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SHAPE

CASE STUDY OF GOVERNANCE OF NORTH KARELIA BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnerships for Ecotourism
Deliverable DT 3.2.1

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1. North Karelia biosphere Reserve

North Karelia Biosphere Reserve (NKBR) is located in North Karelia province, Eastern Finland. The territory of the reserve is about 7 900 km². This area includes municipalities of Lieksa, Ilomantsi and Joensuu (Tuupovaara district), with overall population of approximately 21000 people. The Biosphere Reserve (BR) activities occur in the whole North Karelian province.

2. SHA Vision and Core Objectives

NKBR seeks ways of improving the overall relationship between North Karelians and their environment. All activities are aimed at creating regional sustainable development solutions for better economy and the environment. The key objectives are:

- **Exchange and transfer of ideas and knowledge on sustainability** (core areas are Diversity, Natural resources, Energy and Climate Change).
- **Sustainable development (SD) solutions for better economy and the environment** (using projects, studies and researches).
- **Awareness that helps the inhabitants focus more on sustainable solutions** (the BR promotes a learning culture by encouraging more voluntary actions).

3. SHA Governance Structure

Steering committee:

- a yearly meeting day organised in one of the BR municipalities (circulating); 25 permanent participants (voluntary) from stakeholder organisations and partners + varying number of experts and other visitors (municipalities, universities, businesses, NGO's, agencies etc)
- what has been done in the BR & is still going on, where to go next – presentations and discussions for future actions

Working committee (board)

- 5-8 times a year, 8 members (chairperson and members are voluntary and come from key organisations) + a secretary (employed); visiting experts are invited as needed
- working committee makes BR operational decisions along the lines of the steering committee

“BR office”

- coordinator, project staff; located in the Centre of Economic Development, transport and the Environment for North Karelia (regional, governmental unit) where the office is located
- office takes care of the most of practical work

Project structure

- projects and co-operation are the tools for that allow the BR to exist and be visible and topical
- BR has own projects together with various partners; BR takes part in others' projects and processes

The NKBR acts as an intermediary between North Karelians (stakeholders) and MaB programme and National Mab Committee, but it also has close relationships with government's regional activities. The administration has changed several times during 25 years, and funding has changed according to political changes. UNESCO MaB guidelines for setting up a BR have been followed all the way.

Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for North Karelia has been the key actor together with municipality of Ilomantsi, City of Lieksa and City of Joensuu since the last admin

change. Regional stakeholders responsible for governing the BR have been included in the governance as well as businesses and NGOs.

At present BR's governance model combines the regional network of sustainability projects, interdisciplinary research, and extensive local-oriented partnership co-operation (the NKBR partners). The BR covers officially the city of Iloanta, Lieksa, and Joensuu's Tuupovaara areas, although the activity extends almost to the whole of the province; with governance consisting representation of region's stakeholders that form the NKBR steering committee.

4. Decision Making Process

There is no single organisation responsible for the NKBR area. BR is a unit of co-operation, which works on voluntary basis according to the prevalent legislation and rules, and in co-operation with those who are legally responsible for management, development, and conservation, etc of the area. We are not landowners nor "managers", except for cases which are agreed with those responsible for management. BR decisions are, however, done in the working committee. BR coordinator is the secretary and the committee decides.

There are tens of persons doing management decisions in BR organisations.

5. Communication

North Karelia Biosphere Reserve has both internal and external communication plans. The steering committee consists of a representation of key stakeholders (government, private institutes, education, SMEs, etc) who define the BR goals and actions, as well as issues at hand. The outcomes of the internal communication is then shared with interested parties (depending on the issue at hand), using the mode rendered as most efficient for spreading that information (specific target group, or public). The external communication have been for example in form of a press release, online documents, articles, or using BR's social media. The BR also has a yearly magazine that features ongoing and upcoming actions by the BR, as well as good practices from the region. These are distributed around mid-summer to over 10,000 households across North Karelia.

6. Resources

The basics with present structure are 1) maintaining the office, steering group, working group and getting the project funding for existing 2) running the projects for practical BR results & visibility

With the present limited funding our options are fully in full use – more project money would be available, but we have no capability to handle it. Money for each more permanent person would directly increase visibility and opportunities to help the local actors and increase the project funding 5-8 fold as related to the money used for employing the person.