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## Nature conservation and nature experiences for protected areas: Developing socio-economic monitoring together



Widuchowa (ots) -

**How do you combine nature conservation and tourism in sensitive protected areas? The German-Polish project 'MoPA' is developing innovative approaches for sustainable visitor management and socio-economic monitoring - a balancing act between conservation and experience in the Lower Oder Valley.**

There are more than 20 protected areas in the Pomerania Euroregion, which are located in different national parks as well as in different countries. If you look at the system from a nature perspective, it forms a large whole with ecological connections and dependencies.

As conflicts of interest between nature conservation, economic and settlement development have been identified, it is necessary to develop methods with which comparable data can be collected. In German-Polish cooperation, the "MoPA" project aims to simplify existing monitoring procedures for protected areas in the Pomerania Euroregion and supplement them with socio-economic methods.

For a site visit, we meet Norman Ebert, the project coordinator from the University for Sustainable Development in Eberswalde and the lead partner of the project Wojtek Zbaraszewski from the West Pomeranian Technical University in Szczecin on the Polish side in the village of Widuchowa. The meeting point is opposite the supermarket, an easy-to-find spot in the otherwise completely quiet village.

After a few more minutes by car and a 10-minute walk, we arrive at an impressive viewing platform, which offers incredible views over the Lower Oder Valley. In addition to the four universities involved in the project, there are other partners in the project who contribute a lot of information and experience. Dirk Treichel, head of the Lower Oder Valley National Park, explains that the most important thing in nature conservation is to do nothing at all. But that is precisely the problem, when different interests come together and the needs of the population have to be reconciled with those of nature, then doing nothing is no longer possible.

Wojtek Zbaraszewski explains 'an important element of the project is the development of a simplified method for estimating the regional economic effects of tourism in protected areas'. And for Norman Ebert in particular, this means: "We are looking very specifically at nature experience locations that are linked to infrastructure."

Visitor management is crucial for protected areas because the main objective of national parks in particular is to protect nature and the values of nature, and that can only happen if it is not overused by tourism."

Mr Igor Szakowski, head of the administration for the Polish Lower Oder Valley Landscape Park, has organised canoes for us so that we can also experience the link between the two countries, the Oder. An old lock near Gryfino is the destination of the short canoe trip. We only make it to the observation tower in Mescherin by car to drive past it; the tower is the kind of nature experience that Norman Ebert talked about. This is a good place to direct visitors, while other areas are more protected and

nature can develop undisturbed.

You can find more information about the MoPA project here: <https://mopa.zut.edu.pl>

### Description of the project:

Cohesion policy has defined clear objectives for the 2021-2027 funding period: A smart Europe through innovation, a greener, low-carbon Europe, a more connected Europe, a more social Europe and a Europe that is closer to its citizens. Sustainable challenges are becoming the focus of society, particularly in Germany and its neighbouring countries. The "EU4regions" project will produce high-quality multimedia and journalistic information on cohesion policy and then disseminate it widely. Within 12 months, Interreg projects from western and eastern Germany and neighbouring countries/regions will be presented to highlight local challenges. The countries concerned are Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands and Denmark. Our thematic focus is on sustainability, whereby we understand sustainability as a whole. Although climate issues are at the centre of attention, they are complemented by economic and social aspects. The aim is to show how EU cohesion policy affects regions and people.

EU4regions receives funding from the EU Commission.

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### Medieninhalte



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