



Neanderthal and Early Modern Human Interactions in
the Central Balkans

Coordination Meeting Report

27 December 2022

Belgrade

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On Thursday, December 27, 2022, a joint coordination meeting of working groups on the NEEMO project was held. The meeting was attended by six project participants: prof. Dr. Dušan Mihailović (PI), prof. Dr. Vesna Dimitrijević, prof. Dr. Katarina Bogićević, Dr. Ana Majkić, Dr. Stefan Milošević and Dr. Sofija Dragosavac, while prof. Dr. Draženko Nenadić and Dr. Predrag Radović were both justifiably absent. At this meeting, the heads of the working groups submitted reports on the work in 2022 and the work plan for 2023.

WG1: Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology

Head of the working group Prof. Dr. Dušan Mihailović informed the attendees about research within WP1. He announced that all three planned sub-activities were achieved in 2022: SA1.1. Surveying and test excavations in IZ1 and IZ2; SA1.2. Morphological and spatial analysis of archaeological and palaeoanthropological remains; SA1.3. Reconstruction of settlement and regional differentiation of Palaeolithic technocomplexes in the Balkans.

Within SA1.1, field surveys and test pit excavations of Palaeolithic sites in Interaction Zone 1 or IZ1 (southern Serbia) and IZ2 (eastern Serbia) are undertaken. Within IZ1, the late Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic sites were examined (Potpeč cave in the village of Rsovci, Pešterija cave in the village of Zvonce, Pećina kod stene cave in the Jelašnica Gorge), while in IZ2 excavations were carried out in the Selačka 3 cave, located on the Stara Planina Mt. slopes. Findings from Selačka 3 indicate that the cave was inhabited in the late Middle and early Upper Palaeolithic. This assumption will be verified via radiometric dating, which is currently in process.

Within SA1.2, analyses of archaeological and palaeoanthropological material from several sites were carried out. The results of the analysis of palaeoanthropological material from Velika Balanica were published in the *Journal of Human Evolution* (doi: 10.1016/j.jhevol.2022.103175). This paper has been verified as Milestone 1.10/ Deliverable 1.10.

Within SA1.3, research focused on the reconstruction of settlement and regional differentiation of Palaeolithic technocomplexes in the Balkans continued. The preliminary results of the research were presented at the international conference organized by the *European Society for the study of Human Evolution* (ESHE) in Tübingen (Germany), held in October 2022. This result has been verified as Milestone 1.5/Deliverable 1.5. of the NEEMO project.

WG2: Palaeoeconomy

Head of the working group prof. Dr. Vesna Dimitrijević reported that research was carried out within the following sub-activities: SA2.1. Anatomical and taxonomical identification; SA2.2. Taphonomy; SA2.3. Diet, mobility, and resource procurement strategies. Most of the available time was spent on analyzing the very extensive archaeozoological material recovered during the archaeological excavations of Velika Balanica. These analyses have been completed and the results will be published during the next year, as scheduled in the project implementation plan.

WG3: Palaeoecology

Head of the working group prof. Dr. Katarina Bogićević reported that all planned sub-activities of WP3 have been carried out: SA3.1. Anatomical and taxonomical identification; SA3.2. Taphonomical reconstruction; SA3.3. Palaeoecological reconstruction. Research concerning palaeoecological reconstruction in southern Serbia was published in the *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences* (doi: 10.1007/s12520-022-01624-0) and was verified as Milestone 3.6/Deliverable 3.6. of the NEEMO project.

At the end of the meeting, issues related to the Dissemination plan, Data management plan and Risk management plan for each work package (WP1–3) were discussed.