Context of assignment

- ASA Engagement Global scholarship program
- 3-month internship at the GIZ Open Regional Fund - Biodiversity

Aim of ASA assignment:
1. Assessment of the potential of ecotourism for the nature and economic development of the cross-border region of Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia
2. Develop recommendations for TEM and other initiatives related to ecotourism

Definition Ecotourism

"Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education"

(International Ecotourism Society 2015)
Method

2. Interviews

Albania
- CABRA (GIZ)
- CSB/LOZ
- Coastal Management (GIZ)
- SARCO Thane and Kukes (GIZ)
- SFA - Peaks of the Balkan (GIZ)
- EnADE / Swin GIZ
- PINEA
- CED
- Ministry of Tourism
- GIZ/Albania
- Dacia Consulting
- CHiM
- AUA
- NATURAL / Naturalpro
- MMP
- INCA
- Visit Albania
- Association for tourism development
- Guesthouses
- Official joint stakeholder meetings with TEM-project in Kukes and Diber

Kosovo
- COSIRA (GIZ)
- KATA
- Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Shar Planina National Park
- Tourist Information Centre Prizren
- Shar Ecosphere
- FINCH
- SDA-South
- Tourist Information Center Peja
- University Faculty of Business and Faculty of Tourism
- DNO West
- SBK
- Balkan Natural Adventures
- Directorate for Tourism and Sustainable Development
- Kosovo Tourism Association Region Peja

Bosnia and Herzegovina
- VAC/Harman

Macedonia
- LENAMA / Balkan Hiking Adventures (GIZ)
- MESS
- Agency for promotion and support of tourism
- Capacity Development Institute
- Mountain Club "Juboten"

3. In-Field

1. Desk Research

Korab Koritnik Nature Park
Albania

Sar Planina Macedonia

Mavrovo National Park, Macedonia

Korabi Mt

Strazovica, Shar Mt

Dragash Shar Mt

Black Lake Kosovska

Drin sto. Alto
**Albania/ Korab-Koritnik**

- Lack of monitoring, research and data
- Management plan ahead of development
- Different stages of regional economic and touristic development (Kukes and Diber)
- No Natural Park Directorate/office in place
- Lack of touristic infrastructure
- Acceptance and compensation issues towards nature parks
- Ownership problems
- Littering/ Waste management
- Economically disadvantaged

😊 Korab-Koritnik is slowly, but increasingly gaining more attention from NGO’s, tourism operators and researchers
😊 Cultural authenticity and beauty of nature as assets for ecotourism

**Kosovo/ Sharri NP**

- Existing sound legal framework, standards, strategies but lack of implementation
- ‘Ecotourism Umbrella Organisation’ is missing which could function as a regional coordinator
- Need for diversification of ecotourism offers (apart from hiking)
- Littering and Waste Management problems
- Local acceptance -> people need tangible best practice examples
- Women in rural areas excluded from (tourism) businesses

😊 National Park Management Office in Prizren serve as a hub for ecotourism related projects
😊 Positive associations with Sharri Mountains (diversity of ethnicities, food, biodiversity and traditions)

**Mavrovo NP**

- Shar Planina in long process of proclamation as PA ➔ 83% local acceptance as potential for future ecotourism development (97.5%)
- Lack of coordination and cooperation between tourism stakeholders ➔ adverse strategies and inconsistent promotion
- Shar Planina, Mavrovo NP advanced

😊 SWG/ Balkan Hiking Adventures (GIZ) provides ecotourism related information and established a regional network
😊 Chance for a new beginning once Shar Planina is proclaimed as PA

**TEM-region has outstanding natural potential!**

The challenge for future ecotourism development is valuing and using the potential in a sustainable manner!

- Wild Mountain Goat
- Balkan Lynx
- Brown Bear
Opportunities

- Increasing international touristic demand for pristine nature experiences particularly closed to Europe
- Diversified landscapes and natural resources availability for diversification of ecotourism products in place
- Authenticity and hospitality
- Potentially one of the largest coherent protected cross-border areas in Europe
- Good geostrategical position for ecotourism
- Existing networking on personal/NGO level
- TEM-Region branding
- Women and their Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) as promising target group
- Merging of culture/tradition and nature ➔ connects locals to their natural environment

Challenges

- Implementation of legal framework (unauthorized and unplanned construction, waste, corruption etc.)
- Political instability ➔ Information and expertise loss
- Lack of political backing/ will for ecotourism development
- Maintenance of products and projects. long-term thinking
- Unmet expectations of ecotourists (used to EU standards) ➔ damaged reputation
- Lack of knowledge about ecotourism
- Drain of money to foreign countries/capital cities
Ecotourism as a potential tool for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development? A critical review for TEM-region

Vivianne Rau

Recommendations for development partners, implementers and ecotourism related stakeholders

- Inclusive approach particularly in project development phase
- Make use of existent (human) capacities and information for cross-border cooperation
- Promote best practice examples
- Women as a focus target group
- Broaden horizon about complex spheres of ecotourism
- Establish a (new, sustainable) trans-boundary common vision
- Cooperation with respective local, universities
- Mutual learning through participatory ecotourism offers
- Diversify ecotouristic products and offer
- Establishment, support and networking of Tourism Information Centers
- Ensure that revenues from ecotourism contribute to nature conservation
- Quality before quantity and long-term thinking

Tourism and Biodiversity current development and future prospects

- JAR (Joint Advisory Body) transboundary network NCA (AL), MES (HES), NP Sharri (IO) – enriching regional cooperation mechanisms and best practice
- Potential replication processes in NO and AI of Friends of Sharri – best practice, coordination and education function
- GIZ, STP Macedonia with cross-border outreach MST (500 km high Scandal Trail) – diversification of actors and touristic offer
- Cooperation between NP Sharri and NP Bayerischer Wald – mutual exchange about cross-border tourist management
- JAB (Joint Advisory Body) transboundary network INCA (AL), MES (MKD), NP Sharri (KO) ➔ enforcing regional cooperation mechanisms and best practice

- Potential replication processes in KO and AL of Friends of Sharri ➔ best practice, coordination and education function

- GIZ SFF Macedonia with cross-border outreach HST (500 km High Scardus Trail) ➔ diversification of actors and touristic offer

- Cooperation between NP Sharri and NP "Bayerischer Wald" ➔ mutual exchange about cross-border tourist management

Valuing biodiversity assets through ecotourism in South-East Europe

This presentation briefly summarizes the main findings of our project. All sources of information can be found in the reference chapter of the report.

Thank you for your kind attention!

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