

## Some Lessons Learned from the Pfalzerwald/Vosges du Nord Transboundary Biosphere Reserve

Mountain PAs Network Member **Roland Stein**, Transboundary Coordinator for this Biosphere Reserve which straddles the German/French border, offers the following suggestions to fledgling transboundary PAs, based on 15 years of experience:

- Bring people from both sides of the border together, in formal but also in informal situations, even in mixed groups, including park staff, political decision-makers, representatives of local communities and other stakeholders. Constantly follow-up on these events and meetings.
- Create opportunities to let people experience the culture, the way of living and the problems and solutions of their neighbours across the border.
- Promote and support emerging local and regional initiatives on transboundary networking and cooperation.
- Offer opportunities for training on intercultural communication and joint project management, for capacity-building and for training on conflict-prevention and –resolution.
- Actively involve committed key-people in the transboundary work and offer to them appropriate tasks.

What we need is:

- Giving staff from both sides of the border the time and the opportunity to go on site together regularly and to experience the common heritage, in order to link up closely with the subject of their work, by means of authentic experiences and unique perceptions.
- Take political decision-makers, donors and government agency people on joint field-trips, visiting hot spots of transboundary activities and challenges.
- Thus create a feeling of responsibility for the whole of the transboundary area and not just to remain in purely national perspectives.
- Assist people in developing strong emotional ties with the TBPA they are associated with.
- An initial step could also be to focus on the protection of common flagship-species and make people feel proud of their joint natural heritage and its outstanding features.