monitor and report on overall management effectiveness, and also on the satisfaction of stakeholders with participatory processes in each of the component parts.
- Establish clear procedures and responsibilities for complaint management and publicize them among regional stakeholders.

## 4.7. Strategic actions relevant to Objective 7

*Objective 7: Management of the individual component areas and of the series as a whole is constantly adapted according to the results and lessons learned from participatory processes and knowledge exchange.*

### Strategic actions:

- Arrange and institutionalize regular stakeholder meetings to reflect on the management of the component parts and detect emerging conflicts.
- Establish a clear management planning cycle with periodic participatory reviews and revisions of the documented management systems of the component parts.
- Review management regularly (e.g. annually or at other suitable periods), to perform adaptive management of component parts.
- Share findings and lessons learned with other component parts of the WH site and the coordination office.



## 5. Options for implementation of the governance strategy

This strategy is addressed to the regional public authorities responsible for the management of the component parts of the Beech Forests. They can adapt this strategy to their specific circumstances and implement it in concert with all stakeholders, by jointly defining respective specific activities.

Possible mechanisms for the implementation of individual strategic actions at the level of component parts include the following:

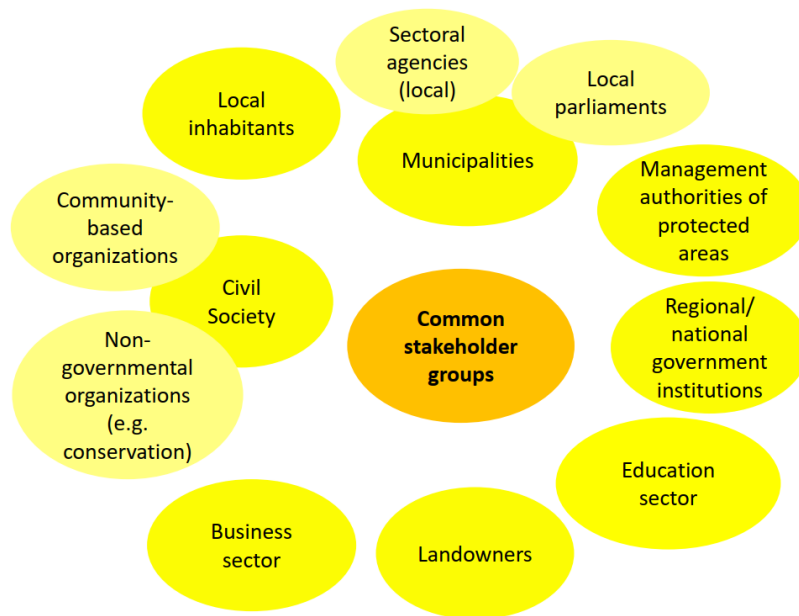
- Integration of strategic actions into the core site management systems of component parts;
- Implementation of strategic actions in cooperation with municipalities and their agencies within existing mandates and with existing resources;
- Implementation in a devolved manner, by other partnering organizations including those where stakeholders are organized;
- Development and submission of project proposals to fund individual strategic actions;
- Engagement of volunteering initiatives to support implementation of some strategic actions;

It is expected that the main objectives and strategic actions under this strategy will require considerable adaptation at the individual component part level, as not all objectives are equally relevant and reflect needs for equally urgent action in relation to all component parts of the Beech Forests. However, this strategy serves as a common base for the component parts to further develop their governance through the activation and involvement of regional stakeholders.



## 6. Annexes

### 6.1. Annex 1: Common stakeholders at and around the component areas of the series





## 6.2. Annex 2: Template for stakeholder analysis

The following graph serves as a template for the management authorities to prioritize and define the form of involvement of the different groups of stakeholders.

