

Education Platform for Children in Divjaka-Karavasta National Park, Albania

Transfer project in the framework of the Klaus Toepfer Fellowship Programme

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Executive Summary

“Education platform for children in the Divjaka-Karavasta National Park” is an environmental education platform designed for children, based on the approach of “Education through Interpretation”. This document aims to support the Regional Administration of Protected Areas-Fier (Fier-RAPA) to implement environmental education in Divjaka-Karavasta National Park.

The document contains two basic elements: the interpretation product and guidelines to help users while implementing it in practice. Education through interpretation aims to help visitors (children) draw their own understanding of the places they visit (in this case parks).

The reason why this project focuses on education through interpretation with children as target group is because: (i) nowadays the young generation is losing connection with wildlife, while the connection with technology is becoming more intensive day by day; (ii) park administrations are new institutions, which are still not implementing proper education programmes due to other major problems, although education is in their management objectives; (iii) recently parks are becoming tourist attractions, but they are not accomplishing their main objectives (conservation, tourism, awareness and education) because of many issues regarding infrastructure, finances, and staff.

The education platform through interpretation is an opportunity to start the education process with the existing capacities, baseline costs (or no cost), and in the same time achieve other management objectives (awareness, wildlife conservation and tourism).

This project focuses on the Divjake-Karavasta National Park, as one of the parks with the greatest potential and need for the implementation of this program. It is a Ramsar site, IBA, has the largest lagoon and a great complexity of habitats. The Park administration is very interested to implement education programs, while there is a basic infrastructure (trail, bridge, observation towers, and the information centre is under construction), that can be useful for the implementation of education program.

The program is designed for children, high school students or families, of the 5-12 years age group. The education package combines a series of outdoor activities, games related with nature and mini projects in class, based on three main themes: Divjake-Karavasta National Park, the Pelican and the other breeding pairs of the lagoon. These themes are inclusive and representative of the profile of the park and they comprise the other elements of the ecosystem, wildlife, local community, zoning system etc. All these concepts are shown and broadcast in the simplest way to the children, coupled with mythical and historical elements

and facts from the park. Children participate in activities, games and mini projects which hide a problem, mission, and concept on nature that they have to discover during the event. All interpretive products are presented as printable resources, associated with further implementation clarifications for users.

By contributing to the education of the young generation on the importance of biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources, a good step is done in transmitting conservation values to other main users of natural resources, such as parents and the wider community.

This initiative can be considered as an innovation in education and conservation of values, different from the classical education, not only for my organisation, but in Albanian parks. It is also applicable in other countries of the KTF region. It is proposed for the first time in Divjake-Karavasta Park with the possibility of expansion to other parks in Albania.