



Regional Bureau
for Science and Culture
in Europe

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



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Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Man and the
Biosphere
Programme

REGIONAL WORKSHOP

REVEILING

THE UNEXPLORED POTENTIAL OF

BIOSPHERE RESERVES Around the Mediterranean

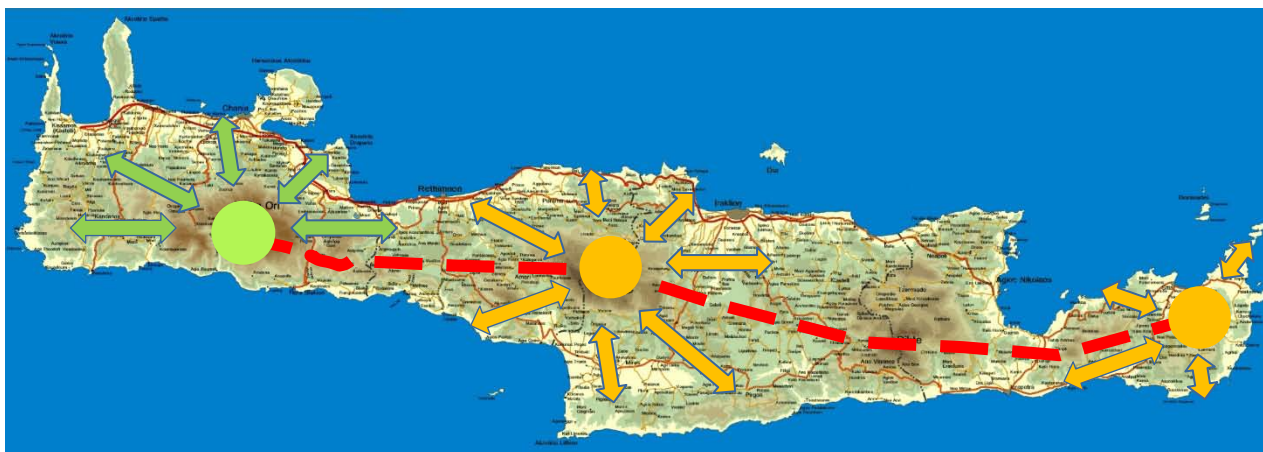
Chania – Crete

3-5 October 2016

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE GORGE OF SAMARIA BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The Gorge of Samaria is a Biosphere Reserve since 1981. It is widely recognized as the natural symbol of Crete while it maintains a key role in the sustainable development of the tourism industry of the Island (3.5 million tourists per year in Crete, 120.000 out of whom cross the Samaria Gorge). The Gorge of Samaria itself is the “heart” of Lefka Ori, Crete’s biggest and westernmost mountain range, that dominates the southwestern part of the island. In total more than 50 peaks of the impressive mountain range exceed 2000 meters. On the contrast, the area is divided by several gorges that cross the land to end up to the Libyan Sea creating thus dramatic wild landscapes. Due to its biogeographical location (in the crossroad of three continents: Europe, Africa and Asia), its geographical isolation, the large variety of landscapes (alpine areas, coastal areas, gorges, forests, brush lands, etc.), the ongoing geological processes and the long-term human interaction with the natural environment, the area is rich in flora and fauna and it has a high degree of endemism. The human presence is also evident in the Gorge of Samaria BR. Small villages set in the mountain foothills, and the practice of semi-traditional economic activities are combined with the protection and maintenance of an emblematic natural environment.

Today the Gorge of Samaria Biosphere Reserve lies in front of a double challenge: finding the best management scheme for the protection, enhancement and sustainable development of the Reserve from the one hand and setting the standard for a new tourism development approach for one of the most important touristic destinations of the Mediterranean. Such development should benefit from the precious help of local institutions and from the generous support of the EU Funds of the Region of Crete, and take the direction of better valuing a natural route that connects the 3 UNESCO designated sites of the Island of Crete (Gorge of Samaria Biosphere Reserve, Psiloritis Geopark and Sitia Geopark).



OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

In this frame the International Workshop that is being co-organized by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, the Samaria Gorge Management Body and the Region of Crete, with the support of the MAB Secretariat and of the Greek MAB National Committee, wishes to contribute equally to the sharing of good practices for the sustainable development of island and coastal Biosphere Reserves of the Mediterranean region, with particular reference to:

- The provisions of the Lima Action Plan recently adopted on the occasion of the 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in Lima, Peru;

- The initiatives already taken within the framework of the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves as well as the Mediterranean BRs Network.

The Workshop in Chania will have the specific aims of:

- Facilitating an exchange of experiences and good practices among Biosphere Reserves having common issues to address (climate change, tourism development and seasonal migrations, water resources management, etc.);
- Strengthening skills and knowledge of key BR stakeholders with the view of enhancing their managerial and communication capacities while addressing the current emerging challenges in island and coastal BRs;
- Laying the ground for possible common actions and joint projects dealing in particular with the promotion of Biosphere Reserves as “Sustainable Tourism Destinations”, thus contributing to the effective launching of the “Biosphere Destinations” MAB initiative in the Mediterranean region;
- Inspiring the local stakeholders of the Gorge of Samaria BR with particular reference to the periodic review process they are subject to (related mainly to the zonation scheme) as well as the new direction they want to take in tourism development;
- Exploring in this framework the possible synergies among the Biosphere Reserves and Geoparks networks in the same region.

PARTICIPANTS

The Workshop is on invitation only. Participants will be representatives of existing and future island and coastal Biosphere Reserves from Mediterranean countries including Croatia, France, Greece, Italy and Spain. Upon their selection, participants will have a full coverage of their travel to and accommodation in Chania.

Participants are requested to come prepared to make a presentation in order to introduce their Biosphere Reserves, its management scheme, its main challenges and successes, and in particular to explain how sustainable tourism development is approached and implemented at their respective territories. They should finally come prepared to engage in possible follow-up actions that could be identified, proposed

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Working language: The working language of the workshop will be English. A simultaneous translation service could be guaranteed from English to Greek on the occasion of an encounter with local stakeholders.

Contacts:

UNESCO Office in Venice:

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MAB Secretariat:

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Gorge of Samaria Biosphere Reserve:

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Invited expert:

MAB National Committee

Michael Scoullos (scoullos@chem.uoa.gr)

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ECOTRANS

Herbert Hamele (herbert.hamele@ecotrans.de)

Location:

Great Arsenali, Chania, Crete,

AGENDA

2 October 2016

Arrival of participants

At 19.00 the Management Body of Samaria National Park will present to a public open event the entire set of actions that has been implemented during the EU structural funds period 2007-2013. It will also present and distribute to the public its new book on the biodiversity of the White Mountains. All participants that will have arrived are welcome to this event that will take place to the Venetian Great Arsenal at the Old City of Chania.

3 October 2016

9:00 – 9:30 **Registration of participants**

9:30 – 10:00 **Welcoming addresses**

Authorities of Chania/Crete. On behalf of the Region of Crete: The Governor Stavros Arnaoutakis will welcome the Participants. Maria Kasotaki, the Head of The Managing Authority of ROP Crete will then briefly present the project of the Region of Crete about creating (through the use of the regional EU funds of Crete) a natural route between the 2 Geoparks of Crete and the one Biosphere Reserve of Crete).

Gorge of Samaria Managing Board (Petros Lymberakis, President of the Board)
Greek MAB National Committee (M. Scoullou)
UNESCO (P. Pypaert / M. Clusener-Godt)

10:00 – 11:00 **Introduction to the workshop**

Objectives and method of work of the Workshop - P. Pypaert (UNESCO Venice Office)

Introduction to the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves – M. Clusener-Godt (MAB Secretariat)

Introduction to the Gorge of Samaria Biosphere Reserve – Dimitrios Michelogiannis (Gorge of Samaria BR Governing Board)

11:00 – 11:30 **Coffee break**

11:30 – 13:00 **Presentations from guest Biosphere Reserves (*first part*)**

(5 presentations still to be defined, highlighting not only the natural and human features of each BRs, but mainly focusing on challenges and good practices, as well as on their efforts towards sustainable tourism development)

13:00 – 14:30 **Lunch**

14:30 – 16:00 **Presentations from guest Biosphere Reserves (*second part*)**

(5 presentations still to be defined)

16:00 – 16:30 **Coffee break**

16:30 – 18:00 **General discussion and Working Groups session I**

Facilitated discussion on lessons learned and inspirational elements from participating Biosphere Reserves on: ***Zonation and Governance Schemes***

18:00 – 18:30 **Conclusions of the first day and introduction to the field visit**

20:00	Dinner
<u>4 October 2016</u>	
All day	Field Visit to the Gorge of Samaria Biosphere Reserve. Participants will visit an alternative track within the BR, not heavily visited by tourists. Through an impressive landscape, they will visit the abandoned village of “Aradaina” and end up in “Agios Ioannis”, an isolated village with a dramatic view to the White Mountains and the Libyan Sea. A boat trip to the south-Libyan coast of Crete along the maritime borders of Samaria will take place if weather permits. If not those who wish to can follow a trekking route that was recently enhanced through the MEET “Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism” Project. Lunch and dinner will be provided.
<u>5 October 2016</u>	
9:30 – 10:30	<p>Inputs by experts. UNESCO Designations as Cultural Districts: Management Issues and Opportunities Alessio Re, CSS-Ebla</p> <p>The Biosphere Destinations initiative - Biosphere Reserves as Sustainable Tourism Destinations in the World Herbert Hamele, ECOTRANS, Germania</p>
10:30 – 12:30	<p>Working Groups Session II Participants, distributed in 2 or 3 smaller groups, will share feedbacks from the field visit and elaborate on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What suggestions they would take back home to improve their governance and sustainable development activities; - What suggestions they would make from their own experience for the improvement of the Gorge of Samaria BR zonation and governance schemes. <p>Note: <i>coffee will be made available at any time during the morning session</i></p>
12:30 – 13:00	Reports in plenary
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch
14:30 – 16:00	<p>Working Groups Session III Participants, distributed in 2 or 3 smaller groups, will discuss the Biosphere Destination initiative and, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore how the proposed approach could be applied at their own site; - Elaborate their recommendations for further developing the initiative in the Mediterranean region; - Reflect on their possible participation in a regional pilot project and set the basis for its launching.
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee break

16:30 – 18:00

Reports in plenary, general discussion and conclusions

In the presence of local stakeholders, participants present and discuss their findings, and agree on a road map for the implementation of the Biosphere Destination initiative in the Mediterranean.

Conclusions of the Workshop and the way forward.

18:30

Departure of participants

(some participants may need/wish to leave on the 6th)