



# **NATIONAL REPORT**

## **ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROTOCOL ON CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE DIVERSITY TO THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CARPATHIANS**

National Report to be submitted to the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention

Slovak Republic 22.09.2017

## Introduction & background

This National Report has been elaborated in accordance with the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians<sup>1</sup>, its Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity<sup>2</sup> done in Bucharest on 19 June 2009 which entered into force on 28 April 2010, and its Strategic Action Plan adopted at the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP3)<sup>3</sup>.

Following Article 28.1 of the Protocol, *“The Parties shall regularly report to the Conference of the Parties on measures related to this Protocol and the results of the measures taken”*.

According to Article 29.1 of the same Protocol, *“The Parties shall regularly examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the provisions of this Protocol”*.

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<sup>1</sup> Hereinafter named “the Convention”

<sup>2</sup> Hereinafter named “the Protocol”

<sup>3</sup> Hereinafter named “the SAP”

## INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION – REPORTING PARTY

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## A. GENERAL INFORMATION OF NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

A.1 Which are the legal, policy and institutional achievements on national and regional levels since the adoption of the Protocol in your country, aiming at its implementation and the realisation of its objectives?

Please give a short summary of all relevant measures, laws, projects, programs, initiatives, multilateral agreements, etc.

During the reporting period the efforts in the field of nature and biodiversity protection have been focused on development and implementation of national strategies and action plans related to biodiversity and landscape diversity in Slovakia (updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2011 - 2020, updated Programme on Wetland Management and Action Plan, Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and its update, updated Nature Conservation Policy, Action Plan on enforcement of CITES and EU regulations on trade in wild fauna and flora, updated Strategy on Geoparks, updated Strategy of Regional Development, new Strategy of Environment Policy to 2030, etc.).

A number of projects supported from different sources have been implemented by governmental and non-governmental organisations and academic sector, which have contributed to implementation of **the Biodiversity Protocol**, focused on conservation, management, restoration, monitoring of species, habitats, designation of protected areas and management planning, ecological connectivity, landscape protection and restoration, environmental education, etc. Among several projects implemented by the national nature conservation agency (State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic - SNC SR), we can mention the project on research and monitoring of large carnivores and wild cat in Slovakia with developed and adopted Action Plans for these species, monitoring of birds and management plans for Special Protection Areas, monitoring of other species and habitats and information system developed, development and/or implementation of management plans for some species (threatened butterflies, birds, wisent, designation and management plans for protected areas, Natura 2000 sites, Ramsar sites, caves, etc.), promotion of protected areas and Natura 2000 species and raising of public awareness, etc.

A big number of books, brochures, leaflets, documentary films, exhibitions and other information and promotion materials were produced and distributed among stakeholders to increase their knowledge and support the communication and cooperation with relevant stakeholders. Results of the SEE TCP project "Integrated management of biological and landscape diversity for sustainable regional development and ecological connectivity in the Carpathians" (BioREGIO Carpathians) (2011-2014) are used in the work of national institutions and are summarized in the book Carpathians hidden treasures, produced by the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic in 2016. Special project to support and improve implementation of international biodiversity related conventions and programmes, including the Carpathian Convention and its Biodiversity Protocol was implemented in 2011-2016 and supported by the Swiss contribution to the enlarged European Union.

A number of guidelines for managers of protected areas and stakeholders have been produced and/or translated within this or other projects. First, the assigning of the IUCN protected area management categories was done for a large-scale protected areas. Afterwards, the inventory of old-growth forests in Slovakia was made in cooperation with NGOs and experts and results were provided to the Carpathian Convention Secretariat. Transborder cooperation was developed within formal bilateral agreements between nature conservation agencies and protected areas administrations and within the cross-border projects with the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Ukraine, contributing to biodiversity research, conservation, management, monitoring, sustainable

tourism development, public awareness etc. The SNC SR is the Coordinator of the Carpathian Wetlands Initiative related to implementation of both the Ramsar and the Carpathian Conventions.

Regarding the landscape protection, the Landscape Award of the Slovak Republic has been granted since 2010 for successful activities in landscape protection, management and planning, as well as the Landscape – Humans – Culture conferences are organized annually (coordinated by the Slovak Environmental Agency). In the reporting period, a relevant laws (Act on nature and landscape protection, Decree for implementation of the nature conservation act, Act on using genetic technologies and genetically modified organisms, Act on EIA, etc.) was updated and new pieces of legislation have been prepared (e.g. on invasive alien species, for implementation of Nagoya Protocol of the Convention on Biodiversity, regulation on compensation measures, etc.).

Please give a narrative description of the main features (geography, biological and landscape diversity) of the Carpathian region of your national territory.

## **B. ACHIEVEMENTS AND FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION INFORMATION**

**B.1 Please provide information on measures to implement the Protocol and the results of the measures taken.**

### **Objective 1 – Measures for harmonization of policies and strategies and integration into other sectoral policies:**

*Pursuant to Articles 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the Protocol*

The Updated National Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 and Action plan for the implementation of Updated National Biodiversity Strategy were adopted by the Slovak Government in 2014. National Committee for implementation of Biodiversity Convention was established with participation of different sectors, academic institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders, and working groups has been established to deal with specific items of the Action Plan.

Set of the Indicators on status and protection of biodiversity in Slovakia was updated in 2015.

The Programme on Wetlands Management in Slovakia and the Action Plan for Wetlands have been updated regularly and adopted by the Government, currently valid is the Management Plan for 2015 – 2021 and the Action Plan for 2015 – 2018.

The Action Plan on enforcement of CITES and EU regulations on trade in wild fauna and flora was adopted by the Government in 2013.

The Sectoral Policy on Environmental Education and Awareness to 2025 was adopted by the MoE in 2025.

The Strategy on Prevention of Environmental Crime 2016-2020 includes measures on wildlife crime.

The Nature and Landscape Protection Policy adopted by the Government in 2006 for 2006-2015 was revised and the updated Policy for 2018-2025 is under development.

Water Management Policy 2006-2015 was updated in 2015 as Water Management Plan and along with implementation of Water Framework Directive it contributes to protection, management and restoration of aquatic habitats and wetlands and related species.

The Priority Action Framework for financing of Natura 2000 in Slovakia for EU programming period 2014-2020 was developed in 2012 (updated in 2015) to identify priorities (goals, measures, activities) for implementation of EU strategies and directives in nature conservation and biodiversity protection.

The new Environmental Policy of the Slovak Republic to 2030 ("Green Slovakia") is under development, which includes biodiversity and landscape diversity strategies with references to the Carpathian Convention.

For implementation of the Carpathian Convention a National Committee was established with representation of all relevant sectors, scientific institutions, local governments and NGOs and the Biodiversity Protocol is a part of its activities. The composition of the Committee was updated in 2016.

Work on the equal treatment of three Rio Conventions were improved. Best synergies were achieved between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UNFCCC. The provisions of the above mentioned documents have been implemented in the national Strategy on Adaptation to Adverse Impacts of Climate Change (adopted by the Slovak Government in 2014), which is updated in 2017.

Interlinkages between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UNCCD will be made within the new strategy dealing with the fight against droughts, where also assessment of the IPBES (Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) on land degradation and restoration will be used.

The above documents were prepared and coordinated by the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic (MoE).

## **Objective 2 – Measures for conservation, maintenance, restoration and sustainable use of natural and semi-natural habitats:**

*Pursuant to Articles 8, 10, 16 and 18 of the Protocol*

SNC SR undertakes activities for habitats within its annual plans. These annual work plans include a number of activities focused on management of habitats of national and Community interest, especially in protected areas (PA), where traditional management is missing. Removal of self-seedlings, scything and mowing and removal of biomass are common management activities. For example in 2016 such activities were realised on 91 sites in PAs with the total area more than 171 hectares and on additional 27 ha on 33 sites of scientific interest. Protection and maintenance of caves is also a part of the responsibility of the organisation (Slovak Caves Administration).

SNC SR in cooperation with the National Forest Centre, Slovak Academy of Sciences and other scientific institutions and experts participated in elaboration of the draft of the Carpathian Red List of forest and non-forest habitats during the BioREGIO Carpathians project and published the draft in 2014.

The status of habitats of Community interest is regularly evaluated and reported to the European Commission according to Art. 17 of the Habitats Directive. The evaluation of threats to the conservation status of habitats and priorities for actions needed are included in the Priority Action Framework for Financing of Natura 2000 in Slovakia for Programming period 2014-2020 approved by MoE.

The SNC SR as a partner of BioREGIO Carpathians project also participated in development of Common Integrated Management Measures for key natural assets (including forests, high nature value grasslands and wetlands) in the Carpathians.

The Carpathian Wetland Initiative (coordinated by SNC SR) in cooperation with Daphne – Institute of Applied Ecology published the Carpathian Wetlands Handbook (2014) with Carpathian wetland habitat types identified. Proposals for new transborder projects have been prepared, for example on restoration and management of peatlands in transborder regions of Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland and Ukraine.

Measures for conservation, restoration and sustainable use of natural and semi-natural habitats have been included in the priorities of the Operational Programme Quality of Environment 2014-2020 and

other financial mechanisms (like Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, programmes of bilateral cooperation within INTERREG, etc.).

Several projects have been implemented for restoration of degraded habitats. For example the SNC SR implemented the project “Development of Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in the Slovak Carpathians” which was co-financed by the Swiss – Slovak Cooperation Programme. The Manual on development of Restoration plan for the degraded sites was prepared and tested on 41 degraded sites for which restoration plans were elaborated and realized. The ERDF financed projects included the project on improvement of conservation and restoration of habitats for butterfly species of order *Maculinea*; management of wetlands (including publication on Management models for maintenance, conservation and restoration of wetland habitats (2015)); implementation of management plans and action plans for selected caves; monitoring of habitats and species (results and assessment in the period 2013-2015 were published in 2015); integrated information and monitoring system for caves; monitoring and management of selected caves, etc. The LIFE+ projects implemented in the Carpathian region included integrated protection of rare butterfly species of non-forest habitats in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The post-project activities of the GEF project Conservation, restoration and wise use of fens in Slovakia included development of the management plan Kláštorské lúky NNR, monitoring of effectiveness of management measures in this site and collection of data on hydrology in the Porec river catchment.

Provisions under the Common Agricultural Policies and measures of the Rural Development Programme are also very important tools for the better protection of agriculturally linked habitats and species. Implementation of cross-compliance, good agricultural and environmental conditions as well as agri-environmental schemes are helping with the basic management and protection of ecological status of habitats and species in most of the agricultural land in Slovakia. Without these measures it could happen that lot of valuable elements from the ecological point of view would be lost. Measures implemented from the level of SNC SR non-governmental organisations are additional to these basic management steps. For the protection of forest habitats and species, very important are forest-environmental schemes, which opened a very good way forward to the better implementation and combination of forestry and nature protection measures in forests. Sustainable forest is the most important way forward for the better protection of nature and biodiversity protection in Slovakia.

### **Objective 3 – Measures for conservation and sustainable use of species of flora and fauna, conservation of endangered species including endemic species and large carnivores of the Carpathians:**

*Pursuant to Articles 11, 12, 16 and 18 of the Protocol*

SNC SR in cooperation with national experts participated in elaboration of the draft Carpathian Red List of species of flora and fauna during the BioREGIO Carpathian project and published the draft in 2014. National Red List of vascular plants of the Carpathian part of Slovakia was published also in 2014 (Turis et al. 2014). The 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Red List of ferns and flowering plants of Slovakia was published as well (Eliáš et al. 2015). The SNC SR experts developed draft publication on rare and threatened vascular plants of the Carpathians. Updated Red List of birds of Slovakia was published in 2014 and work on update of national Red List of mammals continued. Taxa of vascular plants endemic to the Carpathian Mts. were published in 2016 (Kliment et al. 2016) (<http://www.preslia.cz/P161Kliment.pdf>) and provided to the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention. A task force composed of experts from each Carpathian country to finalize the list of Carpathian endemic plants has been established.

The status of species of Community interest is regularly evaluated and reported to the European Commission according to Art. 17 of the Habitats Directive and Art. 12 of the Birds Directive. Results of monitoring and assessment of plants and animal species of Community interest and of birds were

published by SNC SR in 2015. The evaluation of threats to the conservation status of species and priorities for actions needed are included in the Priority Action Framework for Financing of Natura 2000 in Slovakia for Programming period 2014-2020.

The SNC SR as a partner of BioREGIO Carpathians project also participated in development of Common Integrated Management Measures for key natural assets (including large mammals) in the Carpathians.

Measures for conservation, restoration and sustainable use of natural and semi-natural habitats have been included in the priorities of the Operational Programme Quality of Environment 2014-2020 and other financial mechanisms (like Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, programmes of bilateral cooperation within INTERREG, etc.).

Several projects have been implemented for conservation, monitoring and management of species. For example the SNC SR implemented ERDF financed projects for implementation of management plans for critically endangered plant species; on improvement of conservation and restoration of habitats for butterfly species of order *Maculinea*; implementation of management plan for European Bison; research and monitoring of populations of large carnivores and of wild cat; management of wetlands; restoration of wetlands and conservation of birds in some SPAs; monitoring of plant and animal species (results and assessment in the period 2013-2015 were published in 2015); on favourable conservation status of birds and their habitats (results were published in 2015); conservation status of Western Capercaillie and Black Grouse; monitoring and management of Great Cormorant, etc. The LIFE+ projects implemented in the Carpathian region included conservation and management of Lesser Spotted Eagle; conservation and management of Imperial Eagle; conservation and management of Saker Falcon; conservation of priority bird species and solving of problems with electrocution; conservation of Common Swift and bats in buildings; integrated protection of rare butterfly species of non-forest habitats in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, etc. A number of projects financed from different sources have been implemented by NGOs – e.g. on conservation and management of birds, bats and their habitats.

During the reporting period the SNC SR elaborated management plans for several animal species which were adopted by the Ministry of Environment such as for butterflies (*Colias myrmidone*, *Parnassius apollo*), or large carnivores (*Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus*, *Lynx lynx*). Other plans are in the process of endorsement (*Tetrao urogallus*, *Tetrao tetrix*, *Botaurus stellaris*, *Aythya nyroca*).

The annual work plan of the SNC SR includes the activities for practical management measures for species like improvement of protection and breeding conditions for butterflies, birds, bats, souslik *Spermophilus citellus*, amphibians. SNC SR installs the barriers each year during spring migration of amphibians along the roads in order to decrease the mortality of these. There were about 17 000 m of barriers installed in the year 2016. The organisation works on inventory and monitoring of species of national and Community interest and of endemic species.

SNC SR and selected rescue stations also provide care of injured and handicapped animals.

SNC SR coordinated preparation and is involved in implementation of several bilateral or multilateral projects. For example the LIFE project “Integrated Protection of Rare Butterfly Species of Non-forest Habitats in the Czech Republic and Slovakia” had the main goal to contribute to halt the decrease in biodiversity and the ecological network of Natura 2000 by the means of introduction of suitable management. Within the project restorative management (removal of undesired vegetation, mulching, mowing and grazing) was carried out on 39 non-forest habitats sites in Biele Karpaty and Považský Inovec Mountains. All these management measures were taken in order to improve habitat conditions for 10 species of butterflies of European interest. Total area of removal of undesired vegetation, mulching and mowing represents 340 hectares and for grazing it is 290 hectares.

Within the project “Rivers are joining us” which was financed by the Polish – Slovak Cooperation Programme the Vtáčí ostrov Island on the Oravská priehrada Dam was cleaned, tree species were removed and plant vegetation was mowed in order to improve breeding conditions for bird species.

Several transborder projects were or are focused on research and monitoring of migration of large

carnivores and other animals and on ecological corridors (e.g. BioREGIO Carpathians, [CON@PL.SK](#), Czech-Slovak cross-border programme, ConnectGREEN, TRANSGREEN), to restitution of Golden Eagle in the Czech Republic, restitution of *Spermophilus citellus* to the Czech Republic and Poland etc.

SNC SR and the Ministry of Interior, Presidium of Police Force of the Slovak Republic participated in the analysis of the UN Environment and other institutions on wildlife crime in the country within the project on combating wildlife and forest crime in the Danube-Carpathian region, supported from the EU Technical Assistance Facility for Danube Region Projects and are prepared to support further activities in this context.

On the international level was very important that Slovakia joined other countries and signed the Coalition of Willing on Pollinators – this was done on the agreement between the MoE and the MoA of the Slovak republic. As mentioned above, Slovakia will also use the assessment on pollinators, pollinators protection and food production published by the IPBES.

#### **Objective 4 – Measures for continuity and connectivity of natural and semi-natural habitats; ecological network in the Carpathians; enhancing conservation and sustainable management inside and outside the Protected Areas:**

*Pursuant to Articles 9, 14, 15 and 16 of the Protocol*

Identification of areas important as mainstays and priority connecting corridors allowing dispersal and migration of species populations is included in the national Territorial System of Ecological Stability (TSES) (developed on national, regional and local levels). Most of these documents require update.

New guidelines for development of documents on Regional TSES were prepared by the Slovak Environment Agency (SEA) in 2015 and adopted by the Ministry of Environment. Within the project financed from ERDF “Development of documentation of nature and landscape protection – Regional Territorial Systems of Ecological Stability for selected districts” (50 districts) background information and models for development of green infrastructure have been elaborated.

A study “Connecting the areas in transborder region through ecological networks” was prepared in 2015 and bio-corridors and bio-centres on both sides of the Czech and Slovak border were interconnected in selected districts. A study on adaptation measures to adverse impacts of climate change in a model area was elaborated, including measures on maintenance and improvement of ecosystems and their services through establishment of green infrastructure, restoration of degraded ecosystems and other remedial measures. The SEA coordinates national funding programme for village regeneration which includes measures in establishment or green infrastructure restoration.

SNC SR participated in implementation and preparation of relevant projects on ecological connectivity in the Carpathians (e.g. Alpine-Carpathian Corridor, BioREGIO Carpathians, TRANSGREEN, ConnectGREEN) and is a partner of already implemented Interreg DTP project TRANSGREEN.

The Natura 2000 was completed for all 41 SPAs (special protection areas) and the second addition for SCIs (Sites of Community Importance) has been prepared since 2012. Proposals for additional SCIs have been negotiated with stakeholders and would be subject to the approval of the Slovak Government. There are 170 newly proposed sites with total surface area of 44 000 ha, mostly in the Alpine biogeographical region (in the Carpathians). Most of them are out of the existing national network of protected areas. In addition, the process of designation of SCIs submitted to the European Commission in 2004 and 2011 continued along with development of management plans for these sites. These procedures are difficult and complicated and need additional efforts during next years, consultations and cooperation with all relevant stakeholders.

Exchange of information and experience in these processes and in defining priority connecting corridors and migratory routes has been done mainly with the Czech Republic and Hungary within

existing transborder committees and working groups for nature conservation on the level of Ministries for environment. Within bilateral agreements of the SNC SR with protected areas administrations and nature conservation agencies in neighbouring countries such exchanges exist also with other countries.

SNC SR coordinates the Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWI) and cooperation with authorities responsible for designation, conservation, management, restoration and wise use of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands in the Carpathians.

And as it was mentioned also above, measures and schemes of the Common Agricultural Policy and the Rural Development Programme are very useful and important in the protection of natural and semi-natural habitats. Their policy include also several elements, which help also to the connectivity among them – just there are often problems with the achievements of relevant information, which would linked the agricultural and environmental policies properly,

### **Objective 5 – Measures for prevention of introduction of invasive alien species and/or genetically modified organisms threatening ecosystems, habitats or species, their control or eradication:**

*Pursuant to Article 13 of the Protocol*

SNC SR elaborated draft national strategy on invasive species in 2012, its update is under preparation reflecting implementation of the EU Regulation 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species. A draft of the new law on invasive species was developed in 2016, and is under negotiation with relevant sectors.

The list of alien species of vascular plants in Slovakia was published in 2012 (Medvecká et al. 2012) and their invasive potential was estimated.

SNC SR annually deals with inventory, mapping, monitoring and eradication of invasive alien (IA) plant and animal species and data are stored in the national database system (KIMS – Complex Information and Monitoring System). Other sectors and organisations are also involved in these activities. E.g. in 2016 occurrence of IA animal species was recorded in 17 protected areas. *Myocastor coypus*, *Mustela vison*, *Nyctereutes procyonoides*, *Pseudorasbora parva*, *Perccottus glenii* represent the species which were recorded most often. In 2016 IA plant species were mapped in protected areas on 73 sites with total area of 280 hectares. *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*, *Asclepias syriaca*, *Amorpha fruticosa*, *Solidago canadensis*, *Fallopia japonica*, and *Heracleum mantegazzianum* occurred most often. Apart from the protected areas, mapping was realized on 63 sites with total area of 2,499 hectares.

Eradication of IA plant species was carried out mechanically, by using herbicides or by combination of both methods. In 2016 eradication of IA plant species was realised on 75 sites with total area of 25.50 hectares in protected areas. The eradication of IAS is included between priorities of the Operational Programme Quality of Environment 2014-2020.

These activities are included in the annual protocols for implementation of bilateral agreements of SNC SR with nature conservation organisations in neighbouring countries. Transborder projects have been implemented – e.g. the project NEOVISION within the Programme of cross-border cooperation with the Czech Republic on influence of alien carnivores on threatened population of birds (2013-2014).

Special web page is devoted to this issue within the SNC SR web site (<http://www.sopsr.sk/invazne-web/>).

SNC SR in cooperation with national experts participated in elaboration of the draft Carpathian List of

**Objective 6 – Measures to support cooperation under the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas:**

*Pursuant to Articles 7 and 14 of the Protocol*

Most of the Slovak protected areas with size over 100 ha are members of the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA). Among them are 9 National parks, 12 Protected Landscape Areas, 4 Biosphere Reserves, 2 complexes of World Heritage sites, 6 Ramsar sites. The list of protected areas is regularly updated, together with contact persons from relevant administrations of protected areas and provided to the Carpathian Convention Secretariat and the CNPA Unit.

SNC SR designated CNPA National Focal Point and actively participates in the activities of the CNPA. In 2012 the SNC SR organized the Meeting of the CNPA Steering Committee in Banská Bystrica (Central Slovakia) and in 2013 the 2<sup>nd</sup> CNPA Conference (23-24 April 2013, Tatranská Javorina, Slovakia). The CNPA Unit was established in Slovakia on interim basis in 2013-2014.

The CNPA National Focal Point actively cooperates with the Alpine Network of Protected Areas (ALPARC) and participates in ALPARC conferences and other events, cooperates in organising common events (workshops, Youth at the Top in 2016 and 2017), contributed to development of Memorandum of Cooperation between ALPARC, DANUBEPARKS and CNPA (2016) and the Action Plan to this MoC, etc.

SNC SR participated as a partner in the BioREGIO Carpathians project and contributed to the Study on Regional development opportunities of protected areas and natural assets in the Carpathians and the Study on Sustainable financial mechanisms and economic tools for protected areas.

Other tools and guidelines (Participative Management of Protected Areas in the Carpathian Ecoregion, Evaluation of Ecosystem Services in Protected Areas in the Carpathians, Carpathian Countries Protected Areas management Effectiveness Tracking Tool) developed within the MAVA Programme 2012 Protected Areas for a Living Planet (lead by WWF) were translated to Slovak language and are available in the SNC web site and used by PA managers. Within this project, the support was provided in form of the international training course on management of protected areas to the SNC SR staff members.

SNC SR also participated in other projects with Carpathian protected areas involved: Governance of Protected Areas in Eastern Europe (2011-2012); Capacity Building Plans for Efficient Protected Areas Management in Eastern Europe (2012-2015), both commissioned by German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and implemented by ProPark Foundation for Protected Areas from Romania.

A number of events have been organized in occasion of the Carpathian Day of Parks in the country.

**Objective 7 – Development and implementation of management plans or conservation measures:**

*Pursuant to Article 17 of the Protocol*

During the reporting period management plans for some national parks were developed and adopted – Slovenský raj NP (adopted by the Government in 2015), Poloniny NP (adopted in 2016), as well as for more than 30 smaller protected areas and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Management plans for 6 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) (e.g. Horná Orava, Dolné Pohronie, Slňava) were adopted by the Government in 2017. Management plans for other (about 30) SPAs and a number of

SACs (143) and Ramsar Sites are developed and under negotiations. Management planning background documents are developed for a number of national parks (Tatra NP, Veľká Fatra NP, Muránska planina) and protected landscape areas (Cerová vrchovina, Poľana), as well as of caves (national nature monuments).

Management plans and rescue programs for several animal species were adopted by the MoE - butterflies (*Colias myrmidone*, *Parnassius apollo*), large carnivores (*Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus*, *Lynx lynx*). Some other are subject to negotiations (*Tetrao urogallus*, *Tetrao tetrix*, *Botaurus stellaris*, *Aythya nyroca*, *Phalacrocorax carbo*).

The rescue programs for selected critically endangered plant species and for wisent (*Bison bonasus*) have been implemented within the projects financed by EU Structural Funds.

Rescue program for the Močiar National Nature Reserve was realised and management plans for small-scale protected areas in Malá Fatra National Park were developed.

Carpathian Countries Protected Area Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (CCPAMETT) was translated to Slovak language and the administrations of the National Parks and Protected Landscape Areas monitor management effectiveness using this tool.

## **Objective 8 – Consultation, harmonization and coordination of measures in border areas:**

*Pursuant to Articles 7, 16, and 20 of the Protocol*

Crossborder cooperation is subject to the regular meeting of relevant groups at the level of ministries (SK- HU, SK – PL, SK-UA and CZ-SK).

SNC SR closely cooperates with border protected areas in Hungary, Ukraine, Poland and the Czech Republic. Agreements on cooperation were signed with administrations of Bükk NP, Aggtelek NP, Duna-Ipoly NP (HU), Uzsanski NNP (UA), Nature Conservation Agency (CZ), Pieninski NP, Babiogorski NP, Tatrzański NP, Zespół Karpatskich Parków Krajobrazowych (PL). Annual work plans are prepared for implementation of these bilateral agreements. Generally, the cooperation is focused on monitoring of species, habitats, mapping and eradication of invasive alien species in transboundary areas, public awareness activities, organisation of workshops and conferences, development of joint projects. This cooperation is developed also between organisations responsible for protection and management of caves (especially in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland). For example a publication on World Heritage site Caves of Slovak and Aggtelek Karst was published in 2014. Trilateral cooperation is developed in the International Biosphere Reserve Eastern Carpathians (Poland – Slovakia – Ukraine) with framework agreement signed between protected areas included in the BR. Joint Declaration of Intent was signed between relevant ministries of Slovakia, Ukraine and Germany concerning the cooperation on the protection and management of the Joint World Heritage property Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians (Slovak Republic and Ukraine) and the Ancient Beech Forests of Germany (since 2017 named as Ancient and Primeval Beech Forest of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe), and for improved implementation of obligations in the World Heritage Convention.

A number of INTERREG projects have been implemented in cross-border areas, e.g. Comprehensive research of wetlands in the Ipeľ River basin and elaboration of the list of species and their communities; Biotic research as a basis for management of transborder hills from nature conservation point of view; Survey of aquatic habitats and waters of the Slaná River basin from the nature conservation point of view; Survey of the Hornád River and its tributaries from the nature conservation point of view; Development of comprehensive system for informing visitors on nature conservation in the transborder area; Management of the World Heritage caves in Aggtelek and Slovak Karst; Biodiversity conservation using grazing by Hutzul horses and traditional way of management (HU-SK); International Biosphere Reserve Eastern Carpathians – our common heritage; Following footprints of

Carpathians wisents; Natural nooks of Orava region; Rivers connect us (SK-PL). New project proposals were developed for the current programming period. Within the BioREGIO Carpathians project a common transboundary management plan for the Ipeľ/Ipoly valley Ramsar Site was developed. Within the Cross-border Cooperation Programme of the EEA Grants and Norway Grants the project of Slovak-Ukrainian cooperation was implemented to enhance nature conservation as opportunity for regional development, focused on Poloniny NP (SK) and Uzsanski NNP (UA).

**Objective 9 – Measures in support of the development of compatible monitoring systems and a joint information system:**

*Pursuant to Articles 18, and 19 of the Protocol*

SNC SR provided data to Carpathian Protected Areas Clearing House Mechanism and joint biodiversity information system. The SNC SR signed Memorandum of Understanding between UNEP Vienna – Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention and relevant institutions on collaboration in data collection and analysis in the field of biological and landscape diversity and for development of the Carpathian Integrated Biodiversity Information System.

**Objective 10 – Measures of coordination of scientific research:**

*Pursuant to Articles 19 and 20 of the Protocol*

Comprehensive directory of scientific institutions and database of scientific research undertaken with regard to conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity has not been established yet.

Slovak experts participate in the work of the Science for the Carpathians S4C and its Executive Board and the Scientific Steering Committee. Slovak scientists organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> Forum Carpaticum conference in Stará Lesná, Slovakia in May – June 2012. Slovak experts actively participated in all conferences of Forum Carpaticum and contribute to implementation of the S4C research agenda.

SNC SR and National Forest Centre actively participated in preparation and implementation of BioREGIO Carpathians project and research activities within this project. Regular consultation on harmonization of databases on habitats and species and of monitoring is made especially with the Agency for Nature and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic. The SNC SR and other institutions organize or co-organize conferences and workshops and invite experts from Carpathian countries, SNC SR staff members participate in research activities, workshops and conferences organized by partners in neighbouring countries and protected areas. Within the SNC SR there is active collaboration in research with foreign researchers especially in the Slovak Cave Administration, e.g. on geological and geomorphological research, bio-spaeleological research, hydrological and hydro-chemical research, climatological research. For example, in cooperation with Aggtelek NP Directorate, the 10<sup>th</sup> scientific conference on research, use and protection of caves was organized in September 2015 on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of inscription of the caves of Slovak and Aggtelek karst to the World Heritage list. Slovak-Slovenian project on morphology and genesis of karst caves was also implemented.

The SNC SR was entrusted by the Ministry of Environment with coordination of national activities of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

**Objective 13 – Other measures of international cooperation:**

*Pursuant to Article 7 of the Protocol*

Regional and local authorities in transborder regions cooperate especially in development and implementation of cross-border projects, but also in organization of cultural events, environmental education activities, landscape protection and restoration, tourism development activities.

On the international level, we are closely work with all the EU and its MSs especially through the official working group on international environmental issues approved by the European Council, where all the common work of the EU and its MSs is coordinated and harmonised and which helps to the nature and biodiversity protection not only within the EU and broader Europe, but also on the international level. Within the DG Environment exist several working and expert groups, which are working in different fields of the nature and biodiversity protection – usually the results are also mentioned within the official working group of the European Council.

**Objective 15 – Measures on education, information and public awareness:**

*Pursuant to Article 24 of the Protocol*

SNC SR with administrations of protected areas organize and participate in event on occasion of the Carpathian Day of Parks. The organization participated in development of CNPA communication plan. The information on activities within the Protocol is provided in articles published in national environmental and nature conservation magazines. Among the exhibitions prepared during the reporting period the exhibition on National parks of the Carpathians and Europe and the exhibition Mystic Carpathians were installed. During the Presidency of the Slovak Republic of the Council of the EU the exhibitions on National Parks of Slovakia and on Biodiversity of Slovakia were displayed at EU premises in Brussels and at the Climate Change Conference in Marrakech in 2016 and continued in 2017.

SNC SR cooperates in education, information and public awareness activities with organizations in neighbouring countries and with ALPARC (workshops, seminars, Youth at the Top – 2 events – 2016, 2017, etc.).

The Carpathian Wetlands Initiative (CWI) organized the World of Carpathian Wetlands Training (2013) for participants from Carpathian countries and co-organized other international trainings (e.g. Wetlands as habitats for waterbirds in the Czech Republic, study tours to Ramsar sites etc.) and workshops. The CWI is co-organizer of the triennial international exhibition and contest of posters on the theme of environment and nature conservation EKOPLAGÁT, co-organized by SNC SR in Slovakia and awards a prize for the best poster on wetlands.

Promotion of the Carpathian Convention, Biodiversity Protocol, CNPA and Carpathian Wetland Initiative was included in the project “Development of nature conservation and of protected areas in Slovak Carpathians”, co-financed from the Swiss funds. Educational program “World of the Carpathians” with provision of manual and tools and training for teachers and SNC SR staff members was organized in 2013.

SNC SR currently runs 12 information centres which provide information about protected areas to the visitors (more than 33,000 visitors in 2016). In 2016 more than 978 lectures (for 29,750 individuals), 173 excursions to the protected areas (more than 4,500 people attended), games, discussions, film shows for more than 28,380 people were organized. Lots of exhibitions were prepared and run (EKOPLAGÁT, Species of Community Interest in Slovakia, Invasive species around us, Stork, Bear, Poloniny – part of nature heritage, the Beauties of Veľká Fatra Mts., the Wetlands of Turiec region, Protected areas of Horná Orava region...). 34 education trails were repaired and maintained in 2016.

Extremely lot of events as well as public awareness raising and information also about the nature and biodiversity protection was published in 2016, before and during the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union, where Slovak Republic was in front as a leader in negotiations and discussion

of all relevant topics, including environment and nature and biodiversity protection.

B.2 Have you taken complementary measures to those planned by the present Protocol? If yes, please, list them.

No

B.3 What have been the most successful aspects of implementation of the Protocol?

Transborder cooperation, cooperation of protected areas, development and implementation of management plans for some protected areas and species, preparation and implementation of international projects,

B.4 What have been the greatest difficulties in this implementation? Please tick your answers in the following list.

Lack of political will and support	
Limited public participation and stakeholder involvement	
Lack of integration of the objectives of the Protocol into other sectors	x
Inadequate capacity to act, caused by institutional weakness	x
Lack of transfer of technology and/or expertise	
Lack of adequate scientific research capacities to support all the objectives	
Lack of public education and awareness at all levels	x
Loss of biodiversity and its related goods and services not properly understood/documentated	
Lack of financial, human, technical resources	x
Lack of economic incentive measures	
Lack of synergies at national and international levels	x
Lack of cooperation between involved stakeholders at local and national levels	
Lack of effective partnerships	
Lack of appropriate policies and laws	
Lack of precise definitions of potential misunderstanding notions	
Population/local communities pressure	

Lack of knowledge and practice ecosystem-based approaches to management	x
Others (please specify)	
<i>Possible comments and details</i>	

B.5 Which institutions in your country are the driving forces to implement the objectives of the Protocol? Are they in contact with similar institutions in your neighbouring countries?

The State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic – implementation of the Biodiversity Protocol and the Strategic Action Plan and participation in relevant working groups; cooperation within CNPA; communication, consultations and formal cooperation agreements signed with nature conservation institutions in neighbouring countries; cooperation with ALPARC and other regional networks; coordination of the Carpathian Wetlands Initiative.

Slovak Academy of Sciences - Institute of Landscape Ecology, Institute of Botany, Institute of Forest Ecology – cooperation with scientific institutions in the Carpathian countries, especially in the framework of the Science for the Carpathians S4C; regional research.

Universities - University of Technology in Zvolen, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Constantin the Philosopher University in Nitra, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Comenius University in Bratislava – Botanical Garden Blatnica, University of Žilina – Institute of High Mountain Biology Tatranská Javorina – cooperation in research, conservation of habitats, threatened and endemic species, landscape protection, management of protected areas.

Slovak Environment Agency – green infrastructure development, landscape protection, European Landscape Convention implementation.

B.6 Are the local authorities or other stakeholders (NGOs, private sector, ...) encouraged to contribute to the implementation of the Protocol in their objectives and activities? Have they undertaken activities or actions aiming at implement better and further the Protocol? If yes, in which particular field (degraded habitats, endangered species, water and river basins management, industry and energy, spatial planning, tourism, protected areas, communication, research, cooperation, information, ...)?

Municipalities, Regional self-governing bodies and associations of municipalities – involvement in some projects, transborder cooperation, regional development.

NGOs - DAPHNE – Institute of Applied Ecology; Civic Association Prales; Slovak Wildlife Society, Raptors Protection of Slovakia; Slovak Ornithological Society/BirdLife Slovakia – collection of data on habitats and species, old-growth forests, large carnivores, publication of information, education, awareness, transborder projects.

B.7 Is there a special unit/committee responsible for the consultation and mediation between all the stakeholders at national level?

Inter-sectoral Committee for Implementation of the Carpathian Convention was established by the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, the Biodiversity Protocol is included in the work.

B.8 Do you have any other general comments or recommendations on the implementation of the Protocol?

No. What we need for the future is better cooperation and coordination within our institutions, esp. to improve the synergies and links between different biodiversity-oriented conventions,