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PRESS RELEASE

From a vision to concrete implementation - concluding the BEECH POWER project

To enhance the management quality and effectiveness of the UNESCO World Heritage Beech Forests by building capacities for stakeholder involvement and anchoring the World Heritage in the region - this was the main objective of the BEECH POWER project, funded by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme. The closing conference organised on the 29th March will mark the conclusion to a long-time commitment, which started in April 2019 and will formally end on 31st March 2022.

European beech grows nowhere else in the world but in Europe. The ongoing ecological process of beech forests spreading from small refuge areas throughout the continent since the last ice age is of outstanding universal value. For this reason, 94 of these beech forests distributed across 18 European countries are recognized as 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.

In order to ensure effective management of such a complex transnational site, both strong cooperation in the regions and beyond borders is essential.

The BEECH POWER project responded exactly to this need, by establishing a cooperation platform for stakeholders and harmonizing the management and conservation measures across sites and regions. The partnership believes, that the key to achieve a successful and long-term protection is its community-based approach, with a focus on young generations and participatory stakeholder involvement. The project recognized the important role that neighbouring communities of beech forests can play in preserving the common natural heritage and aimed to empower them to actively participate in the development of strategies and to support local sustainable development.

The development of several strategic tools along with the organization of workshops, trainings and exchanges document the relevance and creative force of the work of the BEECH POWER partnership: empowering World Heritage Beech Forest Communities, strengthening the processes of community development and the steps necessary for real change. Various materials accessible on the project website showcase the experiences accumulated and exchanged by the partners and the joint achievements.

The main BEECH POWER project results are:

- Governance strategies for activating and involving regional stakeholders in participatory planning processes and for integrating natural heritage in regional development planning
- Strategy for the creation of additional participatory processes in the surroundings of Protected Areas
- Pilot models for local Working Groups
- A pilot model for a school exchange program: BEECH ACADEMY
- Pilot models for regional World Heritage beech forest marketing concepts



- Cooperation models for World Heritage beech forest communities
- Strategy for the active involvement of stakeholders in World Heritage beech forest buffer zone management
- Strategy for conflict management in buffer zones of World Heritage beech forests
- Strategies for visitor management and knowledge transfer in buffer zones of World Heritage beech forest Protected Areas
- Strategies for sustainable forestry practices in buffer zones of World Heritage beech forests
- Guideline for ecosystem-based forest management practices in landscape conservation buffer zones of World Heritage beech forests.
- Code of quality management for World Heritage beech forests
- Strategy for improvement of management quality of World Heritage beech forests BEECH POWER Knowledge exchange platform

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the final event of the 3-year project will take place online on the 29th March at 9:00. Attendees will have a chance to listen to presentations and participate in discussions about the main project results and their continuation after the project ends. The organisers will be delighted to welcome all interested parties at the event!

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

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