

# Common grazing in Croatia



Best practices for sustainable use of common grasslands in the Western Balkans  
and Europe, Sofia 15.04. 2013

# Outline

Introduction

Agricultural land

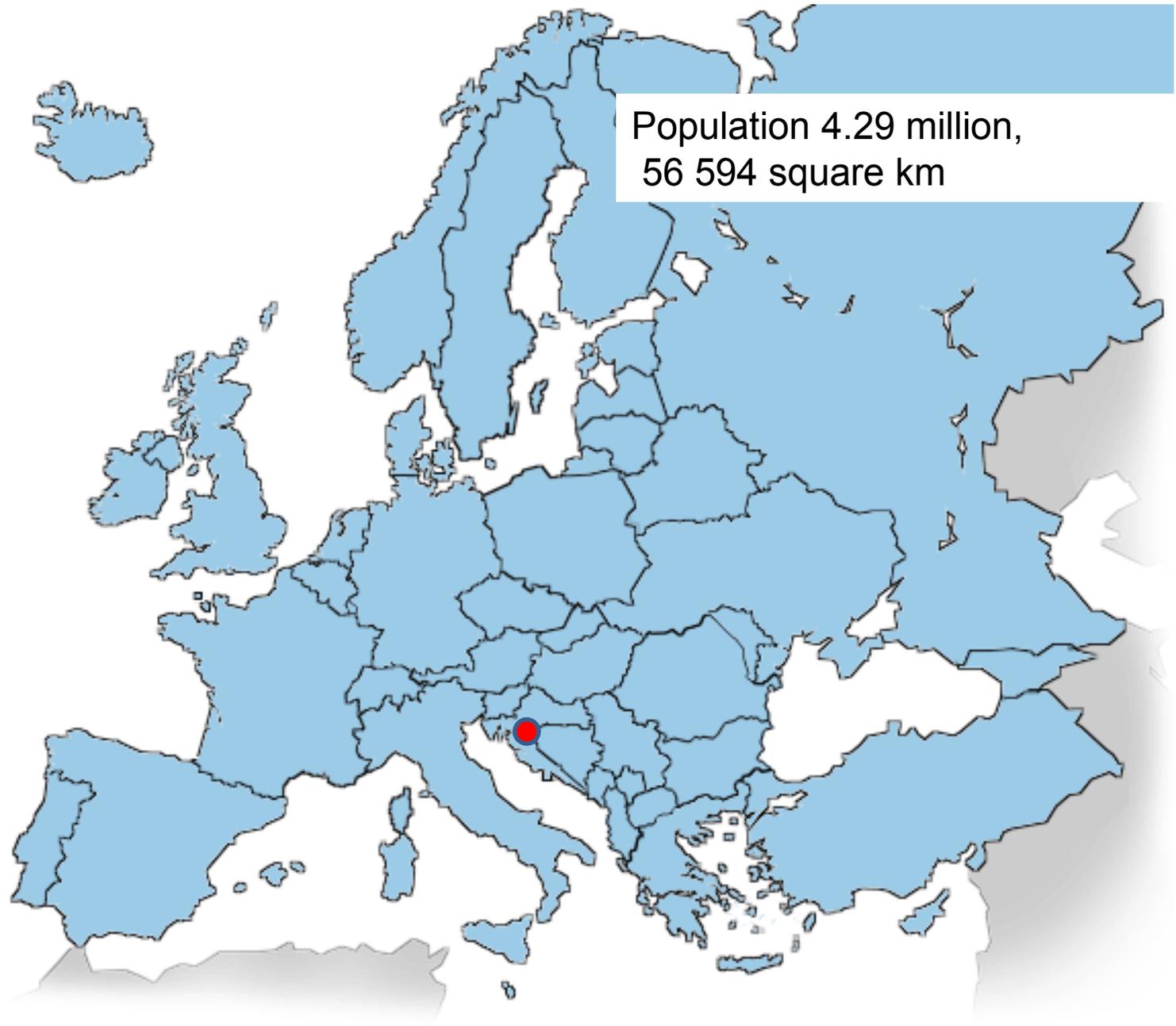
Legal framework

Gajna, Croatia – example of sustainable grazing as  
prerequisite for nature protection

Problems/solutions/joint actions

## Geography of Croatia :

- plains, lakes, rolling hills in continental N & NE (Central Croatia & Slavonia, part of Pannonian Basin);
- densely wooded mountains in Lika and Gorski Kotar, part of Dinaric Alps;
- rocky coastlines on Adriatic (Istria, N coast & Dalmatia).



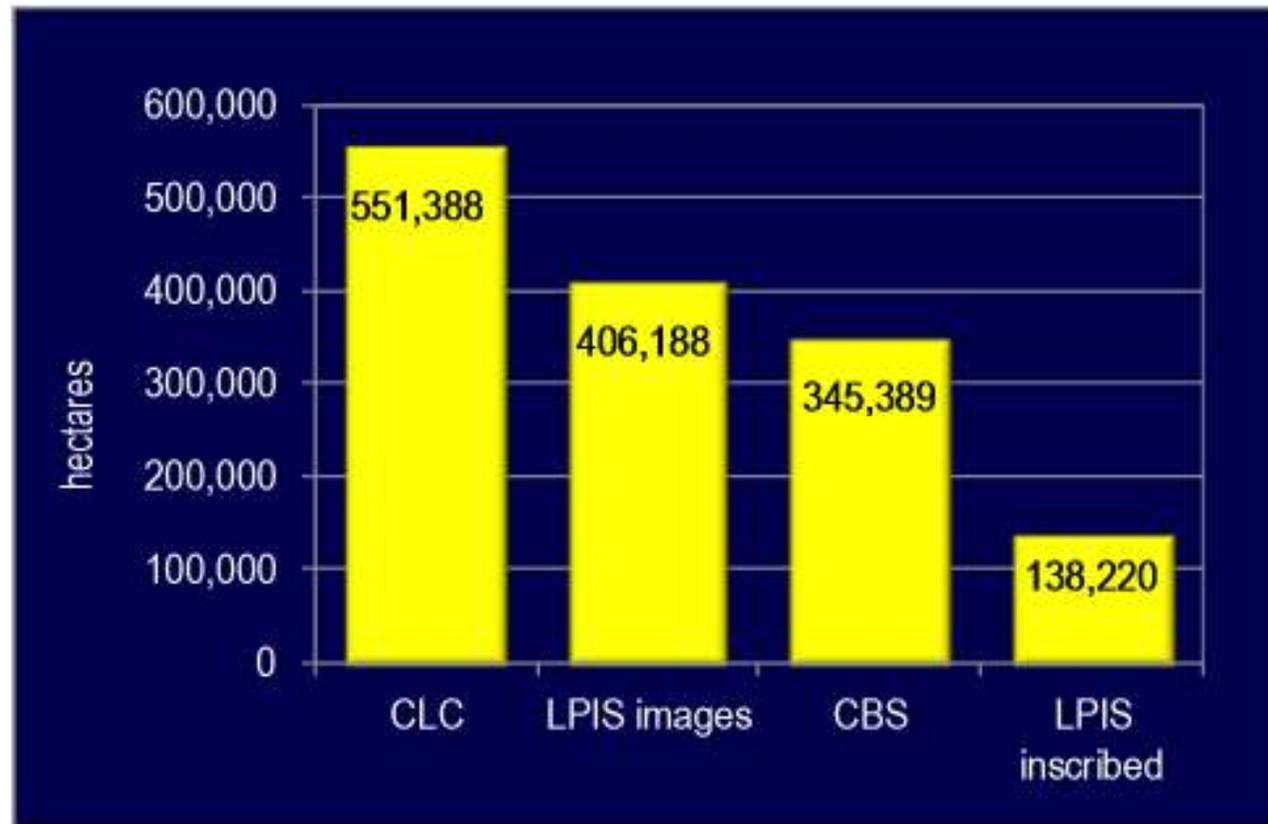
## Data issues: Agricultural land as reported by different official sources

Land category	Classification system	Source	Reference year	ha
Agricultural land	Corine Land Cover	Corine Land Cover	2006	2,536,446
Agricultural land	LPIS	PAAFRD	2012	1,824,965
Agricultural land	Agricultural Census	CBS	2003	1,391,622
Agricultural habitats	Habitats map	MENP	2000	1,386,699
Agricultural land	Utilised agricultural area	CBS	2010	1,334,825 *
Utilised agricultural land	Agricultural Census	CBS	2003	1,077,404
Registered agricultural land	LPIS	PAAFRD	2012	1,004,517

\* *It is reported that permanent grassland area is likely to be larger due to the fact that the state-owned land is jointly used by more than one family farm.*

# Data issues: Permanent pasture as reported by different official sources

The area under permanent grassland in Croatia is a big puzzle



But not as big as the puzzle of areas under common grasslands!!

# Legal framework

**Act on proclamation of land and similar communities and property communities' common property, 1953 – common pastures formally transferred to State ownership**

- Croatia passed a property restitution law in 1990, and subsequently amended that law in 1991 and 1993 and the 1996 “Law on Restitution/Compensation of Property Taken During the Time of the Yugoslav Communist Government”
- However, it was mostly not applicable to the land communities since, to simplify it, the State claimed they lacked unbroken continuity and in many cases just transferred the social ownership of the land to the state ownership.

# Legal framework

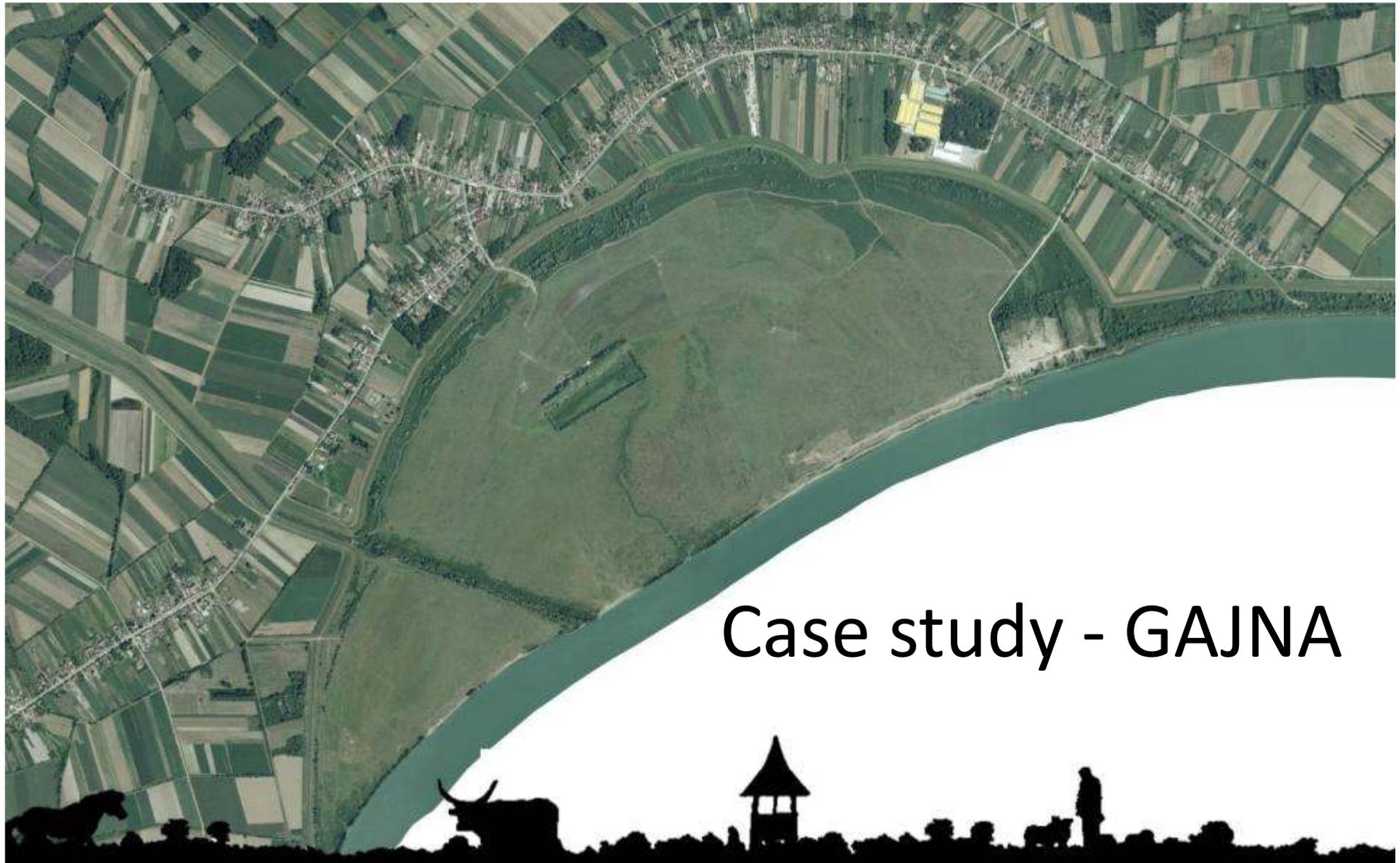
**The Agricultural Land Act (OG 152/08)** – amended 21/10, 124/10 and 63/11

- Municipalities given the right to decide on the lease of the formerly common and now State owned land. (Out of 547 municipalities, 75 do not possess state owned land and 74 never created the Program of distribution of the State owned land as required by the 2008 Act)
- Amendment 63/11 introduction of so called *Pasturing Communities*. *PCs* - a cooperative – only with people with residence of that or neighbouring municipalities.
- **The Ordinance on Conditions for Submitting Requirements and Criteria for the Lease of Communal Pastures (OG 135/11)**

# Legal framework

## Newest **Agricultural Land Act 39/13** -

- References to Pasturing Communities removed between two readings in Parliament – subacts to follow – future of Pasturing Communities uncertain.
- Articles 46 and 47 - biggest differences – any private or legal person instead of PC's ;
- 5 years instead of 20;
- proportionally to number of cattle,
- Agency for agricultural Land taking over the tenders and all procedures from municipalities



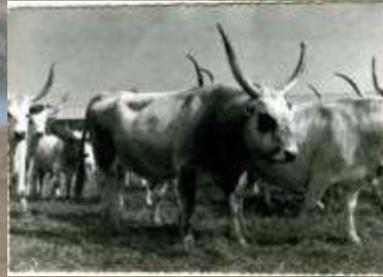
## Case study - GAJNA

In densely populated and intensively cultivated agricultural area close to the Sava River, there are places of very high value for nature which are directly dependent on traditional land use (common pastures, flooded grasslands and alluvial floodplain lowland forests)

# Similar grazing practices over the centuries – continuous communal governance of the land



Late Bronze Age



1970s



1980s



2010s

Local community and NGO BED founded in 1989 - managing the area together -  
revitalization, biodiversity protection and protection of cultural and natural heritage



Protected as a significant landscape since 1990

280 ha of typical flooded pasture, alluvial depressions and elevations,

**Directly dependent on activities of local community for its survival as a valuable habitat**

Indigenous and protected breeds – best caretakers of the pasture – low input, high stamina, natural and cultural heritage, gene pool, best for extermination of invasive plant species, adaptation qualities



**Black Slavonian Pig**



**Slavonian  
Syrmium  
Podolian  
Cattle**



**Tsigai sheep**



**Posavina Horse**



**Croatian Shepherd Dog**

# Gajna - Pool of biodiversity- Networks – Emerald, Natura 2000 (SPA and SAC), ELBARN

**Four leaf clover– *Marsilea quadrifolia*  
EU red list**



Numerous alluvial depressions harbour over 250 plant species of marshy and pasture flora. It is important bird feeding and fish spawning area.

**Sand martin – *Riparia riparia***



**Black stork– *Ciconia nigra***



Invasive plant species poses a major threat, particularly *Amorpha fruticosa* – grazing is the only efficient way of controlling it !!!



*Podolians grazing on amorpha*

# Gajna – the first Pasturing Community in Croatia



- Eco-cooperative Gajna was founded in 2007- re-registered as Pasturing Community in 2012.
- Management plan created for Common pasture Gajna in 2012.- approved by Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection

[www.bed.hr](http://www.bed.hr) –new english version expected in May 2013

## Conservation measures:

- ensure constant livestock grazing in pasture areas;
- keep 10-15% of the total area under water during non-flooding periods;
- keep 10% of the total area covered by indigenous forest vegetation (oak, willow, poplar and narrow-leaf ash);
- prohibit waste disposal in the area;
- prohibit removal of surface soils with grasses ;
- favour traditional endangered domestic breeds etc



## Problems:

- Inefficient institutional support
- Sporadic funding,
- Legal obstacles and ambiguities impede traditional grazing practices,
- Population decrease,
- High infrastructural costs due to floods,
- Invasive species,
- Overlapping of jurisdictions.

## Most important threats for common grazing in Croatia 1

- Unclear **legal regimes in governance and land tenure** of former common grounds + overlapping of jurisdictions (water and forest companies, municipalities, nature protection bodies, local communities...) impeding eligibility for subsidies
- Without a solution of land eligibility rules for CAP support in particular, even the most perfect set of EU or national subsidies would be wasted. There is still a lack of capacity – lack of an organizational structure that can administer the agri-environment measures and payments to farmers.

## Most important threats for common grazing in Croatia 2

Disappearance of the last generation of pastoralists, **population decrease and isolation** in the rural areas , **social stigma**

- Economic and the the social conditions in areas where common grazing still exist are very unfavourable, most of them being in the so called Areas of special state concern. These areas are in most cases also affected by the war in the 1990's and have suffered additional war related depopulation. The traditional knowledge of extensive grazing regimes and conditions is disappearing since there is no transfer of knowledge to the younger generations. Shepherding carries a social stigma, being linked to the poorest members of society.

Developmental pressures – **intensive agriculture, unsustainable tourism, land purchase**

- Croatia, like many transitional societies, is affected by the new type of economy favouring the interests of capital and big corporations.

## Future – uncertainties and certainties

### What is uncertain?

- Legal – What will the new Ordinance on Conditions for Submitting Requirements and Criteria for the Lease of Communal Pastures look like and how will it shape the future of common grasslands?
- Financial – What will agri-environment measures for Croatia in 2014-2020 look like?

### What is certain?

Links , mutual understanding and sync between policies and actors involved are very weak but pivotal for finding viable solutions.

Economic support most important and urgent but should be followed with sets of measures aimed at support towards sustaining social and cultural values connected towards common grazing.

# Through the barricades....

## Nature Conservation view

- Agriculture is the biggest threat to biodiversity
- Rural people always look after economic interests first
- Communities don't have knowledge necessary for nature conservation – only experts can guide the process
- Nature has to be protected from people



## Agriculture view

- Greening is more work and less profit
- Can we eat bees, birds and butterflies?
- Traditional practices are ineffective, that is why they disappeared in the first place
- Protected areas are hijacking land from better use



## RED ALERT

Knowledge of last generation of pastoralists will be gone if we don't react jointly  
How do we learn each other's languages and find common grounds ?

# ICCAs and ICCA Consortium



**What does ICCA's stand for ?**

**Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Areas and Territories**

**3 ICCA defining characteristics:**

1. *The community is closely connected to a defined ecosystem culturally and/ or because of survival and dependence for livelihood*
2. *The community management decisions and efforts lead to the conservation of nature*
3. *The community is the major player in decision making (governance) and implementation regarding the management of the site*

The ICCA Consortium is an international association whose Members are organizations

The Consortium also has honorary members (individuals) and partners (e.g., CBD Sec., IUCN, GEF SGP, etc.) –

[www.iccaconsortium.org](http://www.iccaconsortium.org) – Iris Beneš Coordinator for Central, Eastern and Northern Europe [iris@iccaconsortium.org](mailto:iris@iccaconsortium.org)