



Propark Strategy

2023-2030

Content

INTRODUCTION	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
1. CONTEXT.....	13
1.1. PROPARK ACHIEVEMENTS 2008 - 2022.....	13
1.2. OUR FINANCIAL SITUATION 2008-2022	21
1.3. PROPARK TEAM	22
1.4. PROTECTED AREAS AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN ROMANIA	27
2. STRATEGY 2023 - 2030	37
2.1. OUR VISION	37
2.2. OUR GOAL.....	37
2.3. OUR MISSION	38
2.4. OUR PROMISE.....	38
2.5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	39
3. ACTION PLAN	50
3.1. PILLAR A. INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY BUILDING	50
3.2. PILLAR B. ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING	56
3.3. PILLAR C. SECTOR LEVEL CAPACITY BUILDING	61
3.4. PILLAR D. COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS RAISING	65
3.5. PILLAR E. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....	67

ACRONYM

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
EC	European Commission
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
NANPA	National Agency for Natural Protected Areas
NBS	Nature Based Solutions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECM	Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures

PA	Protected Area
P&CAs	Protected and Conserved Areas
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNEP WCMC	The UN Environment Programme’s World Conservation Monitoring Centre
UNFCCC	United Nation Framework Convention for Climate Change

TERMS USED IN THE TEXT

Core Propark Team	The Core Propark Team includes full and part time staff.
Extended Propark Team	Refers to the experts co-opted by Propark for the capacity building programmes i.e., trainers who are contributing to the development and implementation of training programmes on a more or less regular basis.
Other Effective Area - Based Conservation Measure (OECM)	‘A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values’ (CBD).
PA Administration	PA management team established for the management of a PA or several overlapping ones, established by the state (the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration), by an entity delegated by the Ministry of Environment (e.g. the National Forest Administration for most of the national and nature parks), or by the National Agency for Protected Areas (no such teams established yet till the end of 2022).
PA Administrators	Any legal entity managing protected areas in accordance with legal provisions.

Professionalization of conservation PA management	Elements of professionalization observed in other sectors, applicable to conservation ¹ : “(1) a defined and respected occupation; (2) official recognition; (3) knowledge, learning, competences and standards; (4) paid employment; (5) codes of conduct and ethics; (6) individual commitment; (7) organizational capacity; and (8) professional associations.”
Propark Projects	This term, with capitalised Projects, refers to projects and contracts implemented by Propark, using funds from various sources (from grants to our own resources generated through consultancy).
Protected and Conserved Area (P&CAs)	Used here to cover both Protected Areas (PAs) and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs). May also include Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) with formal ranger teams.
Protected Area (PA)	‘A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values’ (IUCN).
Strategic actions	Define “packages” of projects/programmes planned for the implementation of the strategy
Strategic pillars	Components on which the strategy is structured

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Strategy was developed by the Propark team with very valuable support from our Board of Directors, whom we thank for their involvement. We were helped in shaping our strategic directions and priorities by all those who provided feedback on our activities, including the trainees and those who participated in structured discussion with us at the start of the strategy review process in early 2022.

Thanks to Dan Dinu, Vlad Dumitrescu, Mihail Donea, Romania Salbatica for the images provided for this strategy.

1. Appleton, M., Barborak, J., Daltry, J., Long, B., O’Connell, M., Owen, N., Singh, R., Sparkes, E., Valencia, L. (2022). How should conservation be professionalized? *Oryx*, 56(5), 654-663. doi:10.1017/S0030605321000594: “elements of professionalization observed in other sectors are applicable to conservation: (1) a defined and respected occupation; (2) official recognition; (3) knowledge, learning, competences and standards; (4) paid employment; (5) codes of conduct and ethics; (6) individual commitment; (7) organizational capacity; and (8) professional associations.”



INTRODUCTION

„A new way of thinking is essential for humanity to survive and reach higher levels.”

- Albert Einstein

Our new way of thinking should recognize and embrace an old truth: our lives and future depends on Nature! (Re)learning to value Nature, to recognize its rights, and to use our natural resources and the services offered by ecosystems wisely and responsibly should be a must by now and should already be happening at a very fast pace.

The Triple Planetary Crises (climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss) is triggering more and more international agreements and commitments for action to restore Earth's health. None of these agreements and promises will produce miracles, unless powered by committed and motivated people. We need individuals aware of the emergency and equipped with knowledge, skills, and motivation to act locally and internationally, in their communities,

institutions, and organizations.

As most of us should know by now, protected areas are crucial in safeguarding the precious biodiversity that sustains life on Earth and in facilitating responsible use of natural resources and sustainable development. Hence, protected and conserved area practitioners are the ones to spearhead the new way of thinking. And yet, there are only a few opportunities around the world for these people to develop their competences in a structured way and to gain professional recognition for the complex and challenging work they are doing for some of the most special places and communities i.e., for protected areas.

Propark is committed to providing life-long learning and training opportunities for protected area practitioners and conservationists and to supporting them to better conserve nature for the benefit of society. This is our Mission. This is the way we want to contribute to the

professionalisation of protected and conserved area management, by supporting people who are expected to be on the frontline of global efforts for reversing biodiversity loss and to initiate best practices for sustainable development and climate change adaptation.

In the 14 years of its existence, the dedicated, passionate and professional people working for and with Propark, have gathered a wealth of experience by developing training programmes and tools and by implementing projects in support of protected area management teams. This experience is the foundation for our ambitious strategy.

We are aware that the rapid changes around us have to be seriously considered, therefore we are seeking to incorporate new topics and technologies in our capacity building programmes and in the support activities we provide to protected and conserved area managers. Our aim is that young professionals will be attracted to join the extended Propark team, bringing new approaches and new energy for the benefit of all that we are working for.

This Strategy should guide us in bringing new ways of thinking and acting into protected and conserved area management, and in providing support in developing these areas into inspiring models of effective care for Nature and Communities.

Erika Vaida-Bela (Stanciu)

Founder of Propark Foundation for Protected Areas



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our 2023 - 2030 Strategy outlines the directions of Propark's contribution to the professionalisation of protected and conserved area managers and stakeholders, based on our belief that capacity building is a topic of utmost importance and a significant part of the foundation for successful conservation efforts. We developed this strategy with the awareness that capacity building is not just an option but is imperative in the quest for effective protected and conserved areas and for a sustainable future.

Our **VISION** is that *by 2050 protected and conserved areas will be managed by passionate and competent professionals, reversing biodiversity loss in these areas, facilitating sustainable development and helping mitigate climate change for the benefit of people.*

We contribute to the professionalisation of the protected and conserved area sector because we are convinced that people working

at high and recognized/accredited standards, will bring benefits to Nature and People/Communities and will have a positive impact on the climate. Therefore, our long-term **GOAL** is to provide *access to dependable high-quality life-long learning and training opportunities, thus enabling the protected area and conservation sectors to diversify and professionalise in Romania and beyond, positively impacting nature, people and the climate.*

Our **MISSION** is to contribute to the Vision *by providing life-long learning and training opportunities for protected area practitioners and conservationists and support them to better conserve nature for the benefit of society.*

We structured the plan into 3 pillars built around the 3 levels recognised as important for comprehensive capacity building programmes, and 2 pillars compiling the cross-cutting communication and organisational development objectives:

- A. Individual Capacity Building – Building the capacity of protected area practitioners and staff of key stakeholders.
- B. Organisational Capacity Building – Building the capacity of conservation entities.
- C. Sector Level Capacity Building – Enable decision makers.
- D. Communication and Awareness Raising – Enabling society to better understand our organisation's mission and protected areas.
- E. Organisational Development – Building Propark's capacity to achieve its mission.

The Strategic Objectives set in this Strategy are:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE A

Learning opportunities are provided by Propark to practitioners directly and indirectly involved in P&CA management, through a structured approach entailing capacity building programmes, training events, experience exchange and networking possibilities.

Building on our work from the last 14 years, we are going to implement a P&CA professionalisation programme, ideally through a centre

that will offer capacity building programmes and learning/training opportunities built through a competence-based approach in blended learning events. Diverse learning opportunities will be offered both to protected and conserved area practitioners and to key stakeholders who should and/or can contribute to effective and successful protected/conserved area management. Protected area practitioners and stakeholders

will have access to up-to-date information and opportunities to learn, not only through structured programmes, but also by joining professional debates and working groups to develop solution-oriented thinking and provide innovative ideas to improve protected area management. Key stakeholders will benefit from nature conservation related trainings, information, and materials through the centre.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE B

Professional support and tools are provided for organisational capacity building of entities involved in protected and conserved area management and biodiversity conservation.

Management effectiveness is intrinsically

related to well structured, healthy, resilient, and professional entities. At the same time, professional performance of individuals is highly dependent on the organisational culture related to learning and allowing professionals

to use their knowledge and skills, on the working environment and motivation provided by the organisation. Propark will support organisational development of conservation management related entities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE C

A national framework for protected area professionalisation is initiated in Romania by relevant decision makers with the contribution of Propark.

Propark is recognized at international level for its contribution to the professionalisation of protected/conserved area management.

Propark will continue to advocate for the professionalisation of PA management within Romanian borders and beyond. We are going to increase our efforts to initiate a professionalisation process assumed and supported by Romanian authorities and relevant institutions. We shall work with the relevant authorities for a legal framework

promoting specific occupations and for a national capacity building plan, including resource allocation for capacity building. We shall actively seek involvement in international capacity building initiatives and projects.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE D

Our organisation is recognized and appreciated by those active in nature conservation for its contribution to the professionalisation of protected area management and for promoting the importance of these areas.

We are going to improve communication with our main stakeholder groups i.e., P&CA

practitioners and conservation entities, and with specialists from key stakeholder groups. We'll better promote Propark, our mission and activities, to make our work understood and appreciated by practitioners, as well as for fundraising purposes. Promoting our programmes and P&CA management tools will

become a communication priority. Propark will raise awareness on the important role of professionals for nature conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE E

Propark is effective and efficient in achieving its strategic objectives, has a healthy governance and provides the resources needed for achieving these objectives.

Implementing this ambitious strategy requires increased capacity in Propark's core and extended teams. Special attention will be given to develop our capacity for addressing the following topics: understanding and valuing local communities and supporting them, stakeholder engagement, understanding and working with and for OECMs in the future and climate change adaptation and mitigation in P&CAs, including NBS approaches for sustainable development. Increased efforts will be made for securing unrestricted funding based on a fundraising plan. We'll continue to pay special attention to providing a good working environment for all our core and extended team. We'll continuously improve workflows and internal communication.

The Action Plan summarises our future

approaches for empowering individuals, organisations, and communities / stakeholders with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to effectively manage and protect our natural heritage. We shall develop our internal capacity and partner with highly professional experts and entities to deliver capacity building programmes on key topics in most, if not all, management domains. Setting up a centre of excellence for protected and conserved area professionals to provide learning, exchange and networking opportunities and for opening doors for innovation and collaboration will be one of the main challenges in the coming years.

We'll put special emphasis on critical topics in the capacity building programmes, such as e.g., empowering local communities and various stakeholder groups to establish and manage conservation areas and to get actively involved in the management of the existing ones. This will contribute to aligning



conservation efforts with local needs and values and to building a shared sense of ownership and responsibility for the protection of our shared natural heritage. Another critical topic for us to consider is to develop knowledge and skills needed to adapt and respond to the ever-evolving challenges posed by climate change. New technologies will be considered as a cross-cutting topic, relevant for all 5 pillars of our strategy.

Looking forward, we are confident that we are an organisation that donors would be happy to invest in. We offer good value for money with our support activities for protected area managers, and we deliver measurable practical results that have a positive impact on nature and people. We aspire to be a model of a well-managed non-governmental organisation in Romania. We see opportunities in the direction of EC funding streams, and we will innovate to introduce new important conservation themes into our work portfolio including exploring opportunities emerging from new technologies. We see strength in unity and are

motivated to cooperate with others that share our vision for nature and protected areas. We value our global peers and remain committed to engaging in European and global networks, using them not only to stay informed, but also as an opportunity to get more people, and especially youth, more engaged in conservation and protected areas. There is no doubt that people are concerned about current global crises, and we see in this an opportunity to provide them with a way to engage in finding solutions to the nature and climate problems we all face.

We hope that our strategy will inspire many others to act in support of capacity building, a special domain at the heart of successful protected area management. It is an investment in our planet's future and the legacy we leave to the generations to come. As we face the triple crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, there has never been a more critical moment to act. Through this document we share our commitment to build the capacity of those entrusted with the conservation of our

Nature, and in doing so, build a future where humanity and nature thrive in harmony.



1. CONTEXT

1.1. PROPARK ACHIEVEMENTS 2008 - 2022

Propark was founded in 2008 with the aim to develop and continuously improve the management capacity of protected areas and to educate and raise awareness on the importance of nature conservation. This is how we want to contribute to having effective protected areas which are managed by committed and competent practitioners who can demonstrate that these areas are critical for conserving our natural and cultural heritage and for building a sustainable future for humans.

Objectives set in our previous strategies helped develop and implement activities in a coherent, coordinated manner and directed us towards achieving the aims of the Foundation defined in the Statute. True to the mission presented

in our 2015-2021 Strategy, we developed capacity building programmes and provided technical support to PA managers and some of their key stakeholders, implemented education and awareness raising activities for protected areas and provided technical support to teams managing these areas.

In its 14 years of activity, Propark has focused its activities on protected area practitioners, by providing learning opportunities, inspiration, and tools for those working in and for protected areas. Aware of the complexity of protected areas, knowing that their management require many and varied skills², as well as intense cooperation between many actors, we have developed courses for practitioners and implemented projects to provide those working in protected areas with the

knowledge, skills, and motivation they need to be successful.

Our team and the specialists we collaborate with provide professional training and support focused on the practical aspects of work in all types of protected areas, including national and nature parks, nature reserves, Natura 2000 sites and others.

Since our founding, all of our activities have been oriented towards professionalisation / capacity building for protected areas. Figure 4 highlights our main results from the 14 years of activity, achieved with the 4,8 million Euro raised through more than 150 projects and consultancy contracts. Figures 1-3 show the geographical spread of our activities.

2. Appleton, M.R. (2016). A global register of competences for protected area practitioners. IUCN Gland, Switzerland. <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/PATRS-002.pdf>



1.1.1. Professionalisation

Our efforts were focused mainly on activities directly linked to professionalisation and capacity building:

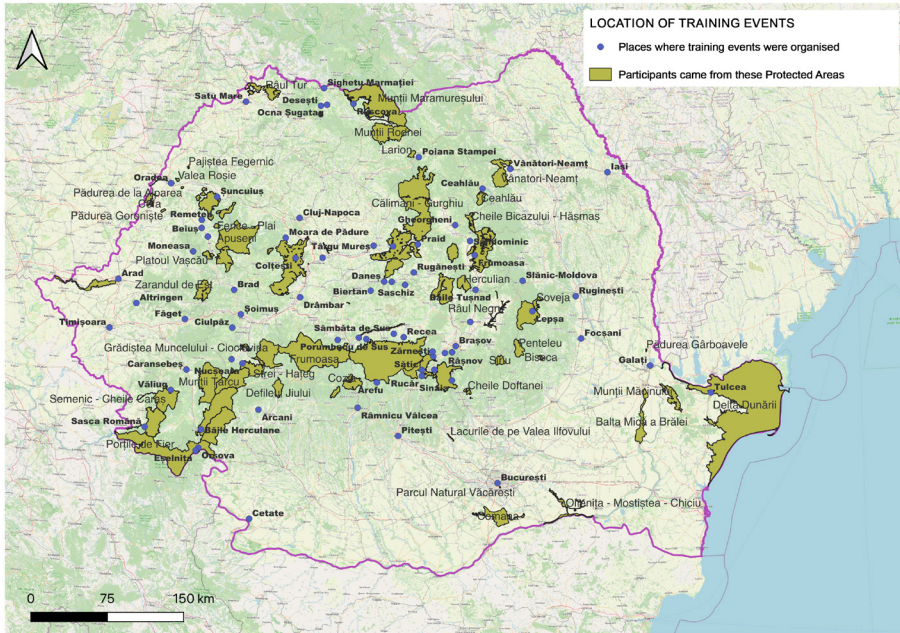
- **2800 participants** were registered as trainees,
- A *new occupation, called Protected Area Specialist and the associated occupational standards* were developed starting from the protected area competence register³.
- Propark was and continues to be **accredited** for the Protected Area Specialist, Ranger, Community Facilitator and Communication courses.
- Almost **10% (158 practitioners)** were certified as **Protected Area Specialists or Rangers**, gaining a good understanding of the complexity of these occupations.
- We worked with more than **50 professionals** with knowledge and experience in a large variety of domains relevant for protected areas, accredited trainers and/or consultants.
- Together with the experts mentioned above, we developed more than **40 manuals and guidelines and 27 short movies alongside other online training materials**.
- We facilitated or contributed to the participatory development of **21 management plans for 42 protected areas**, transferring skills and knowledge through these complex processes to those managing the areas.

- About **850 people from various sectors** participated at awareness raising and training events to learn about protected areas and how they can contribute to their management: foresters, farmers, journalists, judges and lawyers.

The main results of our capacity building activities are presented in the Professionalisation section of Figure 4, with the geographic coverage presented in figures 1 and 3. Figure 1 shows that in the last 14 years we have successfully delivered training events for practitioners from the designated entities of **74 protected areas**.

3. Appleton, M.R. (2016). A global register of competences for protected area practitioners. IUCN Gland, Switzerland. <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/PATRS-002.pdf>

Figure 1. Training events - where and for whom



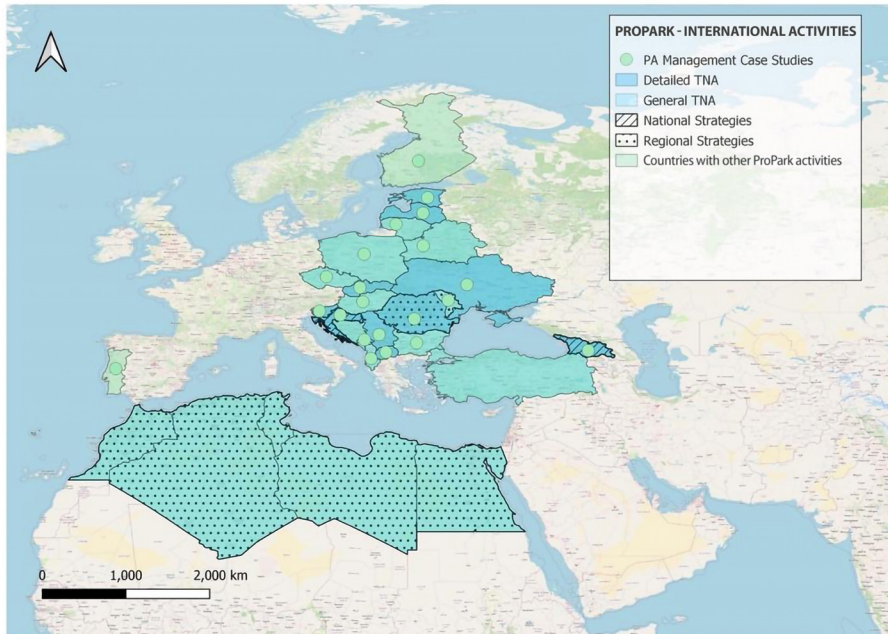
- We conducted **21 training needs assessments in 26 countries**.
- **3 capacity building plans** were developed for **4 countries** (Croatia, Georgia, Romania and Moldova). Croatia is using the document to guide capacity building for protected area professionals.
- We were coordinators and facilitators of participatory processes for the development of two global competence registers: **the SMART Competence Register⁴** and the **Global Ranger Competences** register.
- Together with partners in the EUROPARC Federation, **we contribute to building the European Nature Academy⁵** to offer individual learning opportunities and training events to Natura 2000 site managers.
- We lead the development of **online competence assessment platforms** for Natura 2000 managers.

Our expertise in competence-based approaches to capacity building for protected area practitioners has been used in many countries:

4. Stanciu, E. & Appleton, M.R., Singh, R. & Slade J.L. (2021). The SMART Competences: A register of competences for users of the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool. SMART Partnership. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UUBWN0Eu1ncILCBfOdOqMSuePYzIRJ8/view>
5. LIFE ENABLE Project - Creating The European Nature Academy For Applied Blended Learning <https://www.europarc.org/about-us/europarc-projects/life-enable/>

- We documented case studies on **PA governance and management structures and approached** in 21 countries in Eastern and Central Europe⁶.

Figure 2. Propark Achievements - International Projects



1.1.2. Nature education and awareness raising

Our **nature education activities** reached about **6600 children** through camps organised over several days or one-day events in nature or at schools; we worked with **100 nature educators**, who learned about new programmes and techniques and were offered access to the **online “Nature Education Library”**;

Our team developed and implemented awareness raising programmes to promote protected areas:

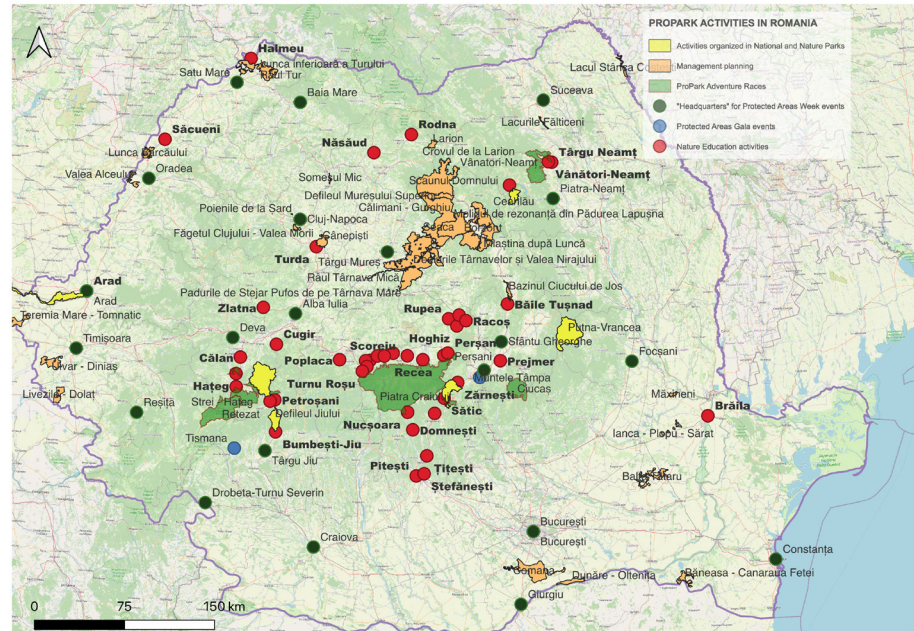
- The **Propark Adventure Race** programme provided a unique experience to almost **500 people in 6 protected areas**.
- The **6 editions of the Protected Area Week**, organised in cooperation with **71 partners**, spread the message about the importance of nature conservation and of protected areas to at least **8000 people from 21 countries**.

6. Stanciu, E. & Ioniță, A. (2014). Governance of Protected Areas in Eastern Europe - Overview on different governance types, case studies and lessons learned Results of a research study commissioned by BfN to ProPark, Romania <https://www.bfn.de/suche?k=Governance+of+Protected+Areas+in+Eastern+Europe>

- **Four Protected Area Gala events** brought together more than **500 participants**, including staff of management teams and national and regional environmental authorities, conservation NGOs, as well as some companies. These events provided opportunities for networking, celebrating conservation work results, and discussing priorities and solutions for the sector, but also for companies to learn about and meet PA managers.

Results of the education, awareness raising and networking events are presented in the Awareness section in Figure 4, with the geographical spread illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Management Plans, Education and Awareness Raising activities



Although our achievements speak for themselves, these are not reflective of the cumulative impact we made on PA management. It is challenging to measure changes in conservation outcomes and PA management effectiveness resulting from our activities. Nevertheless, we

did conduct some surveys: one in 2016, interviewing protected area practitioners who participated in some of our capacity building events, and one in 2022, in preparation for the strategic planning process, by interviewing representatives of some of our key stakeholders.

The 2016 evaluation emphasised the necessity of integrating a more practical approach into the bespoke trainings. These interviews also underscored the importance of providing support to nature conservation entities to cultivate an organisational culture

that enables course participants to effectively apply the knowledge acquired from various capacity-building programmes. Our primary focus should be on individuals who have the possibility to apply the knowledge and skills transferred through our training events. It was

recommended to carry out tailored training needs assessments prior to the courses to ensure the delivery of useful practical information. We should also strive to make our training events more accessible to individuals without a university diploma.



Figure 4. Our activities and achievements in numbers

PROFESSIONALISATION



- **Protected Areas Specialist Occupation** - occupation and occupational standards
- **Global ranger competences** - coordination
- **SMART User Competences** (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) - coordination
- **56 accredited Trainers**
- **40 de manuals and guidelines, 27 short movies** (pedagogical or promoting PAs)



- **180 courses** with **2800 participants**
- **158 accredited Protected Area Specialists**
- **151 accredited Rangers**
- **24 accredited Community Development Facilitators**



- **21 Training Needs Assessments** in **26 countries**
- **3 National Capacity Building Plans** for **4 countries**
- **21 management plans** for **42 protected areas**





- 415 children in 25 camps
- 6,416 children and young people in educational programmes
- 100 Nature Educators
- Online Library – Nature Education

**EDUCATION
FOR NATURE**



- **Protected Area Gala** - 4 editions, 500 participants
- **Protected Area Week** - 6 editions in 21 counties, 71 partners, 8,000 participants
- **Propark Adventure Race** - 7 editions in 6 protected areas, 1,730 km, 488 participants
- **Făgăraș Fest** - 3 editions, 3,700 participants

AWARENESS



- More than **150 Projects and Contracts**
- More than **4.800.000 Euro**

**PROJECTS &
CONTRACTS**

1.2. OUR FINANCIAL SITUATION 2008-2022

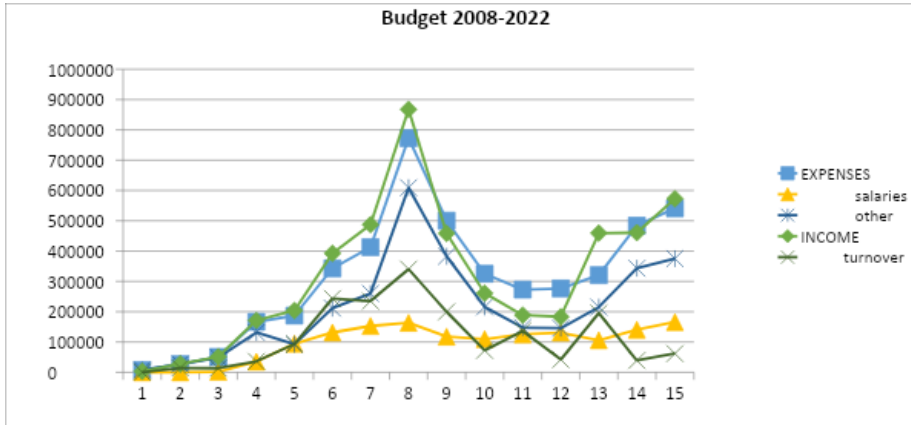
Securing funding for capacity building is recognised globally as very challenging. Despite our excellent reputation and experience Propark has found it difficult to maintain a sufficient and consistent level of funding and thus training provision. Our most successful period was between 2013 and 2017, linked to the EC funding provided for Natura 2000 management in Romania. EC funded projects, developed by delegated protected area management entities, included resources for capacity building and/or for technical support for various activities, especially for management planning. In 2018 the government decided to centralise the management for most of the protected areas under the umbrella of Romanian NANPA (National Agency for Protected Areas), withdrawing the protected area management rights for most delegated entities. As a result, more than 1000

practitioners from NGOs and other entities are not directly involved in PA management anymore. NANPA staff, whose exact numbers are not known, are now present in each county in small teams, having the responsibility of all PAs in the respective country, except national and nature parks and the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. The agency has very limited capacity to access grants and has a very limited state budget allocation, mainly reserved for salaries and administrative costs⁷. Management activities have ceased in most, if not all the PAs taken over by the NANPA from former delegated managers. Hence, capacity building and consultancy opportunities for Propark decreased since 2018, a trend directly linked to the significant decrease in numbers of delegated protected area management entities and to the associated reduction of activities in protected areas. While we continue to access grants,

consultancy contracts are still very important to secure the unrestricted money we need for funding our strategic priorities i.e., developing/improving our capacity building programmes, for sustaining ourselves and for building financial reserves.

7. <http://ananp.gov.ro/buget-din-toate-sursele/> - budget implementation reports for 2019-2021

Figure 5. Financial situation 2008 - 2022



The financial analysis conducted in 2022 with FFI support highlights the following important aspects:

- Our unrestricted financial resources are

limited, hence some of our plans that are critical for our mission cannot be implemented, such as, for example, developing a proper, long-term blended learning programme for

the Protected Area Specialist and Ranger occupations or even for updating the online learning platform.

- We do not have partnerships for accessing long-term grants to cover core activities. We have a sustainable collaboration with the Europarc Federation, but we do not yet have a long-term partnership for accessing international grants, and we have not yet taken steps in the country for strong partnerships, with Propark taking a leading role on capacity building components in long term project/grant agreements.
- Although we have made efforts to build up a financial reserve of €15,000, this is not sufficient to cover major crisis situations.

1.3. PROPARK TEAM

The passionate, dedicated, and loyal staff of Propark form a **core team** that always finds its balance, even in very difficult times, due to our shared values:

- We understand and believe in the power of teamwork, and we are confident we shall always find solutions if we work as a team.
- We accept the more or less changing

environment in which we work, and we know how to adapt on the fly, while also keeping our direction.

- We are convinced that only by investing in

people will the dream expressed in our vision come true.

- We like to learn continuously, and we try to pass on the desire to learn to those we are addressing.

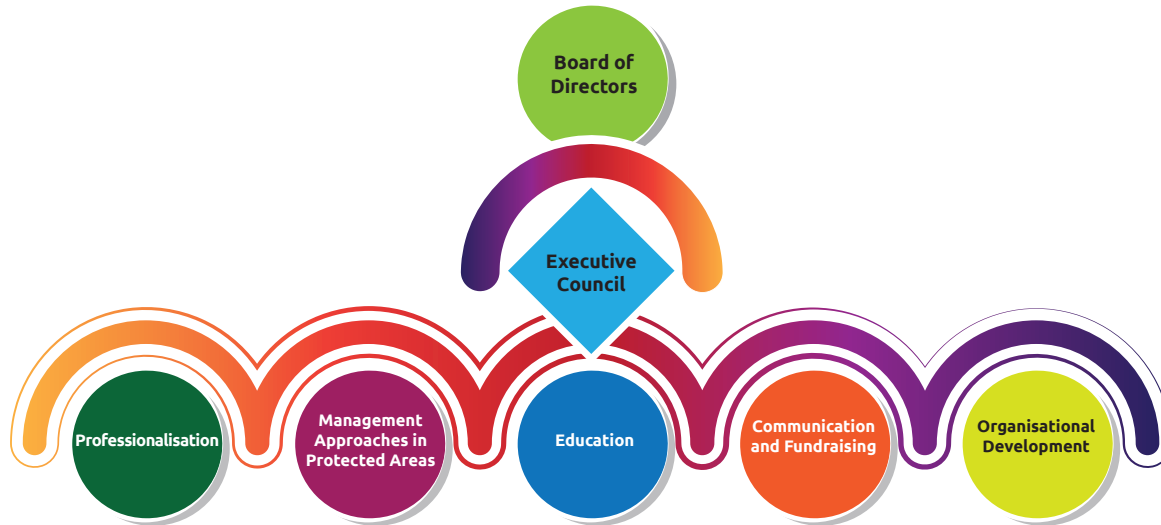
We strive to maintain a small professional **core team**, acting especially as a coordination and support unit for a network of experts

through which we can expand our reach and scope of training and our technical support offer to people and entities involved in protected area management. At the same time, we have in our core team some of the technical expertise we need and therefore the capacity to contribute as trainers and experts to the capacity building and technical support activities.

We have expertise related to protected area management and some natural resource management, nature education, and communication, as well as very good project management expertise.

The current structure of the organisation is shown in the diagram below:

Figure 6. Organisational structure



In addition to the core team at the heart of Propark, we frequently work with more than 30 practitioners who form the **extended Propark team**. These practitioners are specialist in various fields and lend us in various fields, with the practical experience needed to fulfil our mission. In the years to come we hope to strengthen and motivate the extended team so that we have as many specialists as possible contributing to the capacity building and technical support programmes.

The Board has diverse national and international expertise relevant to our organisation and has members who share our vision and believe in Propark's mission. The Board members have provided strong guidance and support during the last 14 years, especially in difficult time. When lack of resources or context for NGO activity in Romania put particular pressure on the team.

The Executive and the Financial Directors together with the Founder of Propark, form the

Executive Council, providing leadership for day-to-day work and enabling the organisation to achieve its mission, whilst securing good working conditions and a framework for the participatory management of the organisation.

The thorough and detailed review of Propark Foundation, done by our core team assisted by the Board in preparation for the strategic planning process, is summarised in the following paragraphs.



Propark is a well-managed, innovative (we are still leaders in our field), positive and energetic organisation that is not afraid to engage in finding solutions to difficult problems when required. We have a great team of experienced, professional and committed staff who are also solutions focused. We are well-networked and have an active board that ensures that we are well governed and connected across Europe and the world. We are great at supporting protected areas and their staff to professionalise through the provision

of support, mentoring and the building of their knowledge, skills, experiences and professional standards, as well as introducing new ways of working. We have helped many protected area teams to set their future direction through facilitation of their strategy process. We have a great reputation in our field across Europe, and we have taken our successful pioneering capacity building work in Eastern Europe to new parts of the world, and we have a wealth of practical, high standard, and bespoke training materials and experiences to build upon.

Despite its importance capacity building isn't a 'sexy' topic and it hasn't been easy to attract funding or the interest of donors or the public. For this reason, we have little funding and are therefore limited in the scope of the work we are able to deliver. We need to invest a lot of time looking for opportunities to secure more funding in order to grow our organisation and expand our scope of work, time that we are not using to train and support people. The impacts of the pandemic and changes to the way in which the Government manages the





protected area network in Romania has reduced the number of employed people needing training support, and made it difficult to reach our intended beneficiaries, the staff and associated people within our protected area network, who could benefit the most from our work. These issues reduce our ability to work with more protected areas and more people involved in conservation, in Romania and around Europe, and thus limit our impact that could be significantly greater without these funding restrictions. Given the triple planetary crisis (climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, pollution), we urgently need to find the funding support that

would enable us to reach more people with our support and to expand our scope of work.

With our focus on PA professionalisation and competence-based approaches to capacity building, Propark continues to occupy a unique niche in the world of protected areas and non-governmental organisations in Romania and Europe. However, we still don't know the best way to communicate our mission and our work. We have a good reputation among those active in biodiversity conservation, but we were not successful so far in really convincing some of our target groups about the importance and need for professionalisation in

this domain. Decision makers are not yet embracing the topic of protected area management professionalisation; hence they do not allocate resources and do not address capacity building or any other aspect of professionalisation at the national level. Most donors are not yet convinced that capacity building is highly important for achieving tangible conservation results through effective protected area management or outside protected areas. Furthermore, even our key target audience (i.e., protected area managers and conservation entities) should have access to more and better information related to our capacity

building offers and our activities.

We have very good experience in writing and implementing grant-funded projects and in consultancy, but we are not yet ready to attract much-needed unrestricted funding for our work.

We also need to further develop the capacity of the core and extended Propark team for international work, mainly with the aim to promote the need for professionalisation of the complex domain of PA management and to contribute to the improvement of capacity building opportunities in Europe.

Looking forward, we are confident that we are an organisation that donors would be happy to invest in. We offer good value for

money, and we deliver measurable practical results that have a positive impact on nature and people. We aspire to be a model of a well-managed non-governmental organisation in Romania. We see opportunities in the direction of EC funding streams, and we will pioneer the introduction of new important conservation themes into our work portfolio, including exploring opportunities coming out of new technologies. We see strength in unity and are motivated to cooperate with others that share our vision for nature and protected areas. We value our global peers and remain committed to engaging in European and global networks, using this as an opportunity to not only stay

informed but also to get more people, especially the youth, more engaged in conservation and protected areas. There is no doubt that people are concerned about the triple global crisis, and we see an opportunity in providing them with a way to engage in finding solutions to the nature and climate problems we all face.

The analysis of our organisation's strengths and weaknesses is reflected in the actions planned through this strategic document that will guide our work in this decade of high international commitments, labelled as the 30x30 Target for Biodiversity, the decade we have to enable people with the skills to save biodiversity and address climate change.

1.4. PROTECTED AREAS AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN ROMANIA

1.4.1. Protected areas in Romania and professional development opportunities

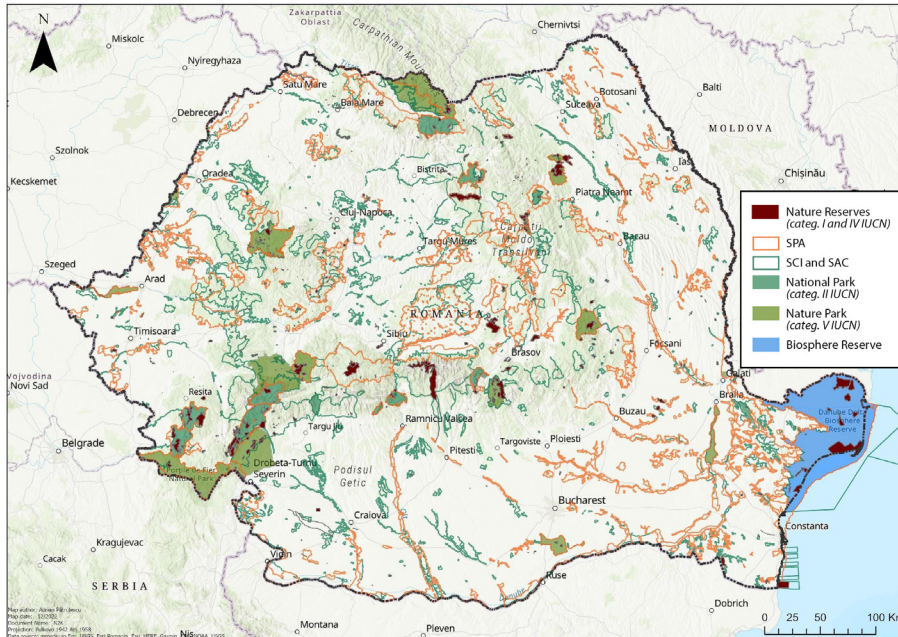
Since Protected areas are at the heart of Propark's work, the situation of the protected areas system in Romania is of major

interest to us. National and nature parks, scientific and nature reserves, nature monuments, Natura 2000 sites, RAMSAR sites, geoparks

and biosphere reserves occupy 24.52% of Romania's land area and 23.2% of its marine area.⁸

8. Sources: Ramsar Convention and UNESCO websites (December 2021); EEA Natura 2000 Barometer, Natura 2000 at the end of 2021; protected areas of national interest - ANANP (2021).

Figure 7. Map of protected areas in Romania



Up to 2018, the management of many protected areas was delegated by the Ministry to various entities: the National Forest

Administration (28% of the subcontracted PAs), nature conservation NGOs (38%), hunting and fishing associations, private companies,

private forest management units, municipalities and regional development agencies, county council, research entities, universities, museums, and private companies. Since August 2018, the PA management contracts of most of these entities were cancelled and the responsibility transferred to the county level Territorial Services of the National Agency for Protected Areas (NANPA). The maximum number of employees in NANPA could go up to 496⁹, but data on the current number of employees is not available. The 496 employees are replacing the over 1000 dedicated staff of the previous PA management teams and have, additionally, the management responsibility for all the other PAs with no management team before 2018. The National Forest Administration (RNP) is still delegated by the Ministry and remains responsible for the management of 22 national and natural parks, and Neamt County Council manages one national park.

9. DECISION no. 997 of 21 December 2016 on the organization and functioning of the National Agency for Protected Natural Areas and on the amendment and completion of Annex no. 12 to Government Decision no. 1.705/2006 approving the centralized inventory of goods in the public domain of the State <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/206528>

Funding for protected areas is still very deficient. Most of the financial resources for these areas are those allocated by the European Commission (EC), mainly to support Romania in meeting obligations related to protected areas of Community interest. Funds allocated by the EC for the Natura 2000 network and the Norwegian funds are at present the main sources of funding for protected area management. Lately, the interest of companies to finance environmental and biodiversity conservation projects is increasing through their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes and in the context of the Global Sustainable Development Goals.

The Norwegian funding programme brought €20 million to Romania between 2014-2021, mainly financing capacity building for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, including €3.5 million for “improving the ecological status of habitats”.

NANPA has a very low budget allocation, mainly for salaries. The NANPA¹⁰ budget allocation for training is insignificant. For example, in 2019 out of the total budget of 11,373 lei, only 570 lei were allocated for training.

Romania does not have a national vision and strategy for the protected areas system. Conservation NGOs did develop a vision for Romania’s PA system in 2017-2018, hoping that it will inspire decision makers. Propark played an important role initiating and facilitating the development, within the Natura 2000 Coalition, of the Vision for Protected Areas¹¹. Protected area managers and representatives of important national decision-makers, such as the Ministry of Environment and the National Forest Administration, participated in the vision development process. A national event was organised in 2018 by the Conservation Carpathia Foundation and Propark, the Regăsește Romania (Rediscover Romania)

Gala, dedicated to decision makers i.e., government and parliament members. However, we failed to convince authorities to develop a national strategy for protected areas. The 30x30 Target for Protected Areas hopefully provides the framework for developing an ambitious vision and a well-thought-out strategy for the protected areas system. Propark will engage proactively, together with the other conservation organisations from the Natura 2000 NGO Coalition, in supporting the development of a Biodiversity Strategy with clearly defined objectives for protected and conserved areas, developed in a participatory process with private and state actors. Our key expectations for this future strategy, related to the management capacity of protected and conserved areas is to provide the framework for coordinated actions for:

- Maintaining / Improving a participatory or delegated management system with state

10. <http://ananp.gov.ro/buget-din-toate-sursele/> - budget implementation reports for 2019-2021

11. Vision of the Natura 2000 Coalition Federation for the management system of the protected area network in Romania 2019 - 2028 - <http://natura2000.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/viziunea-federatiei-coalitia-natura-2000-1.pdf>

and private entities in charge, including non-governmental organisations, each with highly qualified staff/teams specialised on protected area management.

- Securing a functional framework for and supporting active involvement of stakeholders, especially for local communities, to prove the high potential of nature conservation areas for generating sustainable development opportunities.
- Financial support from the state for management, including resources for capacity building.
- Coordinated actions of relevant sectors/Ministries to encourage entrepreneurship based on the responsible use of natural resources and other values (landscape, recreational opportunities, etc.) and environment-friendly infrastructure projects.

Propark is already actively contributing to the improvement of the protected area legislation, as a member of the Natura 2000 NGO Coalition. Our latest activities i.e., in the last 2 years (2021 and 2022) were part of the process initiated by the Ministry of Environment for revising the PA law. In the coming years we shall continue our advocacy activities.

Even though biodiversity conservation has become a priority at EU level, Romanian decision makers and the society still do not accept the fact that biodiversity and, implicitly, protected areas are of critical importance for our future. Hence, a very small number of people and entities are preoccupied with integrating nature and biodiversity conservation in daily actions and in economic development projects. This situation is reflected in the working



conditions of protected area managers and in the fact that protected areas without managers are neglected/affected by human activities. Propark will advocate for delegating PA management to stakeholders and thus increase the resource base and participatory approach for this important sector. We shall also continue awareness raising and education activities, with more emphasis on promoting the critical role of professional PA practitioners in biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation.

In this context, developing and strengthening the competences of those working in

protected areas becomes extremely important. Propark is now the only entity that consistently offers learning opportunities to protected area practitioners, including through certified courses. Information on other entities offering certified courses for protected area practitioners in Romania is hard to find. Apart from protected area related courses in the Master's programmes of a few faculties (Sibiu, Cluj, Bucharest), only one entity¹² advertises such courses. Occasional courses are offered by various entities such as, for example, the Romanian Ranger Association and

individual consultants. Propark aims to further develop capacity building programmes and build a Centre of Excellence for Protected and Conserved Areas. We shall also advocate for updating, together with relevant authorities and those working in protected areas, the national capacity building plan protected area management¹³, developed in 2015 under the coordination of Propark. Thus, we aim to contribute to initiating a national process of professionalisation of protected area management.

1.4.2. European and global trends in areas relevant to our work

We should take time to celebrate the wonders and diversity of our natural world, but we are living in a time when the planet is facing a profound man-made crisis through reckless actions, the impact of which is already evident.

The UNFCCC speaks of the Triple Planetary Crisis¹⁴, a crisis rooted in biodiversity loss, climate change and air pollution. It is evidently clear that we are losing plants, animals and natural habitats at an ever-increasing rate.

Globally, one fifth of bird species, a quarter of mammal species and a third of tree species are at risk of extinction with some species having declined by almost 70% over the last 50 years. We lose almost 10 million hectares of forests

12. <https://sbinfo.ro/>

13. Regional Plan on Increasing the Professional Management Capacity of Protected Areas in Romania and the Republic of Moldova - <https://propark.ro/images/uploads/file/publicatii/Plan%20regional%20de%20dezvoltare%20a%20capacitatii%20profesionale%20RO%20si%20MD.pdf>

14. What is the Triple Planetary Crises? <https://unfccc.int/blog/what-is-the-triple-planetary-crisis> What is the Triple Planetary Crises?

every year globally through deforestation, and seagrass meadows are disappearing at a rate of almost 11,000 hectares a year. Nature is the basis for all life, it makes our world habitable and its loss really matters. The loss of nature coupled with the climate and pollution crisis, will change the shape of the world we live in and we need to take action now to reverse the loss of nature for the benefit of humans.

Propark is a Romanian organisation, part of a global conservation community. Through our networks we draw on global knowledge and data to help us keep up to date on the direction that conservation is taking, and we use this information to inform our strategy and structure our work. Therefore, we understand that the world is changing and that civil society and community-led conservation approaches will play a much greater role in the protection of biodiversity and, we can anticipate, in protected area management in the future. The 30x30 target set at the CBD COP 15, it is argued, will only be achieved if the site-based protection of nature doesn't rely solely on

state protected areas but includes other area-based Ecosystem Conservation Approaches (so called OECMs), which are typically led by local actors, including local community-led approaches and local NGOs. Nature protection and conservation approaches also need to do more to support nature's adaptation to climate change and to give more consideration

to nature's contribution to human health, food and water security. The conservation world is also increasingly being challenged to give more attention to rights, equity, diversity and equality issues, which increases the value of community led approaches, OECMs and the introduction of social safeguard policies and approaches. Global businesses are now deeply engaged in



the business of climate and nature, sometimes driving but also taking advantage of both the market in climate credits and the emerging market of biodiversity credits, for example. This is not an exhaustive list of the key drivers of change for conservation globally, but it serves to demonstrate that it is our responsibility to stay informed about such developments, so that we can incorporate them into our capacity building approaches, in order to enable the conservation professionals we work with to be better informed and prepared to use these approaches as part of their future protected area and conservation toolkit.

There are several important global and EU policies and agreements in place that respond to these crises, through international conventions and even funding programmes, setting at the same time a framework that will significantly influence our scope for action. These important conventions include:

- The global 30x30 target agreed at CBD COP 15.

- The 2030 EU Biodiversity Strategy and the associated Action Plan.
- The European Union's Green Deal programme, which aims to make us the first climate-neutral continent.
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted through the 2030 Agenda by the UN General Assembly in 2015.

After more than four years of negotiations and repeated delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic, *the global agreement on biodiversity conservation* was signed at the CBD COP15 in December 2022, with the aim of putting humanity on a path to living in harmony with nature by mid-century. The main objective is to protect 30% of the Earth's surface by 2030.

The *EU Biodiversity Strategy* adopted in 2020, subtitled "Bringing nature back into our lives" aims to build our societies' resilience to future threats such as climate change impacts, forest fires, food insecurity or disease outbreaks, including protecting wildlife and fighting illegal

wildlife trade.¹⁵ The 10% strict protection target and the 30% protected area target set by this strategy bring the obligation to our country to expand the network of protected areas, but also to ensure effective management of existing ones. Human resources and professional skills are key factors in meeting this obligation. Capacity building opportunities for protected and conserved areas are critical in these times and Propark's mission is to develop such opportunities.

The Green Deal provides an enabling framework for stakeholders to engage in biodiversity conservation actions with the aim to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The opportunities offered by this programme are not obviously related to protected area management. However, it could be potentially important for Propark if we strengthen the Eco-Green Spaces initiative and integrate ecological reconstruction projects and promotion of a nature-friendly green spaces concept in settlements and into Propark's work.

15. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/policy-documents/eu-biodiversity-strategy-for-2030-1>

The Living Planet Report¹⁶ emphasises the link between the three drivers of the global crisis and the importance of urgent and coordinated action to conserve biodiversity: “Climate change and biodiversity loss are not only environmental issues, but economic, developmental, security, social, moral and ethical issues too – and they must therefore be addressed together along with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While industrialised countries are responsible for most environmental degradation, it is poor countries and poor people who are the most vulnerable. Unless we conserve and restore biodiversity, and limit human-induced climate change, almost none of the SDGs can be achieved – in particular, food and water security, good health for everyone, poverty alleviation, and a



16. WWF (2022) Living Planet Report 2022 - Building a nature-positive society. Almond, R.E.A., Grooten, M., Juffe Bignoli, D. & Petersen, T. (Eds). WWF, Gland, Switzerland. https://wwf.eu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lpr_2022_full_report.pdf

more equitable world.”¹⁷

Global Sustainable Development Goals are gradually being taken up in our country, especially in the private sector, with companies already integrating them into their policies and procedures. Some of these companies aim to contribute proactively to the achievement of SDG 15 - Life on Earth and SDG 14 - Climate Action, leading to the initiation of funding programmes for biodiversity conservation. This creates unprecedented opportunities for funding protected areas in our country, hence for us, if we develop our fundraising capacities and turn to these companies with convincing arguments for capacity building programmes.

When considering funding opportunities for our work, EU funding remains an important source for conservationists, especially when considering the budget of €5.4 billion to the LIFE Programme for the period 2021-2027. About 65% or €3.5 billion will be allocated

to environmental activities and about 35% or €1.9 billion to actions to combat and mitigate Climate Change. Allocations are no longer made at national level¹⁸, which makes it difficult for entities in Romania to access these funds, especially without governmental support for co-financing. If we want to benefit from this line of funding for our work, we need strong, viable partnerships, as has been demonstrated in recent years with the three Life projects implemented in partnership with other Romanian and European entities.

The obvious trend of reconsidering the importance of biodiversity at global level, reflected in international agreements and various other approaches, is now seriously affected by the emerging crisis in Europe following the recent ongoing war on our continent. The Romanian Government is already making decisions on renewable energy production which do not take into account whatsoever the principles of

biodiversity and the need for conservation. As usual, the risk of an imminent economic crisis leads to the downplaying of the importance of nature and biodiversity and to decision making that can significantly affect the basis of life and development, with a serious risk of irreversible negative impact. In this context, those working in the field of nature conservation need more than ever up-to-date information and learning opportunities. There is a critical need now to enable them to make the case, verbally and through demonstration projects, for the need to preserve and manage our biodiversity and protected areas as well as possible.

17. WWF (2022) Living Planet Report 2022 - Building a nature-positive society. Almond, R.E.A., Grooten, M., Juffe Bignoli, D. & Petersen, T. (Eds). WWF, Gland, Switzerland. https://wwf.eu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lpr_2022_full_report.pdf

18. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/RO/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ:C:2021:127:FULL&from=EN>



2. STRATEGY 2023 - 2030

2.1. OUR VISION

By 2050 protected and conserved areas will be managed by passionate and competent professionals, reversing biodiversity loss in these areas, facilitating sustainable development and helping mitigate climate change for the benefit of people.

2.2. OUR GOAL

By 2040, access to dependable high-quality life-long learning and training opportunities has enabled the protected area and conservation sectors to diversify and professionalise in Romania and beyond, positively impacting nature, people and climate.

A professional sector, with people working at higher, recognised/accredited standards will:

- Benefit Nature, as better conserved areas and a more engaged society leads to more positive actions to protect species and habitats.
- Benefit People through more participatory, collaborative conservation approaches and

by providing income and employment, education for children etc.

- Have a positive impact on Climate, as better conserved areas and more engaged society leads to more positive actions to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change.

The sector also needs to diversify the

professional group, to be inclusive for professionals of different ages, genders, and from all ethnic and racial groups.

2.3. OUR MISSION

We provide life-long learning and training opportunities for protected area practitioners and conservationists and support them to better conserve nature for the benefit of society.

2.4. OUR PROMISE

Our Nature cared for by Professionals and valued by Society.



2.5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

We shall achieve our mission by structuring our work around the following strategic pillars:

- A. Individual Capacity Building - Building the capacity of protected and conserved area practitioners and staff of key stakeholders
- B. Organisational Capacity Building - Building the capacity of conservation entities
- C. Sector Level Capacity Building - Enable decision makers
- D. Communication and Awareness Raising - Enabling society to better understand our organisation's Mission and protected areas
- E. Organisational Development - Building Propark's capacity to achieve its Mission

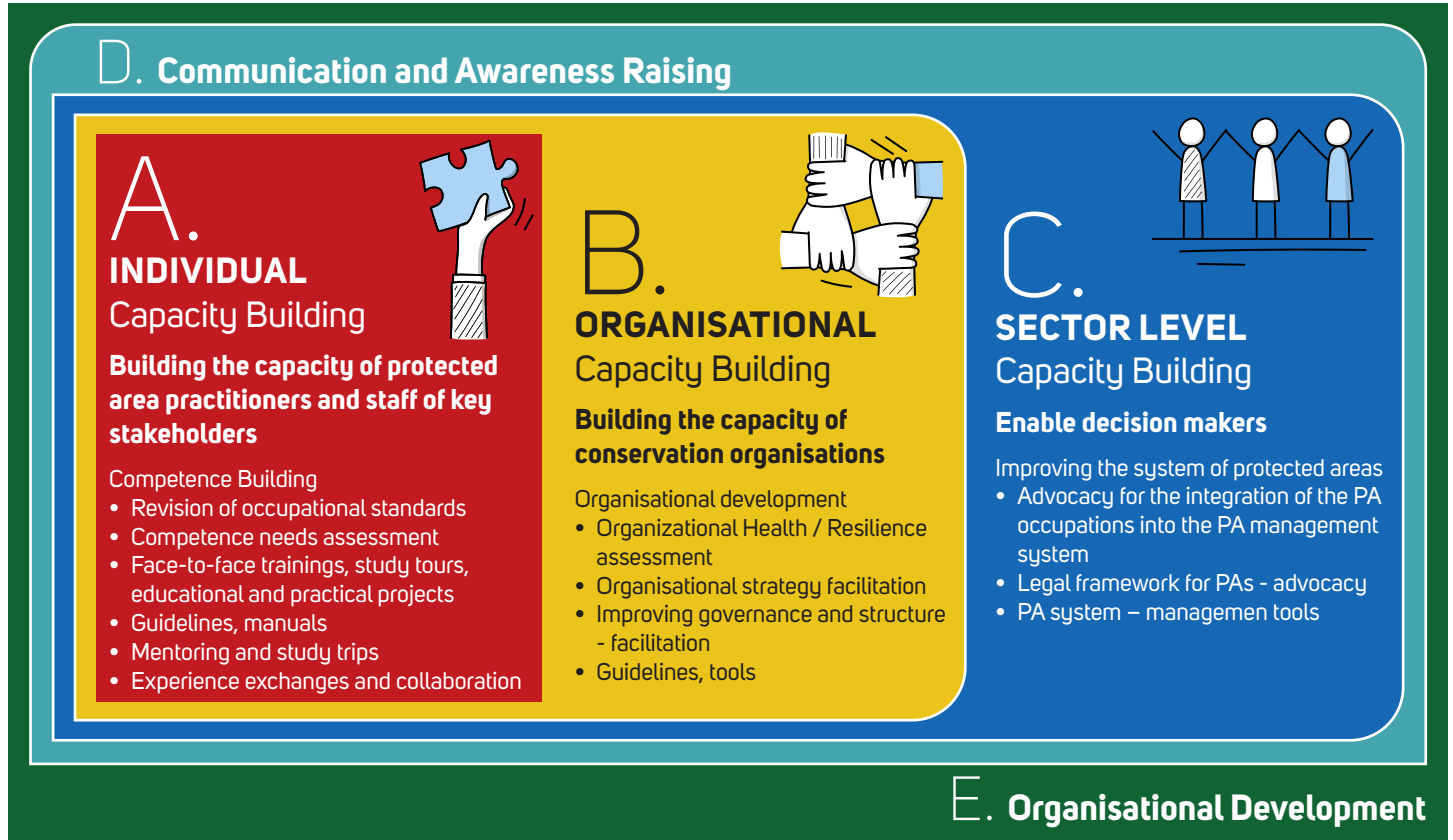
The first three pillars are about objectives aimed at contributing to the professionalisation of protected area management, having those directly or indirectly involved in nature conservation as beneficiaries. There is a close correlation

between these pillars. The professional performance of individuals depends on the way their organisations work and if it has a healthy learning culture. The effectiveness and efficiency of these organisations is closely linked to the enabling environment. Improving the enabling environment is a task that goes beyond the capacity of our organisation. However, we shall address some elements of the enabling environment through work aimed at enabling national level PA decision makers i.e., we are going to work on the sectoral level. At this "third level" we are aiming to work with institutions responsible for biodiversity conservation and protected areas at the national level and we aim to contribute to the improvement of the legal framework. Propark will continue to focus its efforts for the individual level (Pillar A), as we strongly believe that people with high professional qualities are

the drivers for effective PA management, are key for healthy conservation organisations, and are the ones who can take responsibility for running a representative and functional protected area system at the national level. But we did learn in the past years that developing and maintaining healthy, resilient organisations is of paramount importance in the overall action for nature conservation, hence we are aiming to create a support system for organisational development in the coming years. Our contributions to improving the enabling environment, more specifically the legal framework and national institutions will have to be tailored to our capacities and strengthened through the Natura 2000 NGO Coalition. The diagram¹⁹ below (Figure 8) represents the three levels, as well as the main actions we propose to increase capacity at each of these levels.

19. Inspired by Capacity Building and Empowerment - <https://www.solthis.org/en/expertise/capacity-building/>

Figure 8. Strategic Pillars



Pillars D and E are the support pillars, enabling our team to achieve the objectives defined under pillars A-C.

The strategic and specific objectives for 2023 -2030 are presented below.

PILLAR A. INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Building the capacity of protected and conserved area practitioners and staff of key stakeholders

Strategic Objective A

Learning opportunities are provided by Propark to practitioners directly and indirectly involved in P&CA management, through a structured approach entailing capacity building programmes, training events, experience exchange and networking possibilities.

Building on our work from the last 14 years, we are going to implement a PA/CA professionalisation programme, ideally through a centre that will offer capacity building programmes and learning/training opportunities built through a competence-based approach in blended learning events. Diverse learning opportunities will be offered both to protected and conserved area practitioners and to key stakeholders who should and/or can contribute to effective and successful protected/conserved area management. Protected area practitioners and stakeholders will have access to up-to-date information and opportunities to learn not only through structured programmes, but also by joining

professional debates and working groups to develop solution-oriented thinking and provide innovative ideas to improve protected area management. Key stakeholders will benefit from nature conservation related training, information and materials through the centre. New topics will be included in our training programmes e.g., related to sustainable development and Nature Based Solutions and OECMs, whilst more emphasis will be given to some of the “old” topics, such as for example for community outreach and stakeholder engagement or communication. We’ll continue to explore possibilities for building a P&CA management master course in partnership with a university.

Specific Objective A1

Capacity development for protected and conserved area practitioners

A comprehensive learning programme for at least two occupations, as well as management tools tailored to the needs of protected and conserved area professionals are provided by 2025 and continuously improved to increase management effectiveness of these areas.

We are aiming to have:

- a functional learning centre for P&CAs, offering opportunities for learning through modern, quality programmes (the Protected Area Specialist and Ranger programmes and training events for at least 5 priority P&CA topics), with an Evaluation Centre associated for certifying professionals acquiring competences at their jobs, in a learn-by-doing approach, by 2025
- online library for protected and conserved area practitioners, including a Register of Case Studies launched by the end of 2024 and continuously updated
- mentoring support programmes and offers for experience exchange programmes

Specific Objective A2

Capacity development for stakeholders

Learning opportunities are offered to stakeholders on at least 5 priority topics for conservation, with the aim to increase their capacities for active contributions to the management of protected and conserved areas.

Training courses will be offered on topics related to protected/conserved area management for specialists from key sectors for biodiversity management (e.g., natural resource managers and sustainable development/sectoral planners, local authorities), as well as for nature educators. International agreements are now providing the framework for countries around the world to improve conservation within PAs and extend efforts beyond these. With the OECM concept accepted now globally, the need to develop biodiversity conservation related competences with various stakeholder groups is increasing, hence the importance of this objective increases significantly.

Nature education and educators will be one of the key target groups for our programmes developed for stakeholders. We'll continue

developing and implementing education programmes and contribute as much as possible to developing teachers' and nature educators' capacity to convey the important nature conservation messages to young people. We aim to contribute to the youth's increasing understanding of the crisis faced by humanity because of unsustainable development and to the developing their consciousness and proactive attitude regarding the need to conserve biodiversity.

Specific Objective A3

Propark quality

Professional and technical capacity is in place to provide capacity building programmes with up to date, diverse and quality content, built and implemented using modern tools and techniques.

Building the capacity of our extended Propark team is a high priority for the coming years. New specialists with practical experience in conservation will be co-opted and opportunities offered for them to work together and develop/improve capacity building programmes. A

functional online platform will be in place by the end of 2023 for the capacity building programmes, including a library for P&CA management. The impact of Propark capacity building activities will be assessed and lessons used to improve the programmes.

PILLAR B. ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Building the capacity of conservation entities

Strategic Objective B

Professional support and tools are provided for organisational capacity building of entities involved in protected and conserved area management and biodiversity conservation.

Management effectiveness is intrinsically related to well structured, healthy, resilient and professional entities. At the same time, professional performance of individuals is highly dependent on the learning culture of the organisation and on how professionals are allowed to use their knowledge and skills, as well as on the work environment and motivation provided by the organisation. Propark is planning to develop and/or adapt and promote:

- An organisational development programme for conservation management related entities.

- Protected area/conservation management tools, to help P&CA management and improve management effectiveness.
- Innovative/new management approaches for Romanian P&CAs, through projects implemented with protected area managers and other partners.

Special attention will be given under this pillar to developing nature education and awareness raising projects/activities, which will allow us to better promote the importance of protected areas and the critical role of protected area managers for the future of our society.

Specific Objective B1

Supporting organisational development

An organisational development programme is available for nature conservation entities to help improve their capacity for building and maintaining healthy, resilient organisations, capable to work effectively in a fast-changing environment.

Professional people need functional and resilient organisations to fully use their competences and contribute to the effective management of P&CAs. Propark's experiences of past years confirmed the importance of a strategic and structured approach to organisational development. Hence, we are aiming to increase our involvement in organisational

development for nature conservation by:

- Developing our internal capacity, as planned through Action E1.2.
- Adapting/Promoting existing tools and training programmes.
- Investigating possibilities to work with partners for promoting and supporting conservation organisations.

Specific Objective B2

Innovative projects and approaches for PAs

Projects initiated and implemented by Propark promote at least three innovative approaches / tools in Romania and contribute to the improvement of day-to-day management of protected and conserved areas.

The wealth of international management tools, guidelines and experiences is going to be used for the benefit of Romanian P&CA managers, through projects that will adapt, test and promote approaches and tools contributing to improved P&CA management. We shall initiate projects

to provide technical and/or financial support for implementing P&CA management activities in collaboration with the managers and/or key stakeholders of these areas.

Specific Objective B3

Educational Programmes and Awareness Raising for P&CAs

Education programmes and awareness raising activities implemented by Propark increase public understanding for protected and conserved areas and their managers, especially among children and young people, with at least one of the programmes adopted and implemented by national and nature parks in Romania.

We are going to continue our nature education programmes, and we aim to develop, with the active involvement of PA managers and conservation entities, a nature education programme for national and nature parks. Awareness raising programmes will focus on P&CAs and on promoting understanding of the work of PA professionals.

Although our education and awareness raising programmes should

be part of the Innovative projects and approaches Objective (Specific Objective B2), we are giving a special attention to these P&CA management domains through Specific Objective B3, because investing in future generations is critical for the success of biodiversity conservation and for addressing challenges deriving from climate change.

PILLAR C. SECTOR LEVEL CAPACITY BUILDING

Enable decision makers

Strategic Objective C

A national framework for protected area professionalisation is initiated in Romania by relevant decision makers with the contribution of Propark. Propark is recognized at international level for its contribution to the professionalisation of protected/conserved area management.

Propark will continue to advocate for the professionalisation of PA management within Romanian borders and beyond. We are going to increase our efforts to initiate a professionalisation process assumed and supported by Romanian authorities and relevant institutions. We

shall work with the relevant authorities for a legal framework promoting specific occupations and for a national capacity building plan, including resource allocation for capacity building. We shall actively seek involvement in international capacity building initiatives and projects.

Specific objective C1

Professionalisation of the PA system

Propark's action plan proposal for the professionalisation of P&CAs is recognized by relevant authorities and contributes to the establishment of a functional framework for professionalising protected area management at national level.

Starting from the revised Capacity Building Plan for Romania and Moldova²⁰, we shall seek opportunities to work with the national environmental authority and the protected area agency to develop a coherent framework for the professionalisation of P&CA management. Revising existing PA occupational standards and developing new ones

as needed, to cover the management needs of P&CA, will be a priority for us. We are going to provide a framework for collaboration/cohesion for those working in this sector by organising events and/or thematic working groups for PA managers.

Specific Objective C2

Propark beyond the boundaries of RO

Propark is contributing to the professionalisation of protected and conserved area management in Europe/ globally through involvement in at least three international capacity building initiatives/projects.

We are going to strengthen cooperation with international organisations and aim to develop/join international partnerships for promoting PA professionalisation and competence-based capacity building for

P&CAs in Europe. We shall continue to contribute to international initiatives on these topics.

PILLAR D. COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS RAISING

Enabling society to better understand our organisation's mission and protected areas

Strategic Objective D

Our organization is recognized and appreciated by those active in nature conservation for its contribution to the professionalisation of protected area management and for promoting the importance of these areas.

We are going to improve communication with our main stakeholder groups i.e., P&CA practitioners and conservation entities and

with specialists from key stakeholder groups. We'll better promote Propark, our mission and activities to make our work understood and

20. Planul regional privind creșterea capacității profesionale de management a ariilor protejate din România și Republica Moldova, 2016 <https://propark.ro/images/uploads/file/publicatii/Plan%20regional%20de%20dezvoltare%20a%20capacitatii%20profesionale%20RO%20si%20MD.pdf>

appreciated by practitioners and for fundraising purposes. Promoting our programmes and P&CA management tools will become a communication priority. Propark will raise awareness on the important role

of professionals for nature conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

Specific Objective D1

Promoting Propark

Protected and Conserved Area practitioners and those targeted by fundraising programmes are well informed about Propark's programmes and activities.

Communication platforms and activities will focus on our key target group i.e. P&CA managers, conservation entities, and key stakeholders for conservation management. A new target group is becoming more important as we develop our fundraising programme, i.e. potential major donors. Specific communication actions are going to be developed

and implemented for this group, as needed. We do hope that parts of the general public will be interested in Propark and learn about us from the website and social media channels, but we are not proactively targeting this group through our communication.

Specific Objective D2

Awareness raising on the importance of professionalising protected areas

Protected and Conserved Area management professionals understand the importance of professionalisation and continuous learning and have easy access to the programs and tools developed/promoted by Propark.

We'll seek support from and cooperation with PA and conservation practitioners to advance the cause of professionalisation for P&CA and conservation management. For this we need to increase the number of those who understand the importance of developing sector specific competences in structured and continuous programmes. Organising

events, promoting management tools, guidelines, case studies, developed and collected by Propark, will be part of our awareness raising activities. Part of our efforts under this objective will be directed towards activities aiming to improve the image and reputation of professionals from this sector.

PILLAR E. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Building Propark's capacity to achieve Mission

Strategic Objective E

Propark is effective and efficient in achieving its strategic objectives, has a healthy governance and provides the resources needed for achieving these objectives.

Implementing this ambitious strategy requires increased capacity in Propark's core and extended teams. Special attention will be given to develop our capacity for addressing the following topics: understanding and valuing local communities and supporting them, understanding and working with and for OECMs in the future, and climate change

adaptation and mitigation in PAs. Increased efforts will be made for securing unrestricted funding based on a fundraising plan. We'll continue to pay special attention to providing a good working environment for all of our core and extended team. We'll continuously improve workflows and internal communication.

Specific Objective E1

Propark Team

The team has the competences needed for implementing the strategy and these are continuously improved upon.

Specific objective E2

Collaborators

Propark has the capacity to attract experts for its capacity building and technical support programmes and for effective cooperation with protected and conserved area management entities.

Specific objective E3

Financial resources

The organisation has the long-term financing needed to achieve its strategic objectives, especially the priority actions.

Specific objective E4

Infrastructure and procedures

Propark develops and implements the procedures, secures and maintains the equipment needed to function effectively and efficiently.

Specific objective E5

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation tools and procedures are in place for assessing Propark's effectiveness and efficiency and the impact of our projects and activities and for providing information to continuously improve our work.



3. ACTION PLAN

The actions planned for the period 2023 – 2030 based on the strategy are presented in Tables 3 to 8. These are prioritised using the following scale:

Priority 1	CRITICAL action for achieving the objective. Resources are prioritised for this type of action, with the organisation having a high commitment to implement it.
Priority 2	VERY IMPORTANT action the organisation will cease any opportunity to secure the necessary resources.
Priority 3	IMPORTANT action, but resources will be allocated only after securing priority 1 and 2 actions, or if resources dedicated for this type of action are identified.

The degree of “difficulty” for each action was estimated based on the overall need for resources i.e., the estimated need for human, financial and time resources:

HD - highly demanding

VD - very demanding

D - demanding

R - reasonable

All the planned actions are considered necessary to fulfil our mission and to achieve our objectives and prioritisation helps us improve effectiveness. Based on the Action Plan,

annual work plans will be developed. Our achievements will be evaluated annually, using the indicators presented in this document. The strategy will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised after 3 years to ensure that it remains relevant and achievable.

3.1. PILLAR A. INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Propark will develop/review and provide quality learning opportunities and materials, with priority given to protected and conserved area managers. P&CA stakeholders will be considered, especially those from local

communities or entities with natural resource management responsibilities in these areas.

Courses organised by us and prepared and delivered by trainers with practical experience are sought after and appreciated, and our

technical offerings, such as developing management plans or initiating educational activities, are valued by our stakeholders. However, we should focus on developing a more structured approach for professionalising protected

areas. We are planning to establish a centre of excellence dedicated to protected and conserved area management, offering, through diverse online and face-to-face learning experiences (blended learning), opportunities for

interaction to generate inspiration and motivation. This will require us to provide modern online learning opportunities, to increase and strengthen the pool of experts we work with, and to invite experts from areas not yet

covered by the Propark ‘portfolio’, such as climate change, to join us.

1	2	3	4
Objectives / Actions	Measurable indicators	Priority	Level of difficulty
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE A			
Learning opportunities are provided by Propark to practitioners directly and indirectly involved in P&CA management, through a structured approach entailing capacity building programmes, training events, experience exchange and networking possibilities.			
<p><u>Specific Objective A1</u></p> <p>Capacity development for protected and conserved area practitioners</p> <p>A comprehensive learning programme for at least two occupations, as well as management tools tailored to the needs of protected and conserved area professionals will be provided by 2025 and continuously improved to increase management effectiveness of these areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • centre of excellence for nature conservation, offering learning opportunities through modern, quality programmes (PAS, Ranger and programmes for at least 5 priority PA topics), with an associated Evaluation Centre • online library, including a Register of Case Studies • mentoring offers for PA professionals • offers for exchange programmes • at least 700 participants in training events and programmes • explore possibilities for a P&CA master course with at least 1 university 		

1	2	3	4
<p>A1.1. Provide learning and training opportunities, combining traditional methods with new, innovative approaches and new/priority topics for P&CA management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protected Areas Specialis and Ranger blended learning programmes, with learning periods of at least 8 weeks and with applied learning methods, offered on a regular basis (a minimum of 1 full programme for every 2 years) with at least 120 participants in total at least 4 short term training programmes (up to 5 days) on 4 priority topics (e.g., community outreach and stakeholder engagement, monitoring and effectiveness evaluation, role of P&CAs in climate change adaptation and mitigation), with a minimum of 400 participants at least 60% of Propark programmes/courses are delivered using a blended learning approach (online combined with face-to-face) learning opportunities and training programmes integrated into a coherent offer, adapted to the needs of PA managers - establish a centre of excellence for P&CA management 	1	HD
<p>A1.2. Develop learning tools/materials, and collect them, together with nationally and internationally existing ones into an online library.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> quality learning materials developed for each Propark programme / course online specialist library for P&CA management, with systematised resources by management domain/theme including newly developed or existing learning tools / materials, developed in our country and internationally 	2	D

1	2	3	4
<p>A1.3. Develop mentoring concepts for PA employees for support in applying the knowledge and skills, acquired through Propark capacity building events in their daily work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 mentoring programme with the duration of at least one year developed and promoted • at least 1 group participating in the mentoring programme 	1	VD
<p>A1.4. Provide learning opportunities through exchange of information and experience to those working in PA and PA-related projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 2 Biosferis issues per year • at least 2 webinars per year • PA management case studies Register with at least 10 management approaches on different topics relevant to Protected Areas 	2	D
<p>A1.5. Partner with universities to include PA management training programmes in university curricula.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partnership with at least 1 university with a relevant profile for nature conservation, allowing, at a minimum, the organisation of events and short courses related to PA • participation / contribution to at least 1 university / master course 	2	VD
<p>A1.6. Prepare PA managers to understand the phenomenon of climate change, its impacts on biodiversity and hence society, and help them adapt management measures accordingly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 course of at least 2 days developed on climate change and adaptation of management measures in PAs • at least 100 participants attending the course on climate change • integrating relevant climate change related aspects in training programmes provided by Propark 	1	VD

1	2	3	4
<p>A1.7. Organise training events for PA staff responsible for nature education, to help professional development and/or implementation of nature education programmes, including for the national programme developed under B...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> conducting training sessions for at least 50 representatives of protected areas in Romania based on the nature education programmes / activities initiated by Propark 	1	R
<p><u>Specific Objective A2</u> Capacity development for stakeholders Learning opportunities are offered to stakeholders on at least 5 priority topics for conservation, with the aim to increase their capacities for active contributions to the management of protected and conserved areas.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> training events / packages for at least 5 topics at least 200 specialists from key sectors for biodiversity conservation management (e.g. natural resource managers and sustainable development / sectoral planers) participate in courses related to protected area management at least 100 nature educators (outside PA teams) trained by Propark 	
<p>A2.1. Prepare and organise online and face-to-face courses for stakeholders from key domains for P&CAs (e.g. sectoral planning, forestry, water, agriculture, fisheries).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least 5 training events developed for 5 priority stakeholder categories for effective protected area management at least 200 people trained 	2	VD
<p>A2.2. Develop a training programme for environment / nature educators to help them include protected area issues in their programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least 5 train of trainer sessions for nature education for a minimum of 100 participants (coming from various entities, other than PA staff) 	2	R
<p>A2.3. Develop cooperation with educators / trainers from relevant domains with the aim to promote nature education in other sectors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least one partnership with a university or faculty of education sciences with the aim to engage and attract future nature educators 	3	VD

1	2	3	4
<p>Specific Objective A3</p> <p>Propark quality</p> <p>Professional and technical capacity is in place to provide capacity building programmes with up to date, diverse and quality content, built and implemented using modern tools and techniques.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group of trainers/consultants from areas of expertise relevant for protected areas • functional online platform, developed and continuously updated to meet current standards • at least 2 assessments carried out with the tool created for evaluating the impact of Propark's capacity building programmes / activities 		
<p>A3.1. Establish a group of specialists in fields relevant to PA management, giving them the opportunity to interact, exchange information and ideas, and to contribute to Propark's training and consultancy programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group of trainers/consultants on areas of expertise relevant to protected areas • subgroups of 2-3 trainers for each training module defined for the SAP and Ranger programmes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 1 debate per year organised for the group and/or subgroups on topical issues for protected area management 	1	D
<p>A3.2. Revise the online learning platform to current standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • functional online platform at current standards 	1	VD
<p>A3.3. Develop and implement a programme and a tool to assess the impact of the capacity building and support programmes delivered for PA practitioners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 impact assessment tool for training programmes developed • at least 2 evaluations carried out with the tool developed 	2	VD

3.2. PILLAR B. ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Over the years we have focused on professional development at an individual level. Knowing that our impact depends to a large extent on the organisational capacity of the entities in which the trainees work, in the coming period we are going to pay attention to promoting and supporting organisational development actions. This need has been voiced by people who participated in our courses as well as by other stakeholders. Our capacity and experience is still somewhat limited at the moment, but we will develop this component gradually, building on Propark's organisational development experience and on activities already carried out i.e., organisational assessments and facilitating an organisational development process.

One way to support organisational development chosen by us, is to provide case studies related to P&CA management. Aware of the power of leading by example, we intend to

present good practices, either developed and implemented by ourselves or by presenting well-documented case studies. Our demonstration projects implemented so far aimed to demonstrate good practice in protected areas in different domains. And we'll continue to search for funding and implement P&CA management related projects in partnership with management entities.

We are going to continue our nature education programmes, aiming to develop, with the active involvement of protected area managers and conservation entities, a nature education programme for protected and conserved areas. A well-designed education programme, implemented at least in national and nature parks, might significantly contribute to increasing awareness for the young generation of the importance of protected and conserved areas. Furthermore, such a programme can be continuously improved by the network

of P&CAs based on the experiences gathered during implementation. A collaborative platform will be initiated and coordinated by us to involve different entities in the development, implementation and continuous improvement of a national P&CA education programme. Although our education programmes should be under Specific Objective B2 (as part of management projects and approaches), we are giving a special attention to this important P&CA management domain under this objective. Thus, we are supporting P&CA entities to develop their organisational capacity for education activities and we are contributing directly, through our education projects, to nature education in P&CAs. We consider that investing in future generations is critical for the success of biodiversity conservation and for addressing challenges deriving from climate change.

1	2	3	4
Objectives / Actions	Measurable indicators	Priority	Level of difficulty
<p><u>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE B</u></p> <p>Professional support and tools are provided for organisational capacity building of entities involved in protected and conserved area management and biodiversity conservation.</p>			
<p><u>Specific Objective B1</u></p> <p>Supporting organisational development An organisational development programme is available for nature conservation entities to help improve their capacity for building and maintaining healthy, resilient organisations, capable to work effectively in a fast-changing environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tailored organisational assessment tool for entities involved in PA management and biodiversity conservation resources/learning opportunities available for organisational development, including documented case studies at least 3 organisations benefit from Propark support for organisational assessment/development 		
<p>B1.1 Adapt and promote an organisational assessment tool, relevant for entities dealing with PA management and biodiversity conservation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 organisational assessment tool adapted for entities involved in PA management and biodiversity conservation 	1	R
<p>B1.2 Promote the concept of balanced, strategic organisational development through case studies and the provision of manuals and guides.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organisational Development section in the Online Library for PA Management, with resources provided for guiding organisational development (see A1.3) organisational development module included in the Protected Area Specialist programme 3 case studies organisational development 	2	D

1	2	3	4
<p>B1.3. Support entities active in biodiversity conservation, through facilitation or mentoring, to assess and improve their organisational capacity and resilience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least 3 organisations for which Propark facilitates/supports the organisational assessment and/or part of the organisational development process 	3	R
<p><u>Specific Objective B2</u></p> <p>Innovative projects and approaches for PAs Projects initiated and implemented by Propark promote at least three innovative approaches/tools in Romania and contribute to the improvement of day-to-day management of protected and conserved areas.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least 3 projects implemented to support PAs in adapting and testing management tools that contribute to improving PA management effectiveness technical and/or financial support provided for at least 1 project/year (average) in collaboration with P&CA managers and/or key stakeholders at least 3 initiatives of management approaches tested in at least one protected area each (e.g. planning, awareness raising, stakeholder relations, communication, guidelines, strategies, plans etc.) collaborative platform between different entities to develop, implement and continuously improve a national PA education programme 	
<p>B2.1. Adapt/test and promote existing national and international tools (e.g. METT, SMART) for PA management and/or develop and test new tools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least 1 PA management tool tested and promoted 	2	R
<p>B2.2. Support PA management teams in adapting and implementing management tools developed in our country or internationally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least 3 projects implemented to support PAs in adapting and testing management tools that contribute to improving the effectiveness of PA management 	1	HD

1	2	3	4
<p>B2.3 Provide technical support to PA management teams through quality consultancy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technical and/or financial support provided to at least 7 projects implemented with PA managers and/or key stakeholders • at least 3 initiatives of management approaches started and tested in at least one protected area each (e.g. planning, awareness raising, stakeholder relations, communication, guidelines, strategies, plans, etc.) 	1	HD
<p><u>Specific Objective B3</u> Education Programmes and Awareness Raising for P&CAs Education programmes and awareness raising activities implemented by Propark increase public understanding for protected and conserved areas and their managers, especially among children and young people, with at least one of the programmes adopted and implemented by national and nature parks in Romania.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 interdisciplinary protected area education programme adopted at national level and implemented by a group of protected areas • collaborative platform for different entities involved in PA management established with the aim to develop, implement and continuously improve a national PA education programme 	

1	2	3	4
<p>B3.1 Develop and promote nature education programmes with the involvement of P&CA managers, educational institutions and other entities (NGOs).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 1 interdisciplinary nature education programme developed and promoted at the national level • at least 3 seminars for promoting the national education programme developed by Propark and partners • 1 strategic partnership created with at least one of the relevant institutions that is open to participate in the development, testing, promotion and implementation of an education programme at the level of a PA group (e.g., school inspectorate, NFA, NANPA etc.) • one nature education programme adopted by at least 1 strategic partner (e.g., NFA adopting the programme for all national and/or nature parks) • at least 1 conference organised by Propark to promote nature education and the importance of P&CAs for education. 	2	HD
<p>B3.2. Develop organisational capacity of P&CA management entities for the development and effective implementation of education programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative platform for different entities involved in P&CA management established with the aim to support networking and exchange opportunities, as well as a collaboration framework for the development and continuous improvement of nature education programmes in P&CAs 	1	D

1	2	3	4
B3.3. Plan and implement awareness raising activities on the role and importance of PAs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awareness raising activities on the role and importance of P&CAs integrated in projects, if the funding line allows • at least 30% of the P&CA managers have partnerships / joint activities with key stakeholders open to collaborate / work with them 	3	VD

3.3. PILLAR C. SECTOR LEVEL CAPACITY BUILDING

Previous years have proven the importance of institutional capacity building for protected area management. With a quarter of the country's territory included in protected areas and with a new important actor in this sector, ANANP, it is important for Propark to intensify actions at institutional level.

The fact that we have defined occupations

and occupational standards for Protected Areas Specialists and Rangers is not nearly enough for the recognition of these occupations in the true sense of the word. The Ministry responsible for biodiversity conservation and ANANP should include requirements related to these core occupations and perhaps even specialisations related to the Protected

Areas Specialist occupation for the staff of protected area entities and there should be a national plan to professionalise this sector.

Propark will interact with institutions at national level, promoting the need and ways to professionalise²¹ protected area management in all its complexity.

21. Appleton, M., Barborak, J., Daltry, J., Long, B., O'Connell, M., Owen, N., Singh, R., Sparkes, E., Valencia, L. (2022). How should conservation be professionalized? *Oryx*, 56(5), 654-663. doi:10.1017/S0030605321000594: "elements of professionalization observed in other sectors are applicable to conservation: (1) a defined and respected occupation; (2) official recognition; (3) knowledge, learning, competences and standards; (4) paid employment; (5) codes of conduct and ethics; (6) individual commitment; (7) organizational capacity; and (8) professional associations."

1	2	3	4
Objectives / Actions	Measurable indicators	Priority	Level of difficulty
<u>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE C</u>			
<p>A national framework for protected area professionalisation is initiated in Romania by relevant decision makers with the contribution of Propark. Propark is recognized at international level for its contribution to the professionalization of protected/conserved area management.</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Specific objective C1</u></p> <p>Professionalisation of the PA system</p> <p>Propark's action plan proposal for the professionalisation of P&CAs is recognized by relevant authorities and contributes to the establishment of a functional framework for professionalising protected area management at national level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> proposal for an action plan for the professionalisation of PA management developed in a participatory approach and proposed for adoption to the relevant decision makers (based on the capacity building action plan developed by Propark in 2015) proposals for the improvement of the legal framework for PAs promoted / supported through the Natura 2000 NGO Coalition at least one annual event organised by Propark and/or thematic working groups for PA managers, to provide a framework for professional collaboration/ cohesion for those working in this sector and (e.g. think tank actions to identify and promote management solutions or proposals to improve the legal framework for PAs). 		
<p>C1.1 Develop and promote a proposal for a coherent national framework for the professionalisation of PA management and obtain recognition of specific occupations by the central environmental protection authority and the national agency for protected areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> proposal for an action plan for the professionalisation of PA management developed in a participatory approach and proposed for adoption to the relevant decision makers (based on the capacity building action plan developed by Propark in 2015) 	1	HD

<p>C1.2. Ensure a comprehensive occupational framework for protected area management by reviewing/improving existing occupational standards and initiating new ones, if needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> revised and new occupational standards, as needed to cover the complexity of occupations required in PA. At least the Ranger and Protected Areas Specialist occupational standards revised needs analysis for new occupations for PA management and initiation of new standards, as needed accreditation procedure as Assessment Centre for Ranger and Protected Areas Specialist initiated 	<p>1</p>	<p>HD</p>
<p>C1.3. Develop and promote, in close cooperation with the Natura 2000 Coalition, proposals for the improvement of the legal framework and of the governance and management system of protected areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> active presence in Natura 2000 Coalition actions by delegating representatives of the organisation to relevant debates/actions advocate, through the Natura 2000 NGO Coalition, for the participatory development of a National Biodiversity Strategy that includes an action plan for the protected and conserved area system in Romania promoting relevant results derived from Propark's work to contribute to the success of the Coalition's efforts 	<p>2</p>	<p>D</p>
<p>C1.4. Promote PA management tools tested in our country or internationally for adoption in the PA management system at national level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> presentations/discussions with relevant stakeholders on at least 3 PA management tools or the PA system 	<p>1</p>	<p>VD</p>

<p>C1.5. Provide a platform for collaboration and joint actions at the national level for P&CA practitioners and responsible authorities to encourage pro-active involvement in national level activities and to contribute to professional motivation and improvement of professional image in this sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least one annual event organised by Propark and/or thematic working groups for PA managers, to provide a framework for professional collaboration/ cohesion for those working in this sector and (e.g., national working groups to identify and promote management solutions or proposals to improve the legal framework for PAs). 	3	D
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Specific Objective C2</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Propark beyond the boundaries of RO Propark is contributing to the professionalisation of protected and conserved area management in Europe / globally through involvement in at least three international capacity building initiatives / projects.</p>			
<p>C2.1. Initiate / get involved in capacity building programmes for protected area management at European level and in other regions/countries interested in adopting the competence-based approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintaining partnership with Europarc and FFI, identify new partners • participation in at least 3 international project / programme related to PA professionalisation 	2	HD
<p>C2.2 Initiate strategic partnerships at European level and maintain existing ones to benefit from learning opportunities, joint projects and to help promote the professionalisation of PA management at European level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintaining the partnership with Europarc and FFI • at least one new partnership 	1	R

3.4. PILLAR D. COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS RAISING

Achieving the ambitious goals defined for pillars A, B and C require a significant increase in efforts to attract supporters who understand our vision and mission and believe in us enough to contribute to achieving our goals.

Communication plays an important role in this endeavour, as we need to promote our organisation more actively.

And because public understanding and support is important in the field of biodiversity

conservation, we aim to contribute to public awareness in this domain, focusing on protected areas issues and promoting the people involved in their management, i.e. those responsible for these invaluable areas.

1	2	3	4
Objectives / Actions	Measurable indicators	Priority	Level of difficulty
<u>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE D</u>			
Our organisation is recognised and appreciated by those active in nature conservation for its contribution to the professionalisation of protected area management and for promoting the importance of these areas.			
<p><u>Specific Objective D1</u></p> <p>Promoting Propark Protected and Conserved Area practitioners and those targeted by fundraising programmes are well informed about Propark’s programmes and activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the number of online and media channels through which we communicate to at least 5 • at least 50 requests for services and/or project collaboration • at least 10 “major donors” who donate 		

<p>D1.1 Promote Propark as a leading provider of capacity building and expert support programmes for PA practitioners and stakeholders nationally and internationally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 50 requests for services and/or project collaboration • increased media presence compared to the previous period (baseline: 2022) • at least 5 online and media channels through which we communicate 	1	VD
<p>D1.2 Develop and implement a communication programme to support fundraising activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 10 “major donors” supported Propark activities 	1	VD
<p>D1.3. Provide ongoing support to project teams in communicating projects initiated and implemented by Propark.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • project communication obligations fulfilled according to the founders’ request • Propark’s identity standards respected in all communication messages and materials 	1	D
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Specific Objective D2</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Awareness raising on the importance of professionalising protected areas Protected and Conserved Area management professionals understand the importance of professionalisation and continuous learning and have easy access to the programs and tools developed/promoted by Propark.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 3 events dedicated to the importance of professionalism in protected area management • promote the importance of professionalisation at least at one event per year organised by others • at least 3 partnerships to promote professionalisation of protected areas to relevant decision makers • centre of excellence for P&CAs promoted through all means available to Propark (media communication channels, dedicated events, other events organised by Propark or others) • promote each tool at least once a year on the media channel appropriate to the target audience • awareness programme is reflected in each of the projects we develop and implement 	

<p>D2.1 Raise awareness of the relevant target audience on the importance of continuous professionalisation of PA management through capacity building at individual and organisational level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a minimum of 3 events dedicated to the importance of professionalism in protected area management • participation in at least one event per year to promote the importance of professionalisation and identification of partners/collaborators • at least 3 partners to promote professionalisation of protected areas to relevant stakeholders • Centre of Excellence for PAs promoted through all means available to Propark (media communication channels, dedicated events, other events organized by Propark or others) 	<p>3</p>	<p>HD</p>
<p>D2.2 Promote management tools, guidelines, case studies developed and collected by Propark through communication means and channels adapted to the various target groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each tool promoted at least once a year on a media channel appropriate for the target audience 	<p>1</p>	<p>R</p>
<p>D2.3 Identify/Plan and develop actions and materials to help improve the image and reputation of professionals in the field.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 10 actions/materials per year 	<p>3</p>	<p>VD</p>

3.5. PILLAR E. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At its heart Propark is an organisation with a team of passionate people who need a conducive working environment and conditions, provided through a joint effort. We want an organisation that is open to the new, the innovative and the effective, where people learn continuously and have the chance to grow professionally supported by their colleagues.

Priorities for the development of the organisation are reflected in this important pillar of the strategy, which also includes actions to strengthen the enlarged team with specialists from various fields.

We will pay increased attention to international work, which allows us to promote the

importance of protected area professionalisation and enriches us with the experiences it offers. In order to gain recognition and long-term partnerships, we will need to significantly improve our internal capacity to work on international projects and broaden the group of specialists with whom we collaborate and who

can represent us.

We aim to improve the monitoring and evaluation procedures in the future, to allow a better tracking of progress, demonstrate accountability to stakeholders and make data-driven decisions to enhance effectiveness and impact.

1	2	3	4
Objectives / Actions	Measurable indicators	Priority	Level of difficulty
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE E			
Propark is effective and efficient in achieving its strategic objectives, has a healthy governance and provides the resources needed for achieving these objectives.			
<p><u>Specific Objective E1</u></p> <p>Propark Team</p> <p>The team has the competences needed for implementing the strategy and these are continuously improved upon.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 full-time team members with the necessary qualifications and experience for the activities carried out by the organisation • at least 6 days/year/employee allocated to capacity building • at least one opportunity per year for each team member to apply knowledge and gain practical experience • at least 2 employees with skills and experience in organisational development 		
E1.1. Securing the internal human resources needed to achieve the strategic objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a team of 12 full-time members with the necessary qualifications and experience for the activities carried out by the organisation 	1	HD

1	2	3	4
E1.2 Develop and implement an internal capacity building plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agreed priority themes meet organisational needs and capitalise on existing skills and interests of team members • at least 6 days/year/staff member allocated for capacity building within the organisation or through participation to courses/events organised by other entities • at least one opportunity per year for each team member to apply knowledge and gain practical experience 	1	R
E1.3. Develop the fundraising capacity of the ProPark team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaboration with at least 1 fundraising expert/organisation in the first 3 years • at least 1 employee has knowledge and experience in fundraising activities from the 4th year of the strategy 	2	HD
E1.4. Develop Propark’s capacity for effective implementation of organisational capacity building programmes/actions for biodiversity conservation entities (linked to Pillar B).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 2 employees with skills and experience in organisational development 	2	VD
<p><u>Specific objective E2</u> Collaborators</p> <p>Propark has the capacity to attract experts for its capacity building and technical support programmes and for effective cooperation with protected and conserved area management entities.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 5 actions/events through which Propark attracts and maintains collaboration with specialists with practical experience delivering quality training programmes or consultancy services. • at least 2 external trainers for each topic from the capacity building programme. • at least 2 of the team members have the necessary skills to work in international projects • at least 5 of our staff can be involved in international projects and professionalisation programmes • active members in at least 3 international initiatives / organisations • participation in at least 5 national PA events • participation in at least 5 international PA events 	

1	2	3	4
<p>E2.1 Expand and retain the pool of experts involved in Propark capacity building programmes and consultancy services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least 5 actions/events through which Propark attracts and maintains collaboration with specialists with practical experience in delivering quality training programmes or consultancy services (including study tours and training programmes for the specialists we work with) at least 2 external trainers for each topic from the training programmes 	1	D
<p>E2.2 Develop the capacity of the core and expanded team to engage with international programmes and projects relevant to Propark’s mission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least 2 of the team members have the necessary skills to work on international projects at least 5 of our external trainers and specialists can be involved in international projects and professionalisation programmes 	2	VD
<p>E2.3. Increase organisational capacity through active participation in relevant national and international events/actions and through partnerships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> active membership in at least 3 international initiatives/ organisations participation in at least 5 national PA events annually participation in at least 3 international PA events annually 	2	D
<p><u>Specific objective E3</u> Financial resources The organisation has the long-term financing needed to achieve its strategic objectives, especially the priority actions.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at least 50% of activities are funded from long-term grants at least 30.000 Euro unrestricted funds annually from consultancy activities and short-term grants (at least 40% of the total funding needs) at least 10% of the funds for the strategy implementation are secured from fundraising activities and activities related to ecologically responsible green spaces at least 4 different types of funding sources/donors at least 50.000 Euro organisational reserve secured 	

1	2	3	4
<p>E3.1. Secure up to 50% of funding from grants providing long-term funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 50% of activities are funded from long-term grants • identify new sources of grant funding (at least 1 new grant source) • increase the capacity of the team to develop and implement projects adapted to hitherto unused funding lines (e.g. research projects on the Horizon funding line) • maintain existing partnerships and initiating new ones • at least 2 long-term grant-funded projects 	1	HD
<p>E3.2. Develop and implement a fundraising plan and secure unrestricted funds to achieve our mission and to build the necessary reserve for organisational/staff security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 4 different types of funding sources/donors for funding our activities • at least 10% of the funds for the strategy implementation are secured from fundraising activities and activities related to ecologically responsible green spaces • at least 50.000 Euro organisational reserve secured 	1	HD
<p>E3.3. Continuously explore short- and medium-term grants and consultancy opportunities to secure funding for the implementation of the action plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - at least 30.000 Euro unrestricted funds annually from P&CA consultancy activities and short-term grants (at least 40% of the total funding needs) 	1	VD
<p><u>Specific objective E4</u></p> <p>Infrastructure and procedures Propark develops and implements the procedures, secures and maintains the equipment needed to function effectively and efficiently.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • functional premises • sufficient equipment available for training events • project developed for a training centre with advanced capacity building equipment 	

1	2	3	4
<p>E4.1. Maintain a functional office with adequate conditions for staff and for training events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> functional premises, with adequate space and work equipment and conditions for all team members sufficient equipment available for training events the headquarter has a training space with a minimum of space and equipment, as required by the legislation for certified training organisations 	1	D
<p>E4.2. Identify opportunities for the establishment of at least one modern/sustainable training centre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> project developed and partner(s) identified for a nature training centre with advanced capacity building equipment 	3	HD
<p>E4.3 Develop/review and implement agreed/adopted procedures for high quality operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clear procedures for the defining activities of the organisation 	2	D
<p>E4.4 Effective use of internal communication mechanisms/procedures to ensure coordinated/coherent flow of information and messages internally and to stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> functional project/contract database platform (e.g. Airtable and Amazon) At least 1 team meeting/month functional tool for rapid internal communication 	1	D
<p>Specific objective E5 Monitoring and evaluation Monitoring and evaluation tools and procedures are in place for assessing Propark's effectiveness and efficiency and the impact of our projects and activities and for providing information to continuously improve our work.</p>			

1	2	3	4
<p>E5.1. Assess regularly organisational effectiveness and efficiency and develop/implement procedures for continuous improvement of our activities based on the results of these assessments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least one report/analysis on the status of implementation of the strategic Action Plan conducted by the Board • at least one analysis conducted by the Executive Team, proposals developed and presented to the Board (if necessary) and implemented for improving activities • at least one organisational resilience check conducted by an external evaluator (e.g., a partner organisation) 	1	R
<p>E5.2. Establish clear annual objectives and performance indicators for each team member and conduct regular assessment of individual performances.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least one appraisal/year for each team member 	1	R
<p>E5.3. Define clear objectives and key performance indicators and conduct regular assessments for each project implemented.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each project implemented by the team has a project monitoring plan and is being used by the project team to track progress and adapt activities, as needed. 	1	R
<p>E5.4. Develop a simple and comprehensive data-collection procedure on Propark activities to help assess the effectiveness and impact of the organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish a system for regular collection of quantitative and qualitative data (numbers and statistics, narratives and stories) • develop capacities within the team for the use of diverse data collection methods (surveys, interviews, observations, and document reviews) and plan for resources within all projects, as possible • see also A4.3 	1	D

1	2	3	4
E5.5. Develop/improve a regular reporting system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technical report and an overview of cash-flow provided to the Board at least twice / year • full financial report provided to the Board once per year • Annual Report produced by end of March each year and posted on the website • collect the main project reports in a dedicated space in the organisational database, accessible for all team members. 	1	R
E5.6. Conduct regular risk assessments and implement mitigation measures as needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • risk assessment updated annually 	1	R

