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ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE



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## Crowdfunding solutions to ensure peatland preservation

Applied in the nature park of Hochmoor Schrems, Lower Austria

*Crowdfunding efforts for the nature park of Hochmoor Schrems are revolutionizing peatland conservation in Lower Austria and are reshaping preservation strategies. These community-supported initiatives promise a sustainable future for the region's cherished natural landscapes.*

### Key Learnings

- **Raising funds and awareness:** Both individuals and businesses contributed to the campaign, highlighting the widespread commitment in the preservation of natural habitats. Initiatives like the "Förderkreis Hochmoor Schrems" not only raise funds but also awareness about environmental challenges and the significance of peatland preservation, fostering a sense of collective responsibility among the public.
- **Collaboration:** Collaboration between the non-profit COMÚN foundation, the local government, and other stakeholders has been essential for the success of the project.
- **Funding:** Diversified funding sources such as donations from individuals, businesses, and municipal contributions increased the financial resilience of the conservation project.

## About the region

Hochmoor Schrems is a nature park in Lower Austria and is characterised by its high peatlands, encompassing a unique ecosystem of great environmental significance. The climate is cool and temperate with an average annual temperature of around 8°C. The high peatlands lie approximately 560 meters above sea level and cover an area of about 20 km<sup>2</sup>. The region is known for its pristine landscape and unique biodiversity.

## Climate Hazards

Droughts, Extreme Temperatures,  
Flooding, Water Scarcity

## Sector

Tourism, Financial, Biodiversity

## Key system

Ecosystem and Nature Based Solutions

Water Management



## Climate Threats

The preservation and restoration of peatlands in Hochmoor Schrems Nature Park is crucial and is integrated into a comprehensive park concept. Over millennia, peat layers formed by plant remains, act as carbon sinks, capturing and storing CO<sub>2</sub>. However, drained peats release methane and CO<sub>2</sub>, significantly contributing to climate change, and surpassing the emissions of international air traffic. Intact peatlands mitigate global warming by absorbing CO<sub>2</sub>, but rapid global warming threatens their stability. Despite their importance as water reservoirs and for microclimatic regulation, disturbed peatlands lose their carbon storage capacity. Hence, preserving peatlands such as Hochmoor Schrems is vital for climate regulation and biodiversity conservation, emphasising the urgent need for their protection and restoration.

## Crowdfunding in Hochmoor Schrems

In response to the urgent challenges posed by climate change and the alarming rates of species extinction, areas such as the nature park of Hochmoor Schrems need more support than ever. The non-profit federal foundation COMÚN, in collaboration with the city of Schrems, initiated the "Förderkreis Hochmoor Schrems " a crowdfunding campaign to promote biodiversity, mitigate climate risks, and preserve natural habitats. This initiative unites the local population, businesses, and municipal authorities to ensure the financial sustainability of the nature park.

The successful crowdfunding campaign for Hochmoor Schrems exemplifies innovative solutions to ensure budgetary support for peatland preservation. Through the combined efforts of private donations and municipal contributions, **the campaign was able to increase the park's budget by 20%**. This collaborative funding approach not only addresses budget shortfalls caused by external factors such as

inflation but also facilitates investments in educational programs and the preservation of habitats. Initiatives such as the "Förderkreis Hochmoor Schrems" emphasise the ongoing commitment to community engagement and environmental stewardship and support the continuation of activities. It also demonstrates that crowdfunding can efficiently secure resources for nature conservation.

## Launch and achievements

"Förderkreis Hochmoor Schrems" is a participation project launched by COMÚN together with the city of Schrems and the nature park to persuade private individuals and companies to make a concrete financial contribution. Initially set at 95,000 euros, the budget for the Hochmoor Nature Park in Schrems faced some challenges due to inflation. However, as reported by the non-profit foundation COMÚN, the shortfall was reduced by donations exceeding 10,000 euros. As announced at the time, the municipality of Schrems intends to double the donation amount, providing an additional 20,000 euros for the nature park's ongoing operations.

Crucial to this success were the collaborative efforts of various partners.

- The City of Schrems not only provided essential budgetary support for the nature park's establishment and ongoing operations but also demonstrated a strong commitment to its preservation.
- The nature park itself played a vital role in sharing valuable expertise and knowledge, particularly in developing effective promotion campaigns to engage the community.
- COMÚN played a significant role in facilitating the crowdfunding efforts by actively supporting the development and implementation of the crowdfunding strategy.

Beyond the fundraising efforts, raising awareness about the environmental challenges peatlands are facing, played a crucial role. Thanks to a strong collaboration with the media, the project carried out effective advocacy and awareness raising, which underlined the importance of protecting these vital ecosystems and fostered a collective sense of responsibility among the public.

The funds will be allocated towards expanding educational programs and maintaining the area of the nature reserve amounting to around 1,190,000 m<sup>2</sup>. For the Mayor of Schrems, Peter Müller, the campaign is not only of financial importance:

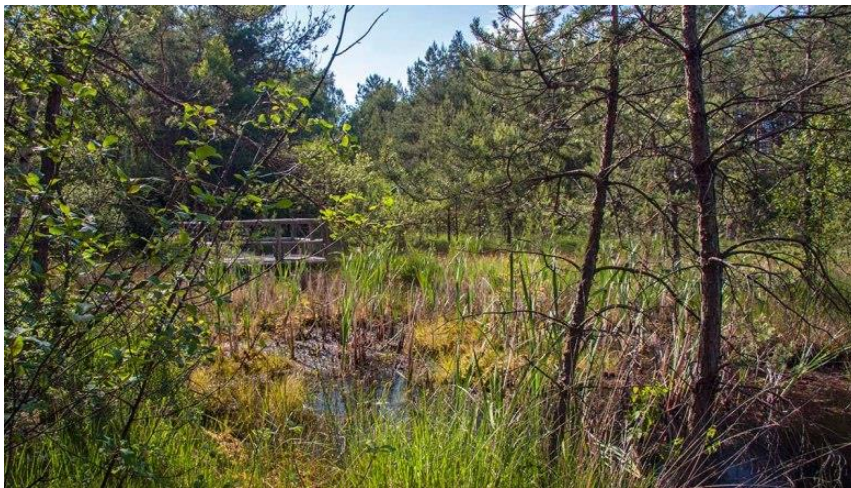
*"This cooperation increases the identification of the population and companies with our homeland and its existing treasures, which must be preserved."*

*Peter Müller, Mayor of Schrems*

## Preserving peatlands through crowdfunding



*Figure 1: Peatland in Hochmoor Schrems. Image Credit: UnterWasserReich, Sonja Eder.*



*Figure 2: Characteristic features of Hochmoor Schrems. Image Credit: UnterWasserReich, Sonja Eder.*

The campaign effectively highlighted the numerous benefits of protecting peatlands, particularly in combating climate change and safeguarding biodiversity. Many people were previously unaware of the importance of peatlands. This is why the campaign succeeded in raising societal awareness on this issue.

After the campaign, many people throughout Austria understood the responsibility each person has in preserving the environment in a changing climate and in adapting to the new circumstances posed by it. In

this specific case, people understood the importance of the preservation of peatlands and the role they play in adapting to climate change. Additionally, they have realised that the peatlands in Hochmoor Schrems play a fundamental role in the surrounding area and the country as a whole. This is why numerous people from all over the country started contributing to this crowdfunding programme.



## Summary

In order to preserve the Hochmoor Schrems, the initiative started a crowdfunding campaign, raising awareness about the crucial role peatland preservation plays in mitigating climate change and biodiversity conservation among the public and engaging different stakeholders. The efforts resulted in financial support from various sources to preserve the peatland. The successful crowdfunding in Hochmoor Schrems highlights the importance of collaboration and broad engagement. Efforts from the non-profit COMÚN foundation, the local government, and other partners not only gathered support from the local level but also nationwide, aided by extensive media coverage. This led to widespread recognition of individual responsibility and the pivotal role the peatlands in Hochmoor Schrems play for the entire country. To replicate this success, it is necessary to involve decision-makers and public authorities, promote stakeholder engagement, and leverage media platforms to disseminate information and mobilise the public. Ultimately, initiatives like this aim to cultivate a shared commitment to nature conservation going beyond collecting donations.

## Further information

- <https://www.unterwasserreich.at/>
- <https://comun.at/>
- <https://noe.orf.at/stories/3230271/>
- [Crowdfunding for Schremser Moor - noe.ORF.at](#)

## Contact

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