



ERASMUS +  
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GAMIFICATION AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL  
FOR UPPER SCHOOLS ON PARKS  
AND ENVIRONMENT [GET UP!]



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## THE LITTLE CARPATHIANS – VIDEO INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION



The interview was conducted in December 2021.

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## THE START OF THE INTERVIEW.

### **1 Can you describe the protected landscape area personnel-wise? How many employees are there and what fields do they specialize in?**

There are 12 people managing the protected landscape area, a manager, a technical-economic specialist, three wardens and the rest are specialists in their respective areas. We have a zoologist, a botanist, a landscape architect, an agrarian, an inorganic chemist and a woodlander.

### **2 What is the average salary? You do not have to mention a specific number, this information is more important as a comparison to the entire budget of the protected landscape area.**

Since we are employees of the public administration our salary is based on pay charts. These pay charts take into account pay classes and pay grades. Simply said, the employees' pays rise with the number of years they have spent working. The initial pay of specialized workers is around 900 euros and after around 20 years of experience it can rise up to around 1100 euros gross.

### **3 What is your average annual budget and what do you spend it on?**

Technically we do not have a budget, because we are a part of the organization called The State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic, which basically includes the management of each protected landscape area and national parks, i.e. the whole organization has a single budget and we get finances from this budget. Of course some of it goes towards the salaries, so that's the labour costs. They comprise roughly around 200 000 euros a year for the 12 employees.....

Obviously it's hard to calculate since we participate in various projects, so part of the finances comes from the state budget and part comes from the projects. As for the labour costs, they are mostly covered from the finances gained from the projects. All this means that it is difficult to state exactly what amount of money is spent on what activity. To get more precise numbers, I would need time to go over it and calculate it.

#### 4 What species of plants and animals are the most important or prevalent?

Our protected landscape area is located in the Little Carpathians mountain range, which is very interesting as it is located at the border of two regions. One is Pannonia, this part includes mostly lowlands and the other is the Carpathians region. This phenomenon resulted in great biodiversity due to the presence of organisms from both regions. It is quite difficult to deem some more important than the rest. There are a few kinds of plants that are widespread in the Mediterranean and this is the northernmost place they can grow in. One of these is the spineless butcher's-broom (*Ruscushypoglossum*), which grows solely in the Little Carpathians. Then there are many species of orchids (the *Orchidaceae* family) that are quite rare as they can only grow in warmer biotopes, e.g. at the forest border or simply on small meadows. They belong to very rare plants. There is a large number of plants then. Regarding animals, we can name all sorts of the species living here. I would mention the stone crayfish (*Austropotamobiustorrentium*), which is found only in the streams of the Little Carpathians. It's basically a native species living in such mountain streams and brooks.

And then there is a large number of insects. The biggest diversity is apparent in the warm biotopes located at the border of the forest and the meadow or pastures and vineyards. It is this wine region which is significant for the biodiversity.

Then there are various species of birds. The rarer ones are the eastern imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), the white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) nests here as well.

I could name some species typical of this region from each category.

#### 5 Do you encounter problems with fauna in connection with humans and human interaction?

I roughly know what you mean by this question – if there are any conflicts between people and wild animals. Basically we don't have problems with protected species of animals. On the other hand, problems are caused by game. Damage is reported in vineyards as well as on agricultural crops. As for serious encounters, a bit more problematic may appear the European beaver (*Castor fiber*), which has spread widely here and its behaviour may collide with human activity, for instance an activity resulting in flooding crops or literally endangering some properties etc.

**6 Does your office compensate for damage caused to farmers by wild animals? If it does, what is the top amount?**

Such cases are dealt with in the Nature and Landscape Protection Act and its decree. The decree lists the potential species of animals which may cause damage and in that case the person concerned may ask for compensation. The list includes beasts like the wolf or the bear and then other potential harmful species such as the beaver, the otter, the cormorant or the heron. Our office does not compensate for such damage since we are a technical organization by law, the compensations are given by the nature protection body, i.e. the District authorities.

**7 What type of profitable activities are allowed in the protected landscape area? For instance in terms of wood harvesting or agriculture?**

The protected landscape area is a protected area where land management is not restricted to a great extent, so wood harvesting is allowed. Also arable land may be cultivated in the protected landscape area. However, there are some activities requiring a permit – for example to fence a property, to place some portable equipment on the property etc. We need to deal with individual cases, so this way we regulate what is done in the area, but we cannot say that such activities are strictly prohibited.

**8 Does it mean profitable tourism would be allowed?**

Tourism as such is acceptable. The protected landscape area permits free hiking and the activities connected with that with the aim of gaining profit, like guiding services, are allowed.

**9 What sort of activities are generally allowed in the protected landscape area?**

Again it's a complex question. Let me look at it from the other side – forbidden is only the driving and parking of motor vehicles and bicycle standing. However, bicycle riding and standing is possible on local roads, purpose-built roads, cycle routes etc. It means cyclotourism is allowed in specific places or generally on roads. Other

activities, namely forestry, agriculture, picking herbs, berries, mushrooms, everything is permitted in the protected landscape area, which is level 2. They are forbidden in higher levels (level 4 and 5). When we consider all the acreage of the protected landscape area, it comprises only 2% of the higher level.

**10 What are the most popular tourist attractions in the protected landscape area, waterfalls or some mountains?**

In the Little Carpathians we have a large number of such attractions and people visit various places. Namely close to Bratislava is Mount Devínska Kobyla, Bratislava Forest Park, in our area in the vicinity of the town of Pezinok it is Pezinská Baba (a mountain pass), close to Modra it is Zochova Chata (a recreational area), Mount Veľká Homola with an observation tower, which is frequently sought.

Then the high peaks of the Little Carpathians, like Mounts Vysoká, Roštún, Záruby, which are highly popular. Of course, Driny Cave, the only cave open for the public in western Slovakia, attracts a large number of visitors. Going northwards up to Čachtice Castle, a popular landmark in the northern part, it is possible to find something of interest anywhere where people enjoy going.

**11 Does the Protection Landscape Area administration manage, organize or provide activities of infrastructure for tourists?**

We don't really provide such activities. We don't even have our own infrastructure, that's why we don't provide such things. Theoretically speaking, we could offer guiding services, but it needs to be completed. It is one of those things which we as the administration may deal with in the future.

**12 Does your administration provide environmental education in local schools? If you do, how many students participate every year?**

We do. In the times before the pandemic, we used to organize various events, such as lectures in schools or excursions or on special occasions like Earth Day or Parks Day we organized some events. It's hard to say how many of them a year, because it varies from year to year, also the number of events varies, but I would say a few hundred students, schoolchildren a year.

**13 What kinds of agricultural activities are done in the protected landscape area?**

It is basically various agricultural activities since there are also parts here with arable land, so it's the cultivation of the land. Part of the vineyards is in the protected landscape area as well and some parts are meadows, pastures. So we do common agricultural activities in the area.

**14 Do you cooperate or have any contracts with the local farmers? Farms right in the protected landscape area, the sale of the local goods..**

We don't cooperate with the local farmers. Basically there is such a possibility, I know it from foreign parks, there may be cooperation between the park and the farmers and they use the logo of the particular protected landscape area, which is sort of a mark that the product comes from the area. But we don't do anything in that respect.

**15 What are the most relevant and characteristic aspects of your park? What causes problems and what is fulfilling?**

Let me start from the back. What is the most fulfilling and what causes most problems. And that is the same basically. And that's people. On the one hand it is pleasing, on the other hand troublesome. So it's two-edged, I would say. On the one hand, we need to protect the nature from humans, but on the other hand, we are glad that people go out into the countryside because that way environmental awareness is raised and this awareness is quite high in this region where we live, where's Bratislava, Trnava, big towns, a large concentration of people. And this helps us with new things and with the nature protection. So on the one hand, a lot of people in that nature worries us, but on the other hand, more people see more. I would say it that way.

And of course we can also say what is the added value because if we consider the salary, as I mentioned before, it is not for people who wish to earn a lot. It is more work for enthusiastic people, for the people living for the work itself. And the added value is that you can go out into the countryside and in your working time do what

you enjoy doing. It means most of my colleagues and the people in the nature protection simply do what they love doing and that is the most significant about it.

## THE END OF THE INTERVIEW

**The video where we interviewed the park manager is available here:**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yfo-KjYjdFsZdy5zz3gr\\_33HJtLalPF9/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yfo-KjYjdFsZdy5zz3gr_33HJtLalPF9/view?usp=sharing)

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