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## PRESS RELEASE

### Successful conclusion of the conference ‘WH BEECH Communities - Experiences, results and conclusions’

In the framework of the BEECH POWER project, the City of Angermünde (DE), Slovenia Forest Service (SI) and the Paklenica National Park (HR) have been closely cooperating on the development of WH Beech Communities as model for ecosystem-based sustainable development.

For the conclusion of the BEECH POWER work package “[Empowering World Heritage Beech communities as model for ecosystem-based sustainable development](#)”, the [international conference](#) “*WH Beech Forest Communities - experiences, results and conclusions*” was held from 16 to 18 February in order to:

- share the experiences and results obtained within the work package “Empowering World Heritage Beech Communities as models for ecosystem-based sustainable development”,
- discuss further opportunities for WH Beech Communities as drivers for sustainable regional development and
- jointly define requirements, options and key points for enhanced regional cooperation and development of WH Beech Forest Communities.

Originally, the conference was planned as a hybrid event taking place in Angermünde and online. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the conference had to be held exclusively online. The conference was moderated by Dr. Anja Salzer and technically conducted by the European Wilderness Society.

### Strengthening the World Heritage Beech Communities concept

The conference was an important milestone for the respective Work Package. The conference provided the opportunity to disseminate the knowledge and experience with the development of WH Beech Communities which was obtained within the BEECH POWER project reaching nearly 70 representatives from different component parts of the Unesco World Heritage Series “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” in 11 countries. Moreover, the concept of WH Beech Communities was developed further and concretized: The successful story of a regionally embedded WH Beech Community was jointly developed defining key ideas, key actors and their values, key elements, actions and strategies as well as success factors and obstacles in the development of WH Beech Communities and enhanced regional cooperation.

The obtained conference results are synthesized in an Overall strategy for enhanced regional cooperation and development of WH communities.

The conference ended with the overall conclusion that joint encounters and the exchange of ideas, experiences, and practices, such as this workshop-style conference are of utmost importance for the further development of the UNESCO WH Beech Forests serial site and enhanced intraregional cooperation.



## Background: The BEECH POWER project

The UNESCO World Heritage (WH) Site ‘Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe’ represents the most complex transnational serial natural site in the UNESCO portfolio - comprising 94 component parts in 18 countries. The programme area shares almost 25% of the components parts distributed in 5 countries (AT, DE, HR, SK and SI). While local management units of the component parts face similar challenges, i.e. concerning buffer zone management, the respective environmental and socio-economic contexts differ considerably on local and national level. The main project objective is to improve management quality and effectiveness of the WH site to safeguard the ecosystem integrity of the single component parts by improving capacities and active participation possibilities of relevant stakeholders.

The project takes an ecosystem-based and participatory approach working on different administrative levels to anchor the WH site in sustainable regional development and produce replicable and innovative models for WH beech forests and their local surroundings (i.e. WH Beech Communities, sustainable buffer zone management, Beech Forest Quality Standard). The main outputs are guidelines and strategies for stakeholder participation and regional development, a handbook for buffer zone management, recommendations for visitor management, a communication concept and a Beech Forest Quality Standard that support protected area administrations, public authorities and actors from civil society in their daily work. The results will be applicable for other WH component parts outside the programme area. The transnational cooperation responds to the challenges of a transnational WH site, as comprehensive solutions must reflect the heterogeneity of the single component parts. Further, it ensures the establishment of a WH-wide learning network between different stakeholders that would not be possible on national level.

For more information on the project: <https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/BEECH-POWER.html>

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