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PRESS RELEASE

The BEECH POWER Knowledge exchange platform has launched

The newly developed BEECH POWER online platform serves as a networking and knowledge sharing hub on World Heritage (WH) Beech Forests. The platform was initiated by partners involved in the BEECH POWER project, supported by the Coordination office of the UNESCO WH Site ‘Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe’ at the Sonian Foundation (Belgium). The platform aims to support communication and cooperation between protected area management teams and responsible public authorities of protected areas comprising the WH component parts. It provides access to several WH relevant documents and can be continuously updated with additional information and data relating to the WH Site and its component parts.

The platform is open to all actors and practitioners from the WH Beech Forest network, anyone affiliated with, or expressing interest to support the WH Site can join. Joining the platform offers an opportunity to discuss and learn about protected areas comprising UNESCO WH Beech Forest component parts. Furthermore, it enables all users to share information on their component part/protected area, e.g. best-practice examples, management plans, research results, education activities, etc. It offers possibilities for future cooperation through development of joint projects and initiatives, strategies and capacity building activities.

Our aim for the creation of this pilot platform is to enable involved actors to exchange knowledge and good practices regarding WH component part management. It should further serve a platform for initiating a dialogue between relevant stakeholders and to initiate and strengthen cooperation that will create mutual benefits for the WH Site!

We welcome you to register and share your views in lively discussions! Please send your expression of interest to: Caroline Celis at ccelis@sonianfoundation.be, Hanna Öllös at hanna.ollos@wilderness-society.org and Marcus Waldherr at Marcus.Waldherr@hnee.de.



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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