

**Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the
Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable
Development of the Carpathians**

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PROPOSAL FOR CREATION OF A 'PLATFORM ON ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY IN THE CARPATHIANS'

1 Background

Considering that:

- economic pressure is growing constantly in the Carpathian region;
- land use changes are modifying the life conditions of wild animals;
- transport infrastructures and human settlements are occupying more and more place in the landscape;
- fragmentation of Carpathian landscape is intensifying;
- animals have to face new threats;
- animal genetic exchange is becoming more and more difficult;
- projects, aiming to improve ecological connectivity are being developed in the Carpathian region;

the Carpathian Convention wishes to establish a 'Platform on ecological connectivity in the Carpathians'.

2 Legal framework:

The legal basis for the development of ecological networks in the Carpathians is explicit: Article 4.5 of the Carpathian Convention emphasizes the importance of nature protection and encourages the parties to develop an ecological continuum that could be a constituent part of the Pan-European Ecological Network.

The Working Group on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity of the Carpathian Convention (Biodiversity Working Group) is supporting the implementation of the Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity, in which the continuity and connectivity of natural and semi-natural habitats is stressed as one of the objectives (Objective 10). The main tasks of this working group are the support activities and coordination, more than the direct implementation.

The Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA) has been established by the relevant Ministries during the 1st Meeting of the Conference of Parties of the Carpathian Convention (COP1) in 2006 as one of the most important implementation tools of the Carpathian Convention. The creation of CNPA and its further development are regularly supported from the Alps in particular by the Alpine Network of Protected Areas (ALPARC), Germany and the Principality of Monaco. To frame the activities of the CNPA, a Medium Term Strategy has been adopted by the CNPA Steering Committee in May 2010 (and will be submitted to the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee for approval) with four main objectives:

- 2.1 Promotion of cooperation on protection, restoration of nature and sustainable use of natural resources, preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the Carpathians;
- 2.2 Promotion of sustainable livelihoods and sustainable development of the Carpathians;
- 2.3 Implementation of the relevant provisions of the Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity;
- 2.4 Implementation of decisions and recommendations undertaken by the bodies established under the Carpathian Convention as well as of other applicable relevant international legal instruments.

Within these objectives, action 1.6 focuses on the expansion and/or creation of new protected areas as well as on the establishment of an ecological network. As stressed in the Medium Term Strategy, the CNPA should cooperate with all relevant bodies and organizations for the creation of an ecological network of protected areas beyond their borders and biotope connections. By 2015, results in following fields are expected: gap analysis and definition of priority connecting corridors, key mainstays and migratory routes; development of a methodology for the creation of the ecological network and creation of a catalogue of measures and, finally, the designation of and work with pilot areas.

3 Basis:

The above mentioned demonstrates that the Carpathian countries are particularly interested in the creation of ecological networks. Until now, the initiatives for supporting the creation of ecological networks in the Carpathians were lead by the national and regional administrations and by NGOs. Here below is the non exhaustive list of documents published within the Carpathians, dealing with the issue of ecological networks:

- Article 4.5 of the Carpathian Convention
- Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity (Objective 10)
- Draft Strategic Action Plan for the implementation of the above-mentioned Protocol (scheduled to be adopted by COP3)
- Medium Term Strategy of the CNPA (Action 1.6)
- Towards and ecological network for the Carpathians (CERI – Carpathian Eco Region Initiative, 2009)
- CNPA: A contribution to the international cooperation strategy (ALPARC, 2008)

- Safeguarding the Romanian Carpathian ecological network (PIN-MATRA, 2006)
- Lifeline for Europe's Diversity of Species – The Alpine-Carpathian Corridor (WWF)
- Creation of ecological corridors in Ukraine (State Agency for Protected Areas, Ukraine, 2010)

4 Objectives:

The platform will have following objectives:

- answer to the loss of biodiversity, especially in times of climate change, by ensuring the migration of species;
- contribution to the implementation of the Article 4.5 of the Carpathian Convention about the “Conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity”;
- contribution to the implementation of the “Protocol on Conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity”, action 1.6;
- contribution to the creation of a worldwide ecological network, one of the objectives of the Convention of Biological Diversity.

The concrete objectives and detailed milestones have to be defined at the first meeting of the platform.

5 Missions:

Following missions will lead to the achievement of the here above objectives:

- creation of a forum for exchange of results, knowledge and know-how in the field of ecological networks conception and creation;
- exchange of information on activities about the ecological networks in the Carpathians at regional, national and international level, in order to harmonize all the projects and in order to avoid the parallel projects;
- support of concrete measures for the establishment of national and transnational ecological networks;
- work with territorial collectivities (pilot sites) and local stakeholders, in view of creation of links between protected areas and areas with high biological diversity on local and regional level;
- identification of financial and political resources on different levels, for the implementation of measures for the creation of ecological networks;
- communication activities with the public and stakeholders in view of amelioration of acceptance.

6 Members:

The members of the platform should equally represent all the parties, governmental and non-governmental organisations, research institutes and Carpathian Convention members and observers. The parties' representatives will ensure the political support to the platform and to the different projects. The research institutes and universities

will ensure the scientific approach to the concept of the ecological continuum. The governmental, with support of relevant stakeholders and non-governmental organisations, will ensure the implementation of the projects as well as the relation with the public and stakeholders. Here below, the proposed list of members:

- Members of the Biodiversity Working Group, including experts of the contracting parties of the Carpathian Convention responsible for the ecological network
- Members of the CNPA Steering Committee and representatives of CNPA members
- Representatives of observers and partners of the Carpathian Convention
- Interested experts from universities and research institutes
- Agriculture and hunters associations
- Carpathian Wetland Initiative
- Non-governmental organisations dealing with the issue (CERI, WWF-DCP)
- Other experts invited by the members of the platform

7 Functioning:

The platform is not an acting body. Its main goal is to ensure the mutual exchange of data, knowledge, know-how and experiences, as well as the coordination of running and proposed projects in the Carpathians. Through the platform, these projects will be emphasized on international and political level.

The platform members will meet at least once a year and, for cost efficiency, will be in continuous contact via e-mails and internet site. Meetings, where appropriate, can be co-organized with the joint meetings of the Biodiversity Working Group and the CNPA Steering Committee. A written report will be submitted after each meeting of the platform to the CCIC through the interim Secretariat.

The financing of the meetings of the platform will be ensured through the work programme of the Carpathian Convention, projects and voluntary contributions.