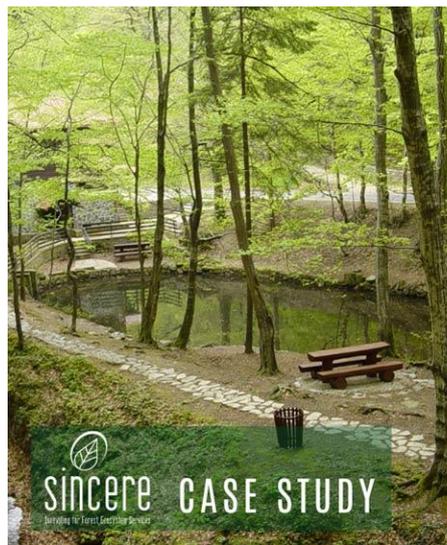


Understanding the health functions of peri-urban forests in protected areas and Payment for Ecosystem Services

This case study focused on valorisation of recreational functions of the Nature Park Medvednica in Croatia through direct payments for recreational activities and donations towards facility management.



Understanding the health functions of peri-urban forests in protected areas

Money collected from the payment for ecosystem services scheme supports sustainable forest management...

...while people understand the benefits of forest on their health.

Public Institution Nature Park Medvednica in collaboration with European Forest Institute

Location: Public Institution Nature Park Medvednica, Croatia

Type of business model: One-time concession permits and donation boxes

Ecosystem services targeted: Social and ecological FES (health, vacation, recreation, tourism, biodiversity, climate)

Providers: Public administration of the park and private owners

Users: Organisations, companies, associations and all who organise events in the area of the park visitors

Stakeholders consulted: Public administration of the park, Institute for Development and International Relations, Civil society, Croatian Mountain rescue service, businesses (hotel, resorts, web service providers)

📍 Context

Medvednica is a nature park (IUCN category V) near the Croatian capital, Zagreb. Almost a quarter of the Croatian population lives in the surroundings. The park's main phenomenon is well-preserved forests: 81% of the area is covered by forest. Forests provide multiple goods, such as places for sport and recreation. Many diverse stakeholders use the Nature Park Medvednica with the annual number of visitors estimated to be about 1 million per year (of which 90% are domestic).

The case study is implemented in the context of an existing and new national legislation, which endorses and governs a permit system for the use of FES in relation to sports and recreation activities. The legislation was adopted shortly before the beginning of this case study and demonstrates how national policies might support FES. The legislation also emphasises the top-level support for valorisation of FES in Croatia. Nature Park Medvednica is managed by a public entity under the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of the Republic of Croatia.

🎯 Objective

- Develop several scenarios for payments of FES (health benefits) and empower future management of the park.
- Raise funds, monitor all sport events, and ensure that these are held sustainably. The innovative mechanism (IM) consists of **one-time concession permits implemented in the Medvednica Nature Park**.
- Raise money for new content and infrastructure to support human health and wellbeing via a second IM consisting of **donation boxes**.

➔ Implementation

The issuing of one-time concession permits related to sports and recreation events was implemented in 2019 allowing for larger groups to organise events in the park. Voluntary donation boxes were implemented to improve and maintain recreational facilities but failed as a funding source. The resources gathered through permits are collected in a fund.



➤ Outputs

- Several meetings with stakeholders raised awareness about the benefits that Nature Park Medvednica provides for well-being and health through recreation, as well as through the FES in general.
- The effect of the one-time concession permits is to prepare and gain acceptance from user groups in paying for using the park for larger events.

📊 Outcomes

The use of mandatory concession permits enabled the dispersion of large groups away from peak visitor zones, reducing conflicts between users. The issuing of permits generated funds for investing in recreational infrastructure, such as a Nordic walking trail, possibly incentivising users to exercise more, and thus have an impact on public health.

The IM also involved monitoring damage to soil, flora, and fauna, and tracking visitors, allowing the Nature Park to prescribe conditions under which activities can be carried out to reduce the impact on certain critical areas when issuing permits.

🌳 Impact

- The introduction of payments for FES will improve recreational opportunities for different user groups and reduce conflicts between users, enhancing in turn the recreational experience for all.
- Improved recreational services could increase the demand for the park's recreational services and motivate more people to use the park, possibly having an impact on public health.

📈 Upscaling potential

National geographical upscaling:

The case study is implemented under national legislation and therefore similar initiatives could be implemented throughout Croatia while benefitting from the lessons learned in the Nature Park Medvednica. The implementation process should outline implementation plans and involve multi-actor groups to raise awareness and acceptance of the use of permits.

Upscaling to other schemes:

Selling permits is quite generic and can be applied to other efforts targeting other forms of recreation when the users benefit from access rights they do not otherwise have (riding or biking tracks, and spatial dispersal of activities to reduce conflicts). This could include mountain biking, horseback riding or forest camping, to the extent that users experience a welfare gain.

Upscaling in scope:

The instrument used in the Croatian case study primarily targeted recreation, with potential spill-over effects for biodiversity. The use of the instrument vis-à-vis other FES does not appear straightforward.

Upscaling to other countries:

For this case study to be implemented in other countries, public and private forest owners must be able to demand payment for additional services or access rights beyond what is already legally available for forest users. Previous research shows that such market-based provision of services beyond current rights are in place in some countries for some activities.

Further information

Case study coordinator: Martina Belović Kelemen, martina.belovic.kelemen@pp-medvednica.hr

[Case study webpage](#)

Martina Jurjević Varga, martina.j.varga@pp-medvednica.hr

Synthesis report: [D4.2 Synthesis report of the experiences and lessons learnt, situating them in the global experiences and knowledge](#)

Upscaling report: [D4.1 Assessing the upscaling potential of SINCERE IAs using a Theory of Change structure](#)

Explore more findings from SINCERE case studies: www.sincereforests.eu/resources/factsheets/



About SINCERE

Spurring INnovations for forest eCosystem sERVICES in Europe (SINCERE) is a four-year project to develop novel policies and new business models by connecting knowledge and expertise from practice, science and policy, across Europe and beyond.

This project has received funding from the European Union's H2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 773702



icons by [Icons8](#)