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HUMANITA: The Farewell

Dear esteemed Stakeholders, Partners, and Colleagues,

On February 24, 2026, Zagreb hosted the international conference **The HUMANITA Summit: From Visitor Impact to Nature Protection – Building a Human–Nature Harmony**, the final event of the EU project “**HUMANITA – Human–Nature Interactions and Impacts of Tourist Activities on Protected Areas**” supported by the Interreg Central Europe Programme 2021–2027.

The HUMANITA project brings together 10 partners from Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, and Slovakia to address one of today’s key environmental and social challenges: how to manage tourism in natural protected areas without compromising ecological integrity.

From the perspective of the Project Partners, the **HUMANITA project at its core supports protected area managers by providing new monitoring strategies, pilot actions, and actionable insights to guide smarter decisions and safeguard natural heritage for future generations**. This collaborative effort also contributes to the creation of common transnational policy recommendations that strengthen

to foster a balanced relationship between tourism and nature conservation.

The final conference of the project, **The HUMANITA Summit**, was one of the few international conferences in Croatia dedicated to one of today's most pressing challenges facing natural protected areas: the environmental impacts of mass tourism. The event demonstrated how real tourism pressures on nature can be measured, and what concrete measures are already being implemented to safeguard the most valuable protected areas.

The programme focused on expert and scientific solutions, as well as practical examples from Croatia, including Krka, Mljet, Telašćica, and Kamenjak, together with partner experiences from their protected areas. While Croatia was at the centre of the discussion, the issue was framed within a broader European context, enabling comparisons of approaches and the transfer of good practices among partner countries.

The conference brought together high-level decision-makers and experts. Participants included representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Green Transition of the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry of Regional Development and European Union, the Zagreb County Tourist Board, directors of national and nature parks in Croatia, and representatives of protected areas from across Europe.

The event also welcomed Croatian and international representatives from academia and research institutions, including the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, University of Zagreb, the University of Žilina, the University of Parma, Carinthia University of Applied Sciences, EURAC Research, CEEweb for Biodiversity, the Italian Ministry for Environment and Energy Security, and the Czech Institute for Heritage Interpretation, among many other experts.

The conference was also the occasion to open a fruitful dialogue on a strategic and tricky issue in the field of nature conservation: **how to preserve nature and the environment while ensuring that tourism remains sustainable and economically viable in the long term.** Responsibility towards future generations emerged as a key theme, as the way tourism is managed today will directly determine whether the natural heritage will still exist tomorrow.

Once again, the HUMANITA Summit confirmed that the future of nature and protected areas depends on achieving a balance between visitor experience and conservation, as well as on the ability of different sectors to develop and implement a shared vision of sustainable human–nature harmony.

The HUMANITA project has developed tools and methodologies to better understand and manage the impact of tourism on natural areas. Through transnational cooperation, partners implemented pilot actions, created monitoring systems, and produced practical recommendations for decision-makers, while actively engaging local communities and visitors.

The final conference in Zagreb marked the culmination of the project activities. It provided a valuable platform for connecting stakeholders and shaping a shared vision of harmonious coexistence between people and nature.

The HUMANITA project officially concludes on 31 March 2026, leaving a strong legacy of knowledge, tools, and policy recommendations to support the long-term

The HUMANITA impact and long-term sustainability include several key outputs and results. Namely, the HUMANITA project focused on enhancing awareness of human-nature interactions and impacts and fostering responsible behaviour towards natural heritage sites by visitors. It aimed to address the environmental impacts caused by tourism, such as soil erosion, wildlife disturbance, and pollution. The project's outputs include tools and methodologies for effective impact monitoring and assessment, visitor engagement through citizen science initiatives, and participatory environmental education. Key outputs include guidelines for developing heritage narratives, training materials for practitioners, and strategies for improving visitor engagement in conservation efforts. These outputs are designed to help create sustainable tourism practices and raise awareness about human impacts on natural environments. **[The most relevant outputs developed by HUMANITA](#)**, to be transferred and applied in other similar contexts, are as follows.

The **Transnational monitoring strategy** sets the framework for the development, testing, and evaluation of a monitoring system that supports visitor management activities of pilot sites within the INTERREG Central Europe project HUMANITA. It is also the framework for pilot actions, based on the report on best practices and gaps to monitor environmental impacts of tourism and report on tourism impacts at pilot sites. Indicators and methods were selected by relevance, validity, practicality, clarity, credibility, and public interest.

Following the approach of the jointly developed Transnational monitoring strategy, **five (5) pilot actions** were developed for the purpose of testing new methods and approaches to collect information on chosen indicators that provide a strategic and accessible overview of the impact of different tourist activities on natural values in protected areas.

Innovative solutions (technological, methodological) were jointly developed to assess the impact of tourist activities on natural values, to provide complex information on changes and trends in the condition of the environment, for the purpose of meeting the visitor management use requirements in the protected areas. They are all archived in one place, in the **Catalogue of Monitoring methods**. **The online monitoring toolbox** is available here: **[BioMONITec - Biodiversity Monitoring Technologies](#)**.

Local action plans were developed for pilot sites to provide a framework for the protected areas to monitor human impacts, further engage local people and tourists in monitoring and nature protection, develop proactive programs for managing ecosystems and their use by visitors, and properly manage human-nature conflicts, respecting the local context and legal framework.

As HUMANITA comes to a close, its impact continues through strengthened cooperation, empowered stakeholders, and a shared commitment to safeguarding nature while enabling responsible visitation. The project's results lay the groundwork for future initiatives and policies that will carry this mission forward.

We want to thank all partners and stakeholders for their collaboration and contribution to the successful implementation of the project.

Thank you for being a part of this journey and following us until the very end.

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