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EcoDidactica

Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung in den Karpaten

(Ecodidactica - Education for sustainable development in the
Carpathian Mountains)

Abschlussbericht (Teil 1)

Zum Bildungsprojekt Ecodidactica AZ 33330/01 -43/1

Gefördert mit Mitteln der Deutschen Bundesstiftung Umwelt

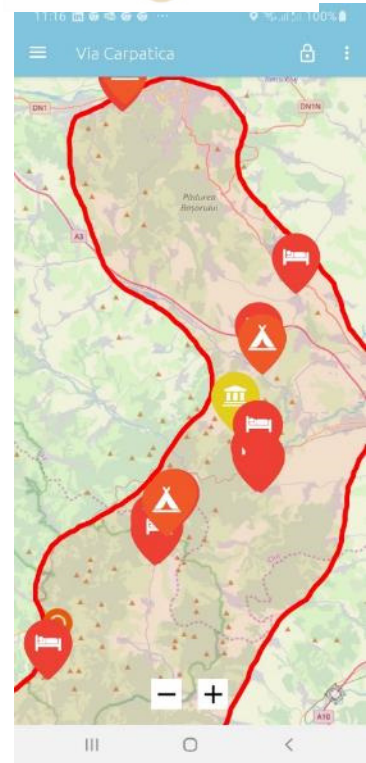
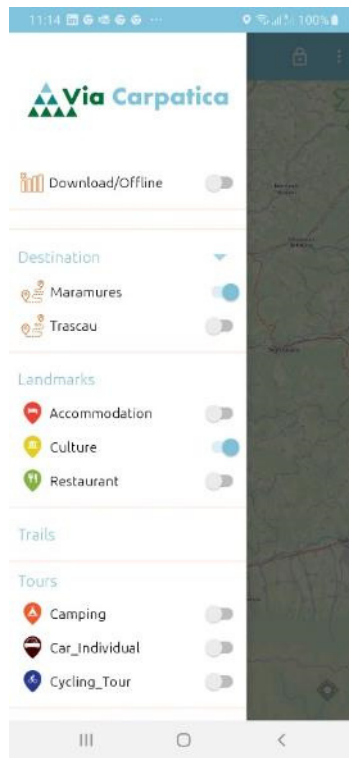
Von

Thomas Wehinger, Horatiu Popa und Ioana Popa

Februar 2020

EcoDidactica

Education for sustainable development in the Carpathian Mountains Project acronym: EcoDidactica Abschlussbericht zum DBU Projekt 33330/01 -43/1



Bewilligungsempfänger

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Ecodidactica

Education for sustainable development in the Carpathian Mountains

PN: 33330/01 – 43/1 Abschlussbericht

Thomas Wehinger, Horatiu Popa, Ioana Popa

Tübingen, den 28.02.2020

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Zielsetzung und Anlass des Vorhabens

Die Ziele des Projektes waren zum einen die Erhöhung des Umweltbewusstseins durch Umweltbildung für Kinder, Jugendliche und Erwachsene im Rahmen von Naturerlebnisangeboten. Zum anderen wurden naturschutzorientierte Tourismusangebote in sensiblen und geschützten Gebieten der rumänischen Karpaten entwickelt. Letzteres wurde mit einem innovativen und aktionsorientierten Ansatz zur Entwicklung des Fernwanderwegs „VIA CARPATICA“ in Zusammenarbeit mit lokalen, regionalen und nationalen Partnern umgesetzt.

Arbeitspakete (Workpakets WPs), Methoden und Ergebnisse**WPO – Projectmanagement**

All project components were implemented within the extended project duration of 42 months in total. The start of the project took place in the summer months, which are usually filled with numerous adventure offers for children and young people. This meant that the conceptual work could only begin in the second project period. All in all, the time required for the implementation of the project activities was underestimated when the application was submitted. The preparation of the documentation, public relations work and the input of partners, especially for the development of the smartphone app "ViaCarpatica", led to considerable delays in completion.

WP1 - Erarbeitung der Konzepte für Umweltbildung für Schulkinder, Jugendliche und Freiwillige

Im Rahmen des Projektes wurden drei konzeptionelle Arbeiten erstellt.

- Trainingsunterlagen für den Bau und die Unterhaltung von Wanderwegen
- Grundlagen und Aspekte der Freiwilligenarbeit beim Bau und Erhaltungsmaßnahmen von Wanderwegen
- Konzept zur praktischen Durchführung von Umweltbildungsmaßnahmen für Kinder und Jugendliche

Diese Ausarbeitungen umfassen die wesentlichen Elemente, die es für die Durchführung dieser bzw. ähnlicher Maßnahmen bedarf. Darüber hinaus werden organisatorische, technische und rechtliche Aspekte beschrieben. Zu Beginn des Projektes wurden verschiedene Seminare und Studienreisen von Mitgliedern und Partnern von Ecouri-Verzi durchgeführt. Dazu gehören ein Besuch der Sektion Bayernland des DAV, Interpret Europe und eine Studiereise nach Albanien zum neu konzipierten Wanderweg "Peaks of Balkans".

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WP2 - Umweltbildung für Schulkinder

Die gesetzten Ziele im Bereich der Umweltbildung wurden bis zu 100% erfüllt. Zwei Schulungen zu Umweltbildungsmaßnahmen mit insgesamt 25 Lehrern fanden statt. An insgesamt 81 Umweltbildungsaktivitäten nahmen 842 Kinder und Jugendliche mit 50 Lehrern teil. An 17 Schulen, mit 61 Schulklassen und insgesamt 1333 Schülern konnten im Rahmen schulischer Veranstaltungen eingebunden werden. 127 Kinder und Jugendlichen nahmen an mehrtägigen Veranstaltungen unter dem Titel "Junior-Ranger" teil.

Aus den Erfahrungen der Umweltbildungsmaßnahmen wurden zwei Spiel-Sets entwickelt.

- Naturerlebnisse / Spiele entlang des Fernwanderwegs ViaCarpatica – Teil "Wald"
- Geografica – Umweltspiel – Edition ViaCarpatica

Diese Spiele dienen sowohl der Umweltbildung als auch als Werbemittel für den ViaCarpatica Fernwanderweg.

WP3 - Via Carpatica – Fernwanderweg

Der Fernwanderweg ViaCarpatica ist schon seit geraumer Zeit in aller Munde. Praktische Arbeit zur Entwicklung und zum Unterhalt des Wanderweges wird von der zuständigen Forstverwaltung nur minimal gewährleistet. Umso wichtiger ist die Freiwilligenarbeit der Mitglieder und der vielen Freiwilligen von Ecouri Verzi, die über fast das gesamte Jahr Abschnitte des Wanderweges begehen und viele Arbeitseinsätze zu dessen Erhaltung durchführen.

Von 2016-2019 wurden mit der Hilfe von 400 Freiwilligen an 2117 Tagen und insgesamt 17495 Stunden ca. 180 km des Fernwanderweges erneuert oder instandgehalten. Wegen des Sturms im Herbst 2017 mussten manche Abschnitte ein zweites Mal begangen bzw. bearbeitet werden. Auf der Basis des ausgearbeiteten Konzeptes für den Fernwanderweg ViaCarpatica wurde die **Smartphone Application "ViaCarpatica"** entwickelt, die nun die wesentlichen Informationen zu den Wanderwegen, zu Unterkünften, zu Einkaufsmöglichkeiten, etc. beinhaltet. Die ersten zwei Regionen "Trascau" und "Maramures" sollen andere Regionen dazu anregen sich an diesem Projekt zu beteiligen, damit in den nächsten Jahren eine **umfangreicher digitaler Wanderführer** vorliegt. Die ViaCarpatica App steht auf **Google Play store** und auf www.travelapp-viacarpatica.com Web-App zur Verfügung. Sie liegt zunächst in englisch und rumänisch vor. Allein der vorliegende Text zu App umfasst 70 Seiten je Sprache. Naccon GmbH und Ecouri Verzi werden sich in den nächsten Jahren darum bemühen, die App zu vervollständigen.

WP4 – Kommunikation und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit

Die digitale Öffentlichkeitsarbeit wurde weitgehend über Facebook praktiziert. Eine spezifische Projekthomepage stand in der zweiten Hälfte der Projektlaufzeit zur Verfügung. Schwerpunkt der Öffentlichkeitsarbeit waren daher die offiziellen und inoffiziellen Treffen und Veranstaltungen an denen die Aktivitäten und Inhalte des Projektes einem interessierten Publikum vorgestellt wurden. Dabei standen Veranstaltungen an der Universität in Cluj im Mittelpunkt. Die bestehenden Kontakte zu anderen Organisationen, zu Schulen und den kommunalen Verwaltung wurden zur zielgruppen-orientierten Öffentlichkeitsarbeit genutzt. Der Auftakt der Öffentlichkeitsarbeit bildete ein Life-Online-Streaming vom höchsten Gipfel Rumäniens (Moldoveanu 2544m). Zusammen mit Greenpeace und „Lets do it“ Romania wurde das Projekt Ecodidactica/ViaCarpatica in Zusammenarbeit mit der Firma Online Video Network dem Publikum vorgestellt. Ecouri Verzi nahm an internationalen Workshops, wie z.B. der Veranstaltung des WWF Rumänien "Getting Active for Wilderness", dem Transylvania Mountain Festival (zwei Ausgaben) und der Via Mariae Trail-Konferenz teil. Der Deutsche Alpenverein veröffentlichte einen Erfahrungsbericht über die Fortbildungsmaßnahme in den deutschen Alpen in ihrem Rundbrief. Alle Freiwilligenaktivitäten und Bildungsveranstaltungen wurden auf Facebook veröffentlicht. In Zusammenarbeit mit den Fakultäten der Babes-Bolyai-Universität wurden drei Plakatkampagnen zu Informationsveranstaltungen in Cluj-Napoca durchgeführt (Busbahnhöfe, Läden im Freien, Studentenplätze) sowie ein Radiospot. E-Mail-Kommunikation mit lokalen Behörden und persönliche Treffen mit Bergrettungsteams auf Kreisebene waren Bestandteil der ÖA.

Fazit

Mit der Förderung durch die Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt wurde es der NGO Ecouri Verzi möglich Ihre Aktivitäten zur Umweltbildung und einem nachhaltigen Tourismus durch die Arbeiten am Fernwanderweg ViaCarpatica zu professionalisieren und weiterzuentwickeln. Die ursprünglichen Projektziele – auch wenn sie schon bei Antragstellung als sehr ambitioniert kritisiert wurden, konnten dank der kostenneutralen Verlängerung des Projektzeitraums mehr als erfüllt werden. Viele Akteure, Interessierte und Freiwillige konnten für ein Engagement gewonnen werden. Durch die Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Organisationen und den Beitrag zahlreicher Individuen konnten alle Aktivitäten in der verlängerten Laufzeit, wie im Projektantrag dargestellt, realisiert werden.

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Content

A. SUMMARY	1
B. INTRODUCTION	3
BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES	3
PROJECT PARTNERS.....	3
PROJECT AREA(S)	4
BENEFICIARY AND TARGET GROUPS	4
C. WORKING PACKAGES, METHODS AND RESULTS.....	4
WP0 – PROJECT MANAGEMENT	4
WP1 – CONCEPT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN , YOUTH AND VOLUNTEERS	5
<i>WP1.01 - Training the trainer on environmental education’s role regarding hiking and volunteering in the mountains</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>WP1.02 - Study tour to protected areas in Germany on eco-pedagogical methods</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>WP1.03 – Seminar – Peaks of the Balkan (Kosovo)</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>WP1.04 - Concept for an educational volunteering programme (Milestone 1).....</i>	<i>6</i>
WP2 – ECO EDUCATION FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN	8
<i>WP2.01 - Trainings for teachers and NGOs on environmental education methods</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>WP2.02 - Running environmental education activities in schools and non-formal activities.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>WP2.03 - Running three educational camps for school children and teenagers (Junior Rangers)</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>WP2.04 - Developing concepts and producing two educational nature board games</i>	<i>10</i>
WP3 – VIA CARPATICA - AN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION TRAIL FOR YOUTH AND TOURISTS	11
<i>WP3.01 – Via Carpatica - Developing a long distance trail concept.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>WP3.02 - Running volunteer camps for building and maintaining trails.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>WP3.03 - Producing an informative and educational guide in digital version (Smart phone Application) for one pilot segment of Via Carpatica (Milestone 3).....</i>	<i>16</i>
WP4 – COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION	17
<i>WP4.01 - Building and maintaining the web site of the project (Milestone 4).....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>WP4.02 - Promoting the project and Visibility</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>WP4.03 - Printing project promotional media</i>	<i>20</i>
D. CONCLUSION AND RESULTS.....	21
D. FAZIT (DEUTSCH)	22
ANNEX / ANHANG	24

A. Summary

The objectives of the project were, on the one hand, to increase environmental awareness through environmental education for children, young people and adults within the framework of nature experience activities by improving the professional capacities of the NGO Ecouri Verzi and its partners. On the other hand the project was aiming to improve nature conservation-oriented tourism offers in remote rural, sensitive and protected areas of the Romanian Carpathians. The latter was implemented with an innovative and action-oriented approach to the development of the long-distance hiking trail "VIA CARPATICA" in cooperation with local, regional and national partners.

Workpackages (WPs), Methods and Results

WP0 - Projektmanagement

All project components were implemented within the extended project duration of 42 months in total. The start of the project took place in the summer months, which are usually filled with numerous adventure offers for children and young people. All in all, the time required for the implementation of the project activities was underestimated when the application was submitted. The preparation of the documentation, public relations work and the input of partners, especially for the development of the smartphone app "ViaCarpatica", led to considerable delays. Communication with partners was in need of improvement.

WP1 – Elaboration of concepts for environmental education for school children , youth and volunteers

The documentation and thus the conceptual work in this area was rather rudimentary or only available in parts. Within the framework of the project, three conceptual works were elaborated and improved the professional approach for their implementation to a wide extent.

- Training documents for the construction and maintenance of hiking trails
- Basics and aspects of volunteer work in the construction and maintenance of hiking trails
- Concept for implementing environmental education measures for children and young people

These documentations include the essential elements necessary for the implementation of these or similar measures. In addition, organizational, technical and legal aspects are described. At the beginning of the project various seminars and study trips were carried out by members and partners of Ecouri-Verzi. These activities include a visit to the Bavarian Land section of the German Alpen Association, Interpret Europe and a study trip to Albania on the newly designed hiking trail "Peaks of Balkans".

WP2 – Eco (Environmental) Education for School Children

The goals set in the area of environmental education were achieved way above the targets set in the project proposal. Two training courses on environmental education measures were held with a total of 25 teachers. 81 environmental education activities were attended by 842 children and young people with 50 teachers. 17 schools, with 61 school classes and a total of 1333 pupils were involved in school events. 127 children and young people took part in events lasting several days under the title "Junior Ranger".

Two game sets were developed from the experiences of the environmental education measures.

- Nature experiences / games along the long-distance hiking trail ViaCarpatica - part "Forest"
- Geografica - Environmental game - Edition ViaCarpatica

These games should not only convey aspects of environmental education but also serve as a promotional tool for the ViaCarpatica long-distance hiking trail.

WP3 - Via Carpatica – Fernwanderweg

The ViaCarpatica long-distance hiking trail is a developing tourism highlight in the Carpathian Mountains. Until now the necessary infrastructure for the trail is not completed. Practical work for the development and maintenance of the hiking trail is only partly guaranteed by the responsible forestry administration. This makes the volunteer work of the members and the many volunteers of Ecouri Verzi all the more important, as they walk along sections of the trail almost all year round and carry out many work assignments to maintain it.

From 2016-2019, with the help of 400 volunteers, 2117 days and a total of 17495 hours have been spent renovating or maintaining approximately 180 km of the long-distance trail. Due to the storm in autumn 2017, some sections had to be walked or worked on a second time. Based on the elaborated concept for the long-distance hiking trail ViaCarpatica the smartphone application "ViaCarpatica" was developed, which now contains the essential information about the hiking trails, accommodation, shopping possibilities, etc. for two destinations. The first two regions "Trascau" and "Maramures" should encourage other regions to participate in this project, so that in the next years a comprehensive digital hiking guide will be available. The ViaCarpatica App is available on Google Play store and on www.travelapp-viacarpatica.com web app. It is initially available in English and Romanian. The text has already been translated into German. Due to the growing number of

German speaking hiking tourists, Ecouri Verzi was keen to make the texts available in German as well. The text of the app alone contains 70 pages in three languages.

WP4 – Communication and public relations work

The digital public relations work was largely practised via Facebook. A specific project homepage was available in the second half of the project duration. Communication started with a kick-off activity with the Online Video Network company. With a Live Online Streaming from the highest peak of Via Carpatica, Moldoveanu Peak 2544m three of the most active NGOs in Romania were promoted. Ecouri Verzi with its Ecodidactica / Via Carpatica trail project was one of them, together with Greenpeace and Let's do it Romania. Ecouri Verzi participated in international workshops such as WWF Romania's event „Getting Active for Wilderness”, Transylvania Mountain Festival (two editions) and Via Mariae trail conference. German Alpenverein had published news about the VIA CARPATICA and the experience exchange in the German Alps in its own newsletter. All volunteering and educational events were published on Facebook pages that Ecouri Verzi manages, Asociatia Ecouri Verzi and Potecatorii Voluntari. Communication work/publicity efforts also included three campaigns with public posters display in Cluj-Napoca (bus stations, outdoor shops, student places), a radio spot and public events in cooperation with Babes-Bolyai University faculties. Email communication with local authorities and face to face meetings with Mountain Rescue teams at county level were implemented regularly.

Conclusions and Findings

With the support of the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt, the NGO Ecouri Verzi was able to professionalise and further develop its activities for environmental education and sustainable tourism in the Carpathian Mountains through the work on the ViaCarpatica long-distance hiking trail. The original project objectives - even though they were very ambitious when the application was submitted - were more than fulfilled thanks to the cost-neutral extension of the project period. Even if there were deficits in communication and public relations, many actors, interested parties and volunteers could be motivated for their commitment. The scope of the activities alone could only be realised through cooperation with other organisations and the contribution of many individuals on a voluntary basis. Due to the core nature of the project, the cooperation with the German Alpenverein, was limited to the exchange of experience in the building and maintenance of hiking trails, for which all participants were highly grateful.

The Smartphone Application “TravelApp-ViaCarpatica” is functioning as a WebApplication and as Android Smartphone Application. The content for the application is available for two regions Trascau and Maramures, with a total of 15 day hiking trips. Local shops, pensions and other facilities of interest for hikers are displayed as well as information on flora and fauna. For the future development of the App, Ecouri Verzi and Naccon will cooperate with other regions along the ViaCarpatica Long-distance-hiking-trail. The app is constantly under process of improvement. One of the next steps is to implement a new map, which will speed up the performance of the application.

B. Introduction

Background and Objectives

EcoDidactica aimed to support environmental education and sustainable tourism development in the Carpathian Mountains. Local communities and the public in general widely benefit from ecosystem services in protected areas in the Carpathians. Education and recreation attract people to the great outdoors. Only a small number of programmes offer nature or outdoor education at national level. Families, children and youths are lacking opportunities for a “game and play” learning approach. Outdoor education board games are not available in the Romanian language. Although new trends reveal a growing number of hikers, mountain bikers and family campers on the mountain trails, few of them are aware of the values of nature. Mountain clubs and NGOs, active in nature conservation, lack membership subscriptions and a sustainable organisational structure. NGOs have limited capacities. Support from government and public administration is missing. Inappropriate or damaging behaviour of the growing number of outdoor tourists, unaware of the impact they have, threaten nature and the ecosystems. The lack of trails and ecotourism infrastructure hinders the development of environment-friendly and sustainable economic development in remote rural areas of Romania.

The project was related to the “new” DBU thematic topic 1 – Instruments and Competences for the assessment of sustainability and strengthening of awareness and behaviour towards sustainability.

The project’s overall objective was to improve education and awareness of children, youths and adults regarding nature and the environment, during outdoor activities. Furthermore, it will enhance the sustainable development of tourism products in sensitive landscapes and protected areas of the Carpathian Mountains in Romania through the implementation of an innovative and action-oriented development of a long distance hiking trail “VIA CARPATICA” in cooperation with local, regional and national stakeholders.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the projects were to...

1. Strengthen the capacity of Ecouri Verzi and other multipliers to provide environmental education programmes and trainings and to run efficient volunteers’ management;
2. Enhance appropriate ecological behaviour regarding outdoor activities for school children , volunteers and tourists, in two Carpathian regions by running eco-pedagogical and non-formal education activities, in order to reduce the impact of nature-based tourism;
3. Support ecotourism development as a tool of nature-education and of sustainable development for local communities in the territory of officially designated Carpathian ecodestinations with a concept for the long-distance hiking trail “VIA CARPATICA”;
4. Increase the awareness of the public regarding ecosystem services and environment-friendly behaviour during outdoor activities through an intensive communication and public relations programme.

The various results and activities of the project emphasize the innovative character of the project and included a school educational programme, the development of an eco-didactical board game, a volunteering programme, and a long distance trail concept for the VIA CARPATICA. Part of the comprehensive communication strategy is a smartphone application. The project duration of 42 months was broken down into work packages, indicated in the work plan. The total budget of the projects is 242.000 EUR.

Project partners

NACCON GmbH (main applicant) and Ecouri Verzi Association (Cooperation Partner) implemented the project together with many other partners on the local, national and international level.

Applicant: Naccon GmbH

NACCON GmbH is a private consultancy company located in Tübingen (see www.naccon.de). Since 2006 NACCON has implemented numerous projects on behalf of German International Cooperation (GIZ), United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO), Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission (DG agri), Regierungspräsidium Freiburg, University of Hohenheim, private consultancies etc.. Rural development and natural resources management are two core areas of activity.

Cooperation Partner: Ecouri Verzi Association (Green Echoes Association)

Ecouri Verzi Association is an environmental NGO and hiking club from Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Ecouri Verzi Association has more than 80 members who are specialists in natural sciences, nature conservation, heritage interpretation, sustainable tourism or simply nature enthusiasts. The organisation is custodian (administrator or managing body) for two protected areas in Transylvania.

Associated Partners

NACCON GmbH and Ecouri Verzi implemented the project in cooperation with the following partners:

German Alpine Club

Dr. Joachim Jaudas, sociologist and mountaineer from München, Germany

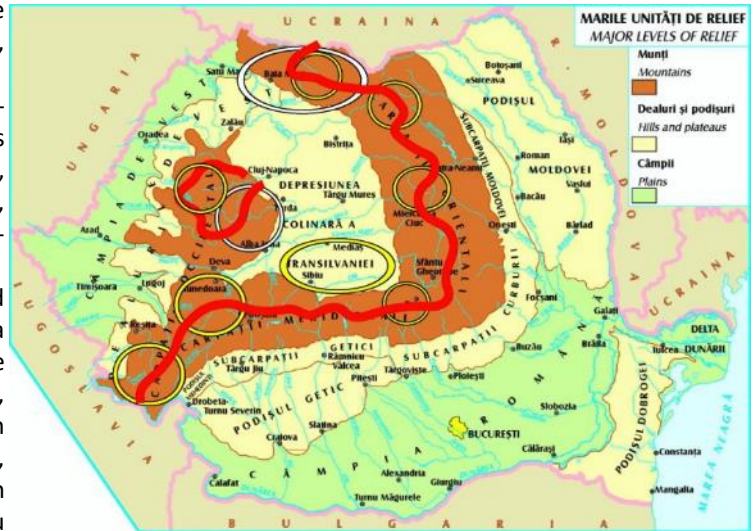
GIZ – Peaks of the Balkans in Kosovo (www.peaksofthebalkans.com)-

Albamont – Club for Ecology and Mountain Tourism, Alba Julia, Romania

Project area(s)

The project covered the whole Romanian Carpathians, which stretch out to 30% of the total area of the country:

- Four counties where hiking trails were built or maintained: Maramures, Cluj, Bihor and Alba (white circles);
- Concept and general map for long-distance trail stretching over 14 counties (Maramures, Bistrita-Nasaud, Suceava, Neamt, Bacau, Harghita, Covasna, Brasov, Sibiu, Alba, Hunedoara, Gorj, Caras-Severin, Mehedinti) (red line);
- Eight ecotourism destinations are crossed by the trail concept: Maramures, Tara Dornelor, Baile Tusnad, Tara Branului, the Saxons Area, Tara Hategului - Retezat, Apuseni Mountains, Southwestern Carpathian Wilderness (yellow circles), with an emphasis on two destinations on the detailed trail: Maramures and Trascau (Trascaului Mountains).



Beneficiary and target groups

The project focused on the following target groups:

- **School children** aged 10-14 years from the Carpathian region with up to 1200 pupils from a minimum of 20 schools within the framework of "Clubul Naturii" (The Club of/for Nature);
- **Teachers** from these schools designed modern pedagogical activities in the schools;
- Romanian and international **volunteers** took part in volunteering activities;
- App. 1000 **hikers** in the Carpathians are expected to use the mobile phone application per year;
- A minimum of **10 Local communities** in the area of the long-distance trail which need perspectives to fully utilize the potential of sustainable development through non-motorized tourism.

C. Working Packages, Methods and Results

In the following section, the work packages and the related activities, along with the outputs of their implementation are described. The total duration of the project was foreseen to be 30 months, but was prolonged until October 2019 with 42 months in total.

WPO – Project Management

The project management unit consisted of staff members of NACCON GmbH and Ecouri Verzi. Thomas Wehinger from Naccon GmbH was the project manager and has the financial responsibility for the project. Horatiu Popa from Ecouri Verzi was the project coordinator and Ramona Balc is the project assistant. An educational expert, Ioana Popa, and an educational specialist, Simona Modog, joined the team of Ecouri Verzi to account for the skills, expertise and time necessary for running educational activities.

The project manager, project assistant and educational expert were freelancers ("Persoana Fizica Autorizata" - PFA) and were contracted by Ecouri Verzi. The educational specialist had a civil contract ("Conventie Civila"). The PFA contractees were responsible for paying their legal fees and taxes, while taxes for the educational specialist were paid by Ecouri Verzi up to the amount approved in the budget.

Having the intention to simplify the invoicing and payment process, the payments for project team were done

in a single contract / single invoices for each contractee, at the end of the reporting period. Although, because of the accountancy regulations limitation on the maximum amount that can be paid in cash in a specific day, there are three payments in three different days for the project assistant. The project assistant does not have an account associated with PFA so the payment had to be done in cash.

For the second project reporting period, two contracts were signed and paid for Simona Modog (educational specialist) and Gugut Razvan (volunteers coordinator for trail work).

Since 2017 was characterized by financial legislation instability, regarding PFA taxation, due to political changes at governmental level, the salary payment for the permanent project team, corresponding to this report period, was postponed for 2018. Nevertheless, as the project team members have PFA contracts, it is not unusual for payments to be covered by single payment. This also helped cover the cash flow. At the beginning of 2018 there still exist uncertainties related to the taxation of PFA, etc. The new fiscal code is into effect and we will ask for clarification from the fiscal authorities. Still, the contracts will be paid during the entire period after the reimbursement based on the second interim report.

The project was prolonged until October 2019. For 2018 and 2019 the association signed contracts with Cojocariu Laurentiu as volunteers coordinator for trail work, with Lupescu Vlad for translations, Peter Lengyel and Macaveiu Lucian for text and photos used for the mobile application. In order to develop the concept of Via Carpatica Trail we contracted Mititeanu Radu, one of the most experienced hikers and cyclists of the Carpathian Trails, with more than 20 years of trail recording and documentation.

WP1 – Concept for environmental education for school children , youth and volunteers

In order to fulfil objective 1. Strengthen the capacity of Ecouri Verzi and other multipliers to provide environmental education programmes and trainings and to run efficient volunteers' management, following activities that have been implemented .

WP1.01 - Training the trainer on environmental education's role regarding hiking and volunteering in the mountains

In order to implement this activity, Ecouri Verzi members and participants from partner NGOs (Albamont) participated in four trainings: nature interpretation five-day training in the Czech Republic organized by Interpret Europe, trail building techniques & Via Alpina three-day trainings organized by DAV and environmental education one-day training organized by JDAV.

Participating in the 40-hour course for interpretive guides, we learnt to turn phenomena into experiences, provoke resonance in participants, offer paths to deeper meaning and foster respect for natural heritage.

We practiced and performed the skills linked to these qualifications. The course was accompanied by tried-and-tested work material and an illustrated 40-page course manual. During training we performed an interpretive talk, presented a peer review exercise and took a short written test. The training took place close to Brno, Czech Republic and two members of Ecouri Verzi participated.

The training on trail building techniques & Via Alpina was organized in the Bavarian Alps, at the Bayerlander Huette. The two trainers were Gunnar Amor and Gabriela Scheierl. Different trail surface techniques were applied together with Gunnar Amor (from OeAV) and Gabriela Scheierl, who is responsible for huts and trails within DAV, teaching us about the network of trails, how these are maintained and financed. For trail building training we had the chance to test the same curricula that is used for German and Austrian trail builders. The content of the trail building training program is attached to this report (WP1_01_Instruire Sistem DAV-OeAV_Marcaje_Semnalizare_Monitorizare final).

The training in environmental education methods was conducted by Solveig Michelsen and was based on curricula developed by JDAV.

A foto report of the activities in Germany was developed by Dr. Joachim Jaudas.

In October 2017 the educational team, Ioana Popa and Horatiu Popa, joined the Interpret Europe international conference in Scotland and participated in several professional development workshops. Moreover, we had an exchange experience with responsables of Friends of Nevis volunteering program for Ben Nevis Mountain, we participated in a one-day training on the trail with „Fix the Fells“ volunteers trainers to learn how to build trail running water ditches and we visited the long-distance hiking trail West Highland Way.

Interpret Europe Conference offered excellent ways to understand how one can encourage people to search for their own meaning in unique landscapes and how to conserve natural landscapes for future generations. More details about the program of the exchange experience and the conference are outlined in the annex (WP1_02_Interpret Europe conference report).

Outputs:

- One curricula for training on trail building and huts and trails of DAV was transferred to Ecouri Verzi from DAV and OeAV;
- One curricula for training on environmental education methods was transferred from JDAV to Ecouri Verzi;
- Two trainings in Germany and one in the Czech Republic were conducted;
- 7 members of Ecouri Verzi and Albamont (one of the project partners) have been trained;
- Ten nature interpretation professional development workshops were attended
- One trail building training in Scotland was attended;
- 2 members of Ecouri Verzi increased their professional competences in nature interpretation.

WP1.02 - Study tour to protected areas in Germany on eco-pedagogical methods

In Germany, there are good nature interpretation trails, visitor centres in protected areas and organizations that are running programs on eco-pedagogical and outdoor education methods. Many of these examples can be replicated and adapted to the Carpathians' specificity and then be used for the children and tourists in Romania.

Using the opportunity to have the "train the trainers" activity with German Alpenverein and the project team meeting in Tübingen (both see WP1 A1), the project team and partners from Albamont had a study tour for knowledge transfer in National Park Black Forest, Berchtesgaden National Park, Bavarian Forest National Park. We learnt about interpretive trails in the park, we had meeting with educational experts and with volunteer rangers. Furthermore, we visited and foto-documented Haus der Nature (in Feldberg im Schwarzwald), Naturschutz Zentrum in Schwarzwald National Park and Haus der Berge in Berchtesgaden National Park.

Outputs:

- A study tour to protected areas in Germany was conducted;
- 7 members of Ecouri Verzi and Albamont (one of the project partners) participated in the study tour and became replicators;
- One curricula for two days training on nature interpretation and eco-pedagogical methods is developed. The curricula document is attached to this report.

WP1.03 – Seminar – Peaks of the Balkan (Kosovo)

In September 2017, a study tour was organized by Naccon GmbH and Thomas Wehinger in Kosovo and Albania.

Eight Romanian participants joined Thomas Wehinger and a Kosovar guide for an experience exchange with local tourism businesses and tourism info center and in order to visit the Peak of the Balkans long-distance trail in Kosovo. In Albania, for two days, the delegation had meetings with GIZ team (that was responsible for implementing the Peaks of the Balkans trail) and with the Naccon Albania team (they are working to develop the smartphone applications). Members from several Romanian NGOs participated in this experience exchange: Ecouri Verzi, Albamont, SKV Cluj, Friends of Nature Banat, Trascau Corp. A more detailed report is attached to this report, including a description of the Peaks of Balkans trail (WP1_06_Peaks_of_Balkans_Study_Tour).

WP1.04 - Concept for an educational volunteering programme (Milestone 1)

The educational volunteering program, called Potecatorii – or trailbuilder, Wegewart(e) – has the mission to educate and empower volunteers to build, maintain and promote a quality trail known as the Via Carpatica Trail. Potecatorii events offer a great opportunity to give back to the outdoors while spending quality time experiencing it. Volunteers at Potecatorii



events work hard, learn standardized trail building, care about nature, develop lasting friendships with each other and, perhaps most importantly, have fun.

Based on the experience of Ecouri Verzi on working with volunteers and on available legislation that is regulating volunteering in Romania, we developed tools for the concept. These are templates for volunteering contracts, volunteer's terms of reference, participants list with safety rules, volunteers register (to develop a volunteers database).

The educational component includes details about categories of protected areas in Romania.

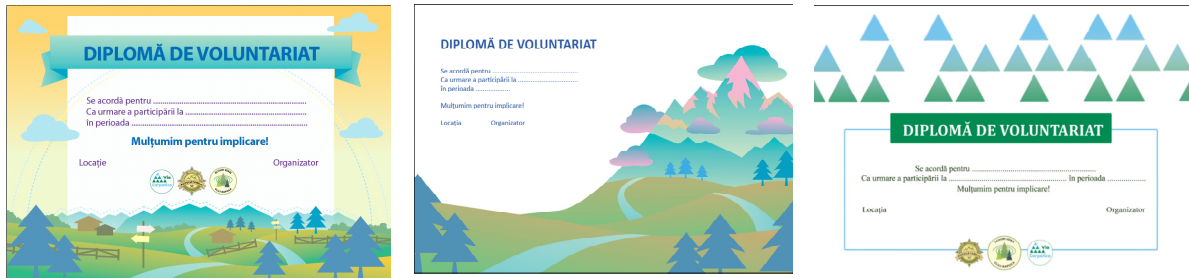
The concept is produced in the Romanian language and is included together with this report in the Annex (WP1_05_Volunteering program concept). The cover is depicted bellow.

Logos for the camps that were organized in 2016 and 2017 were created and are attached to this report in the project visibility folder, as well as inserted below. Additionally, logos for volunteering activities in 2018 and 2019 were created.





As part of the volunteering tools, designers developed three templates for the participation diploma that can be further personalised and used for future volunteering activities. The diplomas are fully scalable and are in Corel Draw format, which allows easy editing with specific software. These are presented below.



During the four seasons of trail work in the frame of the project period, some necessary tools were bought from the project budget, but most of the heavy tools were used from Ecouri Verzi. In order to replace the tools that were worn and torn and to strengthen the capacity of Ecouri Verzi to run efficient volunteers' management (according to objective 1), we made some acquisition of tools at the end of the project. These tools replaced the old ones and the acquisition was made from the respective budget line, without overspendings.

Outputs:

- Volunteering management program is outlined and includes the content on educational activities on nature protection;
- Volunteers management tools developed;
- 22 designs for the volunteering activities logo were created;
- 3 templates for the volunteer's participation diploma were created.

WP2 – Eco education for school children

Experiences show that knowledge gained in an interactive and practical way results in more profound understanding than theoretical lessons and influence behaviour directly. In order to fulfil objective 2: Creating an ecologically appropriate behaviour for outdoor activities for school children and for volunteers and tourists, we implemented eco-pedagogical and non-formal education activities, in order to reduce the impact of nature-based tourism.

WP2.01 - Trainings for teachers and NGOs on environmental education methods

Two trainings for NGO members and for school teachers were conducted by Ecouri Verzi in order to spread/multiply the nature interpretation and educational methodology. The trainings were based on trainings run in the project frame and on curricula developed within activity WP1.02 on environmental education and eco-pedagogical methods, as well as on study tours and experience exchanges. The curricula for the training was also based on the personal experience of the project team members and on the expertise of the invited lecturers. Dr. Tibor Hartel, university teacher specialised in old-growth trees and in the human – wild animals interactions, was part of one of our trainings. Both groups also learned how to identify wild animal tracks and how to manage trail building activities, through the learning-by-doing method. The entire training focused on protected areas, protected species and outdoor-related activities. The trainings provided participants with tools aimed at explaining to the general public how outdoor activities can impact the natural protected areas and why is important to protect nature. Both trainings were organised in Rimetea at the Protected Areas Monitoring and Training Center.

Outputs

- 2 trainings on environmental education methods conducted;
- 28 school teachers and environmental NGO members participated in the trainings.



Dr. Tibor Hartel talking about the importance of trees

WP2.02 - Running environmental education activities in schools and non-formal activities

The rationale of the educational activities was for Ecouri Verzi to have the experience exchange with the German partners, which would add to our own experience in the field and produce draft activities for school classes and for the outdoors. Following this, we are going to test and put into practice these activities during our school activities, Nature Clubs and during camps. Then we will pass this knowledge on to other multipliers and teachers through the trainings we will organize. During this project period other five educational activities on forest, trophic chain, birds, responsible tourism and plants were developed. These are included in the last version of the file containing educational activities plans that were produced by the educational team of the project.

Nature education was focused on school education and during free time, in the frame of Nature Club (Clubul Naturii). The curriculum with the schools programme was developed together with the teachers. The document is attached to this report.

For running these activities, six environmental educational plans were developed: "Benefits of nature", "Introduction to protected areas", "Butterfly metamorphosis", "Frog metamorphosis", "Adaptations of animals in winter" and "Large carnivores from Romania".

The non-formal education activities in the frame of Nature Club were held inside the schools, but after the programme, as afterschool activities.

During 2016-2017, Ecouri Verzi ran the Nature Club non-formal educational activities in collaboration with three schools: Pedagogical National College „Gheorghe Lazar“ from Cluj-Napoca, Highschool for the hearing impaired Cluj-Napoca and „Horea, Closca si Crisan“ School from Turda. The children have been participating in activities each month from February to May. In total, 414 children attended: 209 from the pedagogical college, 156 from „Horea, Closca si Crisan“ school and 49 from the highschool for the hearing impaired.

In 2018 we ran six Nature Club activities at „Gheorghe Lazar National Pedagogical Highschool“ and „Horea, Closca si Crisan“ School from Turda. 163 school students participated in these activities. The thematics for these activities were "Nature Benefits", "Birds – The Woodpekers" and the "The Book of Senses".

During 2016-2017, the project team ran educational activities in schools, too. Seven schools from Cluj-Napoca, Turda and Sebes were part of the program; we have been 23 times in school classes and we had a total of 482 school children participating. Moreover, we organized educational activities within „Scoala Altfel“ („The different school“ – a non-formal education week organized by each school yearly).

In 2018 we had activities at 5 schools („Ion Creangă“ School from Cluj-Napoca, Secondary School from Băișoara, Secondary School from Muntele Băișorii, „Emil Racoviță“ National Highschool from Cluj-Napoca and the Secondary School from Luna). In these activities participated 12 school classes, 226 school children and 12 teachers. The thematics were „The Forest“, „Herpetology“, „Insects“ and „Protected Areas“.

Also, in 2019, our association started a collaboration with the County Public Library and we had educational activities based on the educational nature games that we brought in the framework of Ecodidactica project. These activities were called „Via Carpatica Trails and Games“ and will have a monthly frequency. The agreement with the library is that we will also continue after the end of the project, until 2021, at least. Until now, 58 school children, two teachers and two librarians were involved in 2 workshop run in October 2019.

Outputs:

- 81 non-formal, environmental education activities run (Nature Club and school activities);
- 842 participations in non-formal environmental education activities, as well as 50 teachers;
- 16 schools participated in the schools activities on nature protection and activities in the library;
- 1095 school children participated in the class educational activities with 50 teachers involved.

WP2.03 - Running three educational camps for school children and teenagers (Junior Rangers)

The three camps were organized in 23-27 of June, 03-07 of July and 19-24 of August in 2017.

The summer camp in June was attended by 25 children and teachers from Blaj and Tiur and took place in Rimetea. The July and August camps there were attended by 47 children and teachers from the National Pedagogical College in Cluj-Napoca. The camps took place in Rimetea and Muntele Baisorii. The typical program of the educational camp is attached to the report (WP1_04_Educ_Sust_Dev_Training_program).

We also organized in October – November 2018 two educational camps in Rimetea (22 school students and one teacher for the first camp and 25 school students and two teachers for the second camp) and one educational excursion in Cheile Turzii Nature Reserve (33 school students and two teachers).

Innovative educational contents were included in these camps, resulted from thematics of the training with German Alpenverein, the study tour in Germany and other literature resources.

The project team and the teachers contributed to the Virtual Library of Nature, an indexed and searchable database with nature education publications, with publications and educational nature board games that were developed at national and international level in 2016-2019, as well as with other titles.

Outputs:

- 127 children have learned about rangers activities and positively changed their attitude towards nature conservation;
- Virtual Library of Nature was completed with 52 titles.

WP2.04 - Developing concepts and producing two educational nature board games

Two concepts for educational games were developed and the games were produced during last period of the project. They were tested during educational activities by the project team and Ecouri Verzi members.

One game is called „Nature Games along the Hiking Trail ViaCarpatica“ and the player should advance on Via Carpatica trail that is linking the protected areas by rolling the dice and answering questions related to nature in Romania.

The second game is called „Geografica – Via Carpatica edition“ and players must build their own maps of the Carpathians by arranging cards with images and questions about protected areas and mountains along the trail.

The rules of the games and covers are included in the Annexes of this report.

WP 3 – Via Carpatica - An environmental education trail for youth and tourists

In order to fulfil objective 3: Supporting ecotourism as a tool of sustainability education and of sustainable development for local communities included in the territory of officially designated Carpathian eco-destinations, the following work packages and activities were put into practice:

WP3.01 – Via Carpatica - Developing a long distance trail concept

The concept was developed based on consultations and negotiation with the local NGOs and mountain clubs, local mountain rescue teams, protected areas administrations and local authorities. Experience revealed that this is a time-consuming process. In case of Via Alpina trail the work lasted for about 7 years and huge resources from several countries were involved.

In 2016, as the project started in June and not in January as we the program was designed initially, we had to start field work immediately with, to benefit from the warm season. Also, as the project team focused on running educational activities in schools and afterschool clubs.

However, close consultations were done with local mountain clubs from Cluj and Alba counties like: Albamont (from Alba Iulia), Trascau Corp (from Zlatna), Natura Transilvaniei (from Cluj-Napoca) and Potaissa (from Turda), Cluj Metropolitan Area Association, Tourism Office of Cluj-Napoca, Romanian Alpine Club, Clubul de Cicloturism Napoca, SpeoBrad, Muntomanii Baia Mare, Hai pe Munte Iasi in order to plan the trail segments in this area. We also initiated consultations with Ecologic (Baia Mare) about the trails system in Maramures county, but more detailed plans should be elaborated. Also we had discussions and planning meetings with SKV (Siebenburgischer Karpatenverein) for deciding on the Via Carpatica route in Apuseni Mountains. Ecouri Verzi will support the establishment of a SKV section in Cluj-Napoca and this will be one of the organizations responsible for implementing Via Carpatica in the Western part of Romania, from Oradea to Mures river and in the North, from the border with Ukraine to Rodnei Mountains.

An important component of this activity was to check on the field the situation of the main trail of Via Carpatica and supporting network of trails. In the spots where we hiked, we GPS recorded and foto documented more than 400 km of trails in Trascau Mountains, Bihorului Mountains, Muntele Mare – Gilau Mountains, Lapusului Mountains and Tibles Mountains. This mountain ranges are all within the project area in the counties of Cluj, Alba, Bihor and Maramures. After the field work we worked on the tracks on plotaroute.com , a free Internet platform that has appropriate tools for correcting the raw data. The final tracks were uploaded on the project webpage.

The first draft of the concept was finalised at the end of May 2017 but the updated situation of the trail segments on the field was checked until the end of the project. A huge storm in the autumn of 2017 destroyed huge segments of the trail and a lot of work was necessary in order to rebuild this. The trail in Maramures and Trascau (Alba County) is not walkable but more work should be done for maintenance.

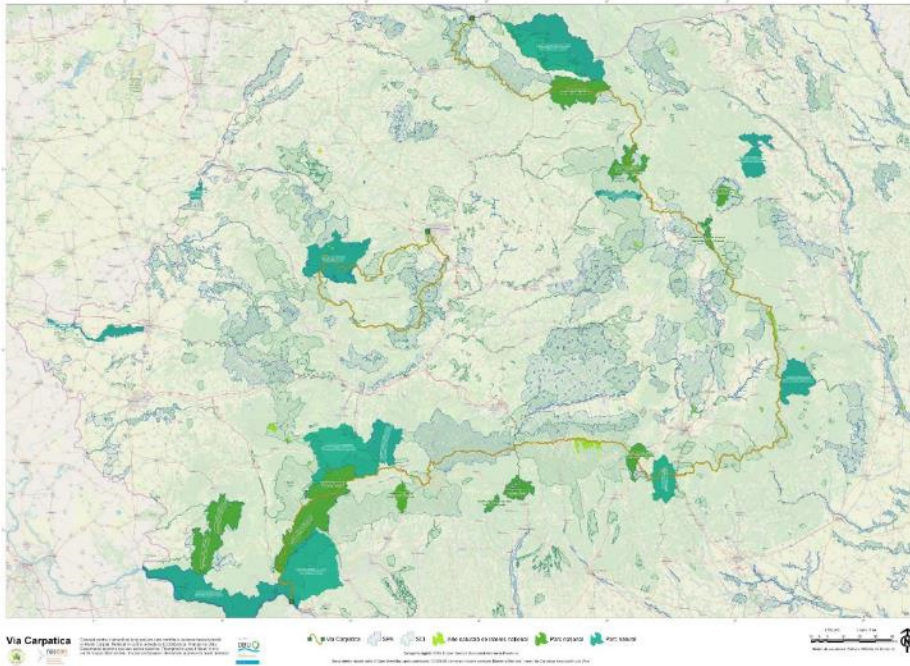
In November 2017 we had a meeting in Bistrita Nasaud and Tihuta, with Salvamont Bistrita in order to establish the link of Via Carpatica between Maramures county and Bistrita county. Also, we made a common working plan for marking the route of the trail in Bistrita county, for the future development of the trail. We had a field visit to indentify and check the trail situation between Bargaului Mountains and Calimani Mountains. Bistrita county is not part of this project area but has a common limit with Maramures county, which is in the project area. Also, we are starting to indentify goals, objectives, routes, solutions and activities for future project proposal as a continuation of our project for Via Carpatica.

Together with Radu Mititeanu and based on field work and extensive literature and maps reasearch, we developed a detailed concept of the trail. We are aware that the development of the trail concept is an ongoing activity, based on the natural conditions on the field and based on the legitimate interests of local communities along the trail. It is recommended, in time, to have a complete situation of the owners and administrators of each leg of the trail, but this is a huge work and involves huge ammounts of time and resources. This cannot be achieved within the framework of this project.

The concept is attached to this report as (WP3_01_ViaCarpatica_concept_rm).

Outputs

- Concept for long distance trail Via Carpatica as electronic version was elaborated;
- General map (1:500,000) with the route of Via Carpatica was produced, electronic version. A reduced version is included below.



Via Carpatica long distance trail

WP3.02 - Running volunteer camps for building and maintaining trails

During the second project phase, we ran several other volunteering camps and activities, in Alba, Maramures, Cluj and Bihor counties, as described below.

Working on trails in Faget, Cluj-Napoca in 2017 April, 4 participants, 4 working days, 32 working hours.

Working on hiking trails at Buceș Vulcan – Vf Gaina from Bihor Mountain, 2017 May 31 – June 03, 9 participants, 27 working days, 216 working hours.

Working on hiking trails at Cheile Fenesului from Trascau and Metaliferi Mountain, 2017 June 15-18, 26 participants, 71 working days, 670 working hours.

International and Romanian volunteers for the support of the implementation of the project during the summer at Giurgesti, Vidra, Buceș Vulcan from Bihor Mountain, 2017 July 15-30, 40 participants, 295 working days, 2494 working hours.

International and Romanian volunteers for the support of the implementation of the project during the summer at Rimetea from Trascau Mountain, 2017 July 30 – August 13, 22 participants, 273 working days, 2259 working hours.

Working on hiking trails at Scarisoara from Apuseni Mountain, 2017 August 24-27, 21 participants, 53 working days, 429 working hours.

Working on hiking trails in Lapus Mountain, 2017 April – August, 40 participants, 108 working days, 1105 working hours.

Working on hiking trails at Bedeleu, 2017 September 07-10, 14 participants, 40 working days, 322 working hours.

Working on hiking trails at Rimetea from Trascau Mountain, 2017 September 03-07, 23 participants, 115 working days, 920 working hours.

In 2017 from April to September, 173 participants worked at the hiking trails. In total for this period there were 986 working days and 8447 working hours.

In October 2017 we had a meeting with volunteers and few stakeholders in Botiza, Maramures county (mayor, forestry officer, pension and restaurant owners, volunteers) to inform them about the results of the 2017 summer season of trail work and to set up the objective for 2018.

During November 2017 we had two meetings with volunteers, mountain clubs and Salvamont Alba in order to put together the results of the trail work season and to plan the camps for 2018. Five camps were planned for 2018 and two of them are exactly on Via Carpatica. Participants were from Trascau Corp Zlatna, Albamont, Ecouri Verzi and Salvamont Alba.

The situation for the 2018-2019 trail work activity is presented below:

2018			
Activity	When	No. of trail activities	No. of volunteers
Volunteers working on hiking trails at Cheile Turzii (Trascau Mountains)	2018.04.22	1	7
Volunteers working on hiking trails at Huda lui Papara (Trascau Mountains)	2018.05.17-20	1	18
Volunteers working on hiking trails at Vidra (Bihor Mountains)	2018.06.21-24	1	14
Volunteers working on hiking trails at Valea Ampoiului - Metes	2018.07.05-08	1	23
Volunteers working on hiking trails at Vidra (Bihor Mountains)	2018.08.24-26	1	9
Volunteers working on hiking trails at Muntele Mare (Cluj-County)	2018.10.20	1	9
International and Romanian volunteers for the support of the implementation of the project trail work during the summer at Rimetea, Trascau Mountains	2018.07.15-29	1	24
Volunteers working on hiking trails at Lapus Mountains (Maramures county)	2018 season	5	23
Total 2018		12	127

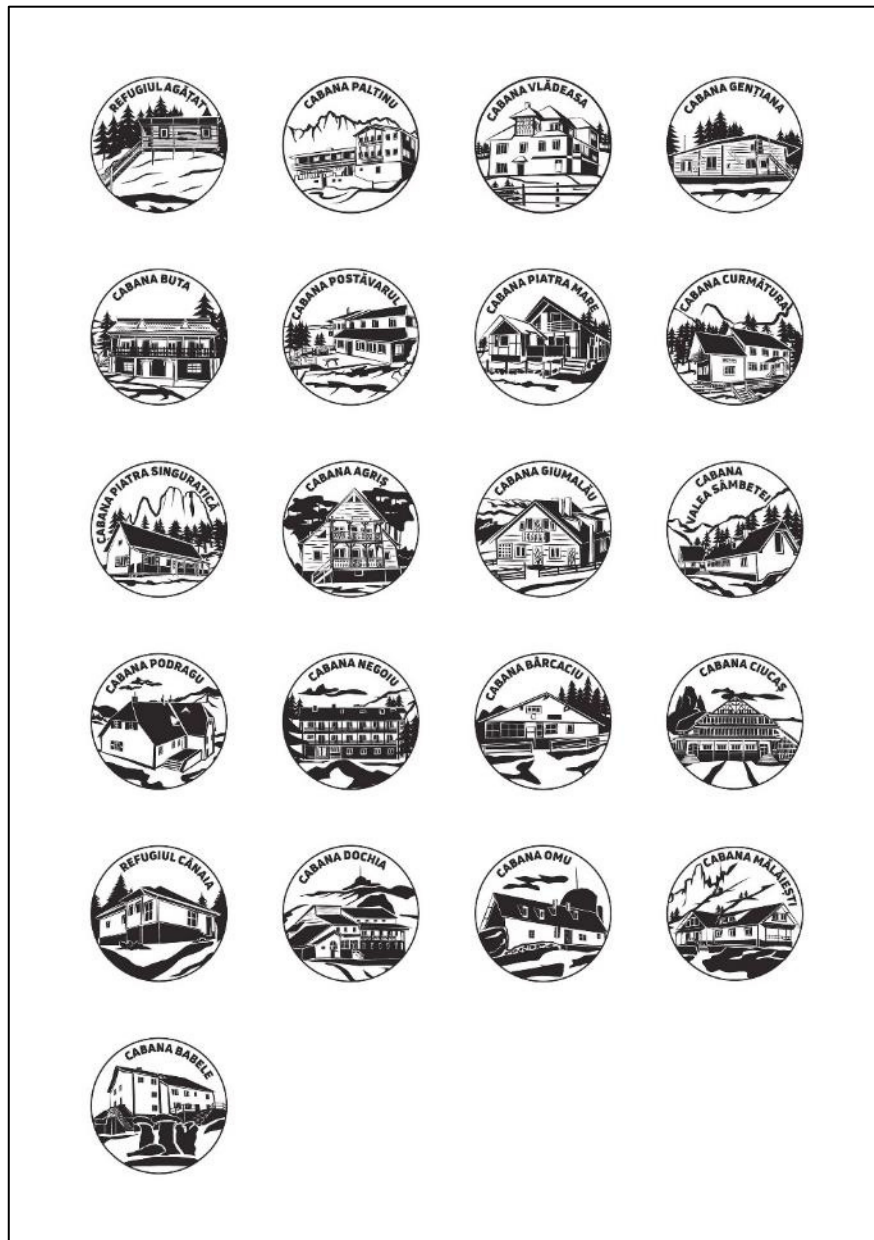
2019			
Volunteers working on hiking trails at Galda (Trascau Mountains)	2019.05.17-19	1	26
Volunteers working on hiking trails at Huda lui Papara (Trascau Mountains)	2019.06.28-30	1	23
International and Romanian volunteers for the support of trail maintenace work during the summer at Rimetea, Trascau Mountains	2019.07.6-28 2019.08.4-21	2	30
Volunteers working on hiking trails at Cheile Fenesului (Metaliferi Mountains, Alba County)	2019.09.19-22	1	22
Total 2019		5	101

In order to ensure a long-term commitment of the volunteers to the idea of Via Carpatica and EcoDidactica we developed a concept of a national system for rewarding hikers (with badges and diplomas) for trails hiked or for volunteering. The hiking badges reward include the rewards for hiking 100 km, 250 km, 500 km, 1000 km, the entire Via Carpatica in Romania, Via Carpatica as through hiking, reaching all 2500+m peaks of Romania, reaching all the montain huts that participate in the program, hiking all Apuseni Mountains trails. There are also included separate badges for kids for hiking 50 km, 100 km, 250 km.



Hikers reward badge system

Even more, we initiated the first Romanian “hike and stamp” concept, that includes stamps for 20 mountain huts. This will be transferred to other mountain clubs, too.



Stamps for the muntain huts

Outputs:

- about 180 km of trails maintained, rebuilt or newly built. Some of them had to be restored two times after the storm from the autumn of 2017;
- 24 camps and activities were organized;
- in four trail seasons, more than 400 volunteer participations had 2117 working days (17495 working hours) in order to contribute to the implementation of Via Carpatica in the field. It is important to mention that we didnt claim all this working hours or days for reimbursment or as the inkind contribution of Ecouri Verzi, but we claim only the hours and days that were foreseen in the project proposal. All the other hours are extra contributions of Ecouri Verzi at the implementation of Via Carpatica.

WP3.03 - Producing an informative and educational guide in digital version (Smart phone Application) for one pilot segment of Via Carpatica (Milestone 3)

The software development is never completed but fully functional.

With the „TravelApp-ViaCarpatica“ NACCON GmbH developed a comprehensive software for georeferenced information for hiking tourists with a focus on guiding visitors and hikers in remote rural areas or protected areas. The software is designed to provide information on the Web and Smartphone Applications.

The WebApp available at

www.travelapp-viacarpatica.com

The Android Version is available on Google Play Store

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=almotech.co.viacarpatica&hl=de>

The iOS-Version is in progress with the implementation of a new Map-Version, which will allow better performance and better user experience than the existing version.

An extensive work of documentation on literature, on the Internet and on the field was done in order to document and describe the points of interest (POI), the protected areas, species and ecotourism destinations.

We collaborated with and contracted photographers to obtain photos for the features that we do not own in our database, while Dr. Peter Lengyel and Lucian Macaveiu wrote the texts for protected areas, species and trail segments, based on their experience / expertise. Moreover they granted us the permission to use the text of several publications that they have online or offline.

The individual stages (segments) of Via Carpatica, each for one day of hiking, were described for a part of the trail in Maramures county (from Sighet to the limit with Rodnei Mountains) and for Trascău Mountains, in Cluj and Alba counties, between Cluj-Napoca and Negruleasa Hut. The guide consist of bilingual text (Romanian and English) with descriptions and detailed maps of the daily segments.

The pdf is included as an annex to this project report (WP3_03_Via Carpatica detailed trail description resize).

The pdf is included as an annex to this project report (WP3_03_Via Carpatica detailed trail description resize).

Outputs:

- One detailed guide of two segments of Via Carpatica in Romania was realised in electronic pdf format;
- One educational and informative smart phone application of Via Carpatica was developed;
- Documentation on local tourism services, public transport facilities, local attractions within ecotourism destinations situated along the Via Carpatica was put together.

The future and sustainable development of the Smartphone App

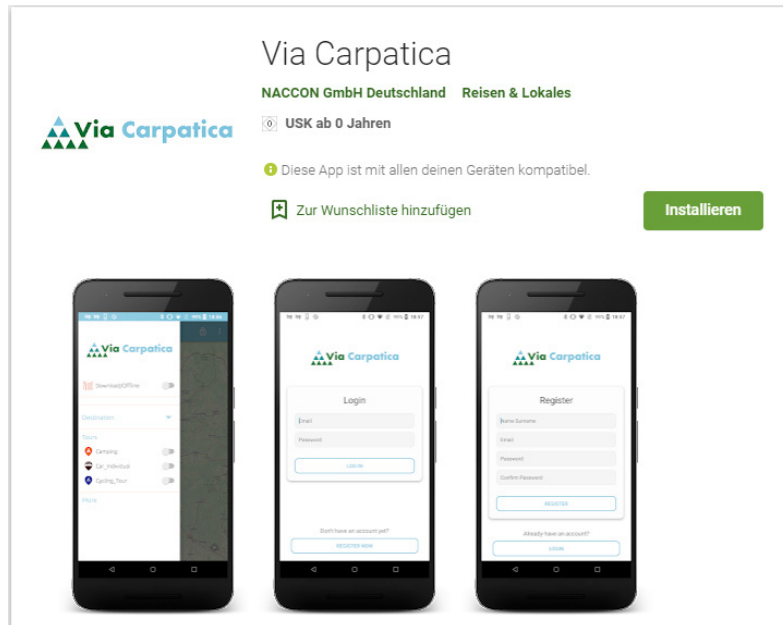
For the future AEV and NACCON will cooperate in the future development of the Application.

In order to make the app maintenance and update of the content, the app will have free content, to be accessed by all users and some parts to be payed for. The educational content will always be free, whereas specific tourism services and content will have to be payed for.

The educational part can be developed through projects and activities by Ecouri Verzi and Naccon. In cooperation with other organisations and individuals. The tourism part can be part of the Naccon tours programme and services in Romania.

Naccon will organize tours and some of the services of the tours can be provided by Ecouri Verzi. For example resupplying the Via Carpatica hikers along the trail, connection with local suppliers and local transportation, guiding etc.. The profit of the app will be shared half between Naccon and Ecouri Verzi.

Parts of the profit should go for further app development (Naccon - new data gathering, photos, POI, work for uploading the info on the app) and Via Carpatica maintenance (Ecouri Verzi - trail work).



The payed part will have more detailed description of the trails, more POI, more photos, places to resupply, direct contact to Via Carpatica support team, possibility to share the location and guidance if they are lost, can download entire mountain ranges or destinations offline.

App functionalities:

- Users can choose what to see on the map: trail segments, limits of protected areas, ecotoursim destinations
- Users can have a location button that tells them where they are, beside the GPS coordinates: commune/municipality, county, mountain range, salvamont team responsible for the area, protected areas (if there are more than one overlapped, should mention all), trail etiquette and restrictions in that specific location
- Users can see detailed information about protected areas, species, communes/municipalities etc.
- Users can download a selected part of map offline, or download the content of selected destinations
- User can report incidents, threats, images, text with coordinates via feedback form in the app

Other functionalities will be considered, such as:

- Recording new trails and uploading them on the server / app
- Downloading different types of maps (e.g. classic, night view)

WP4 – Communication and Dissemination

WP4.01 - Building and maintaining the web site of the project (Milestone 4)

The bilingual website (Romanian and English) www.ecodidactica.ro is uploaded and active. The main menu consist of Home | Education | Via Carpatica | News | Project | Contact

Each of these sections has submenus as follows:

Education: Schools Activities, Nature Clubs, Junior Ranger Camps

Via Carpatica: The Trail, Volunteering, Experience Exchanges

News: Here all the articles in the web page are included

Project: This section offers details about the project

WP4.02 - Promoting the project and Visibility

The project team had a project start up communication activity with the company Online Video Network, that is providing Live Streaming for any platform, any event and from any location. The choosen location was on the highest peak of Via Carpatica, Moldoveanu Peak 2544m, and the event meant to promote live, online on Facebook, three of the most active NGOs in Romania. Ecouri Verzi with Ecodidactica / Via Carpatica trail project was one of them, together with Greenpeace and Let's do it Romania.

A project logo and a logo for Via Carpatica trail were designed.

Ecouri Verzi participated in the WWF Romania event „Getting Active for Wilderness”, the closing workshop of their project in April 2017. Our association had a good oportunity to promote the Via Carpatica trail, the volunteering programme Potecătorii and the project to the participants.

German Alpenverein had published news about the VIA CARPATICA and the experience exchange in the German Alps in its own newsletter, as an article written by dr. Joachim Jaudas.

To increase visibility of the project we partnered with one of the most prominent VIPs/Personalities from mountain sports in Romania. Horia Colibasanu, the most successful Romanian eight-thousand mountaineer, with seven 8000+ meter alpine style summits, agreed to be the ambassador of the volunteering programme. The involvement of the president of Romania, Klaus Johannis, a keen hiker and potential ambassador for the VIA CARPATICA, was not possible due to the political unrest of the 2016 – 2019 governments. We considered that the political fight between the president and the government could threaten the project and we gave up the idea of involving politicians as Via Carpatica ambassadors.

Nevertheless, we are happy to have Horia Colibasanu with us. He had a movie presentation in 2019 at the Geography Faculty in Cluj-Napoca when we also presented the project, the Via Carpatica concept and our volunteering program, during the same event. We had a full amphitheatre with students and university teachers, as well as a large public. One picture from this event is presented below.



Horia Colibasanu at Via Carpatica and Potecatorii event, Faculty of Geography, Cluj-Napoca

The project team had three presentations on Via Carpatica, volunteering opportunities and the project at Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, at the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences and at the Geography Faculty. As a result, the Communication Sciences Faculty proposed that one team of students have their own project on public communication for promoting our volunteering program for trails and Via Carpatica. They run a public campaign for Potecatorii volunteering program with posters displayed in public transport, faculties announcements boards, mountain equipment stores, Facebook posts.

Based on the success of the first collaboration, the faculty asked again in 2018 to lead a team of students for their seminar project. This time, they promoted the „Via Carpatica Trails and Volunteering“ workshop of Ecouri Verzi within Transylvania Mountain Festival. Leaflets were produced and distributed to the general public in shopping malls and public parks in the center of Cluj-Napoca.

The Geography Faculty of Babes-Bolyai University invited Ecouri Verzi to present the volunteering program, the project and the Via Carpatica concept to their students. We had a presentation and open question session during one of their courses.

The Via Carpatica, the volunteering program Potecatorii and the project were presented by the project assistant manager, Ramona Bălc, to students of the Environmental Sciences Faculty, as she is a teacher there and they also have extra curricular activities.

The volunteering opportunities for the trails and the project were also presented in 2018 to BEST – the students organization of Cluj-Napoca Technical University and to the student organization of the Medicine and Pharmacy University in Cluj-Napoca.

A collaboration with Cluj-Napoca Tourism Office was initiated and the Via Carpatica trail was included on their own map named „Discover Transylvania Around Cluj-Napoca“.

We had three participations at the international Transylvania Mountain Festival in Cluj-Napoca. In 2018 we organised the workshop named „Everything about marked trails with Potecatorii“. In 2019 we ran one nature education board games event for kids and parents named „Via Carpatica Trails and Games“ and one day of hiking and trail training named „Hiking and Volunteering“.

Sequences with us during nature education board games workshop at TMF 2019 are included in a short film that is circulating on social media.



Ecouri Verzi / Potecatorii / Via Carpatica event banners at Transylvania Mountain Festival 2018



Ecouri Verzi / Potecatorii / Via Carpatica event banners at Transylvania Mountain Festival 2019

Another activity to promote the project was the participation as speakers at the Via Maria International Trail Conference. Via Maria is a long-distance trail from Mariazell in Austria to Sumuleu Ciuc, in Szekely Land, that is maintained mainly by the Catholic Hungarian community in Transylvania. The project team had a talk on the Via Carpatica concept, about the project and about the volunteering program. We were the only participants that offered the public a detailed insight of the volunteering work on the trail and the educational role of volunteering. It was a wide public, from Romania and from other countries that have long distance trails. Both trail representatives (Via Carpatica and Via Maria) agreed that they will provide reciprocal support for trails maintenance and development. The poster of the event is included here.

The project team presented the Via Carpatica concept and future plans to Romanian Alpine Club and there are big chances that the Via Carpatica will be adopted by the Romanian Alpine Club (CAR), too. We started a close collaboration with "Trails and Huts department" of the CAR Cluj Section, the biggest section in the country.



Working together with Mountain Rescue Services (Salvamont) of different counties was a good way to inform this authority about Ecodidactica project and about Via Carpatica. The Salvamont of Alba, Cluj, Maramures, Bistrita and Bihor counties learned about our project, the results and challenges regarding trails building and volunteer involvement.

An important promotion for the project was the cooperation with the Cluj County Public Library. Ecouri Verzi has a cooperation agreement in 2019-2020 to regularly run an educational games workshop called “Via Carpatica trails and games”. Our nature interpreters are using the the games library that we built up within the framework of the project to teach children about nature and responsible outdoor activities. The teachers are organizing school children groups and they are coming with their classes in the Public Library space. This was a good opportunity to test and present the two games that were developed within the framework of the project.



Via Carpatica Trails and Games workshops

Outputs

- one live interview on social media about Via Carpatica in Fagaras Mountains;
- one activity report article presented in DAV newsletter;
- one presentation of the project at Babes-Bolyai University;
- one poster presentation on the IALB / EUFRAS meeting in Limerick, Ireland;
- one presentation of the project on 1st Annual SEASN Assembly meeting and 3rd Regional Conference of Advisory Services of South East Europe in BIH, Hotel “Vucko”, Jahorina, 6-7 October 2016;
- project presentation at WWF event „Getting Active for Wilderness”;
- one radio spot to promote the volunteering program at a regional radio station;
- two posters in bus stations in center of Cluj-Napoca;
- several posters at natural sciences faculties in Cluj-Napoca and in mountain equipment stores in Cluj in 2017, 2018 (within the framework of Transylvania Mountain Festival 1st edition) and 2019 (within the framework of Transylvania Mountain Festival 2nd edition);
- six project presentations at the Communication Sciences, Geography and Environmental Sciences Faculties of Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca and for the students of the Technical University and Medicine and Pharmacy University;
- more than 20 Facebook posts on project activities;
- participations and workshop organizing at Transylvania Mountain Festival and Via Maria Trail International Conference;
- public event with climber Horia Colibasanu;
- three educational games workshops „Via Carpatica Trails and Games” run at the public library.

WP4.03 - Printing project promotional media

In order to ensure the project visibility and to make the results of the project available to the public, a draft design for a leaflet for project promotion was produced in 2016. At the end of 2017 and 2018 three-language leaflets (Romanian, German, English) with the project description were printed. The flyer was distributed to environmental NGOs mountain clubs and the general public during the project events of Ecouri Verzi.

The leaflets were produced and are attached as an annex in file (WP4_01_Brochure_Project_Ecodidactica).

Outputs:

- One flyer elaborated and printed in 450 copies, three languages, 150 copies each. Distributed during Ecouri Verzi events;
- 30 local communities informed about the project;
- 15 environmental NGOs and mountain clubs were informed about the project;
- more than 200 students were informed about the project.

D. Conclusion and results

Running the project during these years provided several opportunities for cooperation with different entities and organizations:

- There are big chances that the Hiking Rewards system will be "adopted" by other mountain clubs. Ecouri Verzi has a good relation with the Cluj section of the Romanian Alpine Club and part of our team is involved in organising their Trails and Huts department;
- The collaboration of Ecouri Verzi with the academic sector increased and since 2017 we have been invited every year to present the volunteering program that we run for maintaining Via Carpatica to the student of the Environmental Sciences Faculty, Geography Faculty, Political Science and Communication Faculty;
- Our team contributed to the launching of the Act Hub start-up company that is providing after-school educational activities for children, by developing the concept for their first workshops and by running the first model activities;
- Ecouri Verzi is one of the main providers of nature education workshops for Transylvania Mountain Festival, an international event that gathers mountain professionals and outdoor enthusiasts from Romania and abroad;
- The trail activities during the summers of 2016-2019 have strengthened the relation with counties Mountain Rescue (Salvamont) teams from Alba, Cluj, Bihor, Bistrita, Maramures. This cooperation will continue for the following years and we plan to cooperate with other Salvamont teams from other counties, to continue the Via Carpatica in other counties, too;
- At Via Mariae Trail international conference we established good connections and there are good cooperation foresights with other long distance trails managers like Via Mariae, Via Transilvanica, El Camino Romania;
- We built a very good relation with the map publisher Erfatur, that provided the maps used to produce the digital version of the guide. We offered up-to-date information about the trails, new developments, new trails, recent status of points of interest along the Via Carpatica; the publisher is providing the topographic support for our work;
- Together with the Cluj County Public Library, Ecouri Verzi association launched in 2019 a series of educational games workshops named "Via Carpatica Trail and Games" addressed to school children. Teachers are forming groups, they are coming to the space of the library and Ecouri Verzi nature interpreters / animators are running educational games with children. The program is for 2019-2020 with a possibility for prolongation.;
- The Faculty of Environmental Sciences asked Ecouri Verzi to co-host their event Open Days for Science and in 2020 Ecouri Verzi will be responsible for the workshop "Via Carpatica - An adventure of knowledge". Participants will learn that Via Carpatica is an educational route designed in such a way for participants to experience contact with nature in all its forms, imagining that they crossed the ridge path of the Carpathians. As well as hikers walking the true Via Carpatica trail, participants will have a first contact in the base camp with what mountain hiking means. Then, carefully following the markings, they will follow a route that will pass through national parks and other protected areas as well ecotourism destinations. At different points on the route they will receive interesting information about the places they pass through, in an interactive and attractive way, so that in the end, the experience is unique and unforgettable, and they will be better prepared if they decide the next of their adventures to be in the middle of nature.

During the project years, Potecătorii became a well-established volunteering program for building trails. SpeoBrad, Asociația Nordica Sighetul Marmatiei, Hai pe Munte Iasi and Asociația MuntzoManii Baia Mare joined the program. For the future we are constantly searching and inviting local mountain clubs and volunteering initiatives in order to have partners for different sections of the trail. Our trail volunteering program is also promoted by "ProVobis - Cluj-Napoca Volunteering Center" and "Asociația pentru Relații Comunitare" (Association for Community Relations). Both organizations are supporting Ecouri Verzi to make the connections with the business sector. Some of our trail activities were supported by companies like Dot Work, Frequentis, Ixxus Europe. Last year proved that our volunteering program caught the attention of CSR departments of Cluj-Napoca companies and we will continue to offer opportunities for corporate volunteering in the following years. Our trail work is popular among the employees of the companies.

The Via Carpatica mobile phone application will be an opportunity to keep in contact with our followers and is offering the possibility to have users involved in trail maintenance work, as they can provide info about the status of the trail and infrastructure. The app will have further developments, both on educational components

(for free) and on tourism destination services (payed).

Parts of the revenues generated by Via Carpatica app will be used for trail maintenance and for app development and maintenance.

Our games will be played by families and used by teachers for years to come. Ecouri Verzi is planning to develop other games to add to the series of Via Carpatica games.

With the exchange experiences, everything that we learned from our trainers from DAV, Interpret Europe, Peak of the Balkans and other organizations, all the manuals, guides and curricula that we developed and the educational games library that we built up increased the capacity of Ecouri Verzi to provide nature education and interpretation to beneficiaries in the following years. Moreover, our practical work during the project, the tools that we bought and the increasing number of volunteers improved the association's capacity to manage and run meaningful volunteering activities and efficient trail work.

We will continue cooperating with DAV in the future and we will propose organizing together volunteering activities for maintaining Via Carpatica trail sections, combined with attractive tourism programs. Via Carpatica trail hiking programs will be promoted through DAV platform for tours planning.

D. FAZIT (Deutsch)

Mit der Förderung durch die Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt wurde es der NGO Ecouri Verzi möglich Ihre Aktivitäten zur Umweltbildung und einem nachhaltigen Tourismus durch die Arbeiten am Fernwanderweg ViaCarpatica zu professionalisieren und weiterzuentwickeln. Die ursprünglichen Projektziele – auch wenn sie schon bei Antragstellung als sehr ambitioniert kritisiert wurden, konnten dank der kostenneutralen Verlängerung des Projektzeitraums mehr als erfüllt werden. Auch wenn es Defizite bei der Kommunikation und der Öffentlichkeitsarbeit gab, konnten viele Akteure, Interessierte und Freiwillige für ein Engagement gewonnen werden. Schon der Umfang der Aktivitäten impliziert, dass diese nur in Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Organisationen und den Beitrag zahlreicher Individuen umgesetzt werden konnte.

Relevanz des Vorhabens

Umweltbildung ist ein Schwachpunkt nicht nur in der schulischen Bildung sondern insgesamt in der Gesellschaft Rumäniens. Naturgemäß stößt in ärmeren Ländern das Thema Umwelt nicht wirklich auf große Resonanz. Doch mit wachsendem Wohlstand steigt auch die Sensibilität für Umweltthemen.

Ecouri Verzi bemüht sich auf vielen Ebenen erlebnisorientierte Umweltbildungsmaßnahmen mit ihrem bescheidenen finanziellen Mitteln umzusetzen. Das Engagement von Jugendlichen und Erwachsenen als Freiwillige im Rahmen der Aktivitäten zum Erhalt des Fernwanderwegs ViaCarpatica unterstreicht deren Bedeutung.

Ecouri Verzi ist einer der wenigen Nichtregierungsorganisationen in Rumänien, welche die Freiwilligenarbeit im Bereich von Umwelt seit Jahren und mit einer Kontinuität fördert und unterstützt, wie kaum eine andere Organisation. Das Projekt war dem Verein eine wichtige Unterstützung zu Professionalisierung Ihrer Aktivitäten.

Effektivität

Die gesetzten Ziele wurden teilweise weit über die gesetzten Benchmarks hinaus erreicht. Die umfangreichen Outputs, wie sie im Projektantrag dargestellt wurden, konnten zu 100% erzielt werden. Ohne die kostenneutrale Verlängerung wäre es aus zeitlichen Gründen jedoch nicht möglich gewesen.

Effizienz

Aufwand und Nutzen für Umweltbildungsmaßnahmen sind nie wirklich realistisch darzustellen. Aus der neueren Zeit der Umweltbildung und der Förderung des Umweltbewusstseins ordnet man die Bedeutung von erlebnisorientierten Maßnahmen als besonders hoch ein. Dabei entwickeln und verinnerlichen Kinder, Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene eine Sensibilität für Natur und Umwelt, die für das ganze Leben prägend ist. Gleichermassen tut dies das Wandern bzw. das Bergsteigen, wie es sich bei den 1,3 Millionen Mitgliedern des DAV bewährt hat. Diese erlebnisorientierten Maßnahmen sind aber entsprechend aufwendig und bauen vornehmlich auf ehrenamtlichem Engagement auf. Mit Blick auf die vielen ehrenamtlichen Beiträge von bis zu 400 Freiwilligen muss man in diesem Fall von einer hohen Effizienz ausgehen, auch wenn diese nicht genau beziffert oder gar monetarisiert werden kann.

Impact und Nachhaltigkeit

Auf der Ebene der Partnerorganisationen wie Schulen, Schutzgebietsverwaltungen, öffentlichen Einrichtungen sowie anderen Nichtregierungsorganisationen hatte das Projekt eine große Bedeutung für die Zusammenarbeit

und einen langfristige Kooperation. Diese Zusammenarbeit ist Grundlage für die zukünftige Umweltbildungsmaßnahmen von Ecouri Verzi. Nicht nur Schulen und andere Vereine arbeiten mit Ecouri Verzi intensiver zusammen den jeher. Dies zeigt schon die Unterstützung die Ecouri Verzi erhalten hat, um die Applikation ViaCarpatica mit Inhalt zu füllen. Während er Projektlaufzeit hat sich zudem eine weitere Zusammenarbeit mit den Bibliotheken des Landkreises Cluj-Napoca ergeben, wo Mitglieder von Ecouri Verzi Umweltbildungsmaßnahmen für Kinder durchführen.

Innovation und Modellcharakter

Ist das wirklich innovative und hat das Modellcharakter? Aus Sicht der deutschen Vereinslandschaft, dem überall vorhandenen ehrenamtlichen Engagement in Deutschland mag dies zunächst wenig innovativ erscheinen. Für ein ehemals kommunistisches Land ist dies jedoch etwas ganz anderes. Freiwilligenarbeit oder ehrenamtliches Engagement durchdringt nur langsam die Gesellschaft Rumäniens. Doch langsam und stetig verändert sich diese Haltung. Ecouri Verzi zeigt, dass dies auch in Rumänien Erfolg haben kann, zudem noch in einem schwierigen Bereich wie der Umweltbildung. Naccon und Ecouri Verzi haben mit der TravelApp ViaCarpatica die Grundlage für eine digitale Plattform für den Austausch von Wissen und Erfahrung geschaffen, die in den nächsten Jahren entlang des gesamten ViaCarpatica Fernwanderwegs weiterentwickelt wird. Die "TravelApp-ViaCarpatica" soll zur Informationsquelle für Wanderer und Gäste werden. Die besonders zielgruppenorientierten und an umweltorientierten Inhalte werden in den kommenden Jahren vertieft und weiterentwickelt.

Annex / Anhang

	Seite
A 00 Zusammenfassung der Projektergebnisse	1
A1.1 Einführung in das Wanderwegekonzept des DAV und des ÖAV / Introduction to the trail concept of the German Alpenverein DAV and the Austrian Alpenverein ÖAV	4
A1.2 Interpret Europe Seminarbericht Interpret Europe conference report	36
A1.3 Schulungskonzept für nachhaltige Entwicklung Concept Education Sustainable Development Training	45
A1.4 Curriculum für nachhaltige Entwicklung / Training programme for sustainable development.....	65
A1.5 Konzept für Freiwilligenarbeit Volunteering program concept.....	89
A1.6 Bericht zur Studienreise „Peaks of Balkans“ Report on the study tour to the „Peaks_of_Balkans“ Trail.....	114
A1.7 Junior Ranger – Diplom und Logos Junior Ranger diploma and logos	122
A2.1 Beschreibung des „Wald-Spiels“ Forest game description	133
A2.2 Beschreibung des „ViaCarpatica“ Geographie Spiels ViaCarpatica Game Geography	138
A3.1 Konzept für den Fernwanderweg ViaCarpatica Concept for the long distance hiking trail ViaCarpatica	144
A3.2 Karte zum ViaCarpatica Map of the ViaCarpatica LDHT	223
A3.3 Beschreibung der Wanderwege des ViaCarpatica Via Carpatica detailed trail description	224
A3.4 Text zur App TravelApp-ViaCarpatica Text for the TravelApp-ViaCarpatica	256
A4.1 Brochure zum Projekt Ecodidactica Brochure Project Ecodidactica	333
A4.2 Bücherlist die auf Webseite www.pasaportnatura.ro hochgeladne wurden / List of books uploaded to the site pasaportnatura.ro.....	339