

Draft Terms of Reference for the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform

Project “Support for the Implementation of the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Carpathians”

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The Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform (CSTP) is a platform consisting of several centers, which aims at coordinating the implementation of the “Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians. The operation of the CSTP is guided and monitored by the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism.

Background

The basis for comprehensive international cooperation in the Carpathians was laid down by **The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians** (Carpathian Convention), which was adopted and signed by the seven Parties (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Ukraine) in May 2003 in Kyiv, Ukraine, and entered into force in January 2006.

The purpose of the **Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians** (Strategy) is to determine common actions and measures in order to value and sustainably use the outstanding natural and cultural assets for sustainable tourism development of the Carpathians.

This Strategy aims at harmonizing and coordinating country-specific approaches by providing a common understanding and umbrella platform for planning and management. The Strategy is not a stand-alone activity; it is part of the comprehensive effort of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention to coordinate the responsible use, protection and promotion of the Carpathians as a tourism destination.

In line with the objectives of the Carpathian Convention, the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP3), held in Bratislava, Slovakia, 25th – 27th May 2011, adopted the **Protocol on Sustainable Tourism** to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians. In the Protocol, which is in force since 29th April 2013, the Parties decided the following in Article 27 (Implementation), Paragraph 3: *The Conference of the Parties shall develop and adopt the Strategy on Sustainable Tourism Development in the Carpathians, which will accompany the implementation of this protocol.*

The Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP4) to the Carpathian Convention (Mikulov, Czech Republic, 23rd – 26th September 2014), by its Decision COP4/6 para 3, adopted the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians, welcomed the Background Document and took note that the Strategy aims at the implementation of relevant paragraphs of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism adopted at COP3.

In the Strategy in action 3.2.19 (see Annex 1) and in chapter 4.1 - institutional arrangements - the establishment of a Common Sustainable Tourism Coordination Platform (CSTCP) is planned: *The Parties in cooperation with other major stakeholders in the Carpathians may consider setting up a common international mechanism to support the implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism and its Strategy if funding is available. Modalities and functioning of this common mechanism are to be agreed upon and overseen by the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee. The common mechanism might focus on e.g. Developing, maintaining and keeping up to date a common online Carpathian platform on sustainable tourism; Resource mobilization; Exchange of good practices; Product Development; Branding and Certification; Marketing and Promotion; Capacity Building of stakeholders, businesses and destinations.*

Vision and objectives of the strategy

The vision of the Strategy encompasses three dimensions – competitiveness, conservation and cooperation, which are fundamental to adding value to tourism, agreed by the Parties to the Carpathian Convention:

The Carpathians are a top competitive sustainable tourism destination in Europe, based on its unique natural and cultural heritage preserved and maintained on large integral areas	
The people in the Carpathians are successful in, and proud of, maintaining their local authentic traditions, cultures, and landscapes, which contribute to unique tourist experiences	Good cooperation, local management and partnerships contribute to the high quality of responsible tourism and ecosystem services, which ensures continuous benefits for local communities and economies

In order to become a top sustainable tourism destination the Parties agree that the following three objectives form the targets to accomplish the vision by 2024:

Objective 1

Establish supportive conditions for sustainable tourism products and services, including development of a marketing scheme for the promotion of the Carpathians as a unique sustainable tourism destination

Objective 2

Develop innovative tourism management, fully integrating the needs of local people and economies and other supporting sectors, and respecting the preservation of natural and cultural heritage

Objective 3

Establish a continuous process of awareness raising, capacity building, education and training on sustainable tourism development and management at all levels

Institutional set-up of CSTP

The CSTP has to provide a coordinated communication platform for in-house and external experts working on the specific topics for implementing the Strategy and communication between the Parties and its stakeholders.

The CSTP will be guided, as stipulated in the Agreement between UNEP Vienna - Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (UNEP Vienna – SCC) and the Centers, by the Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (WG Sustainable Tourism). The WG Sustainable Tourism will overview the operation of the CSTP and advise the CSTP in application of most relevant and innovative approaches.

The CSTP will be set-up as described on the Joint Proposal of the currently proposed three Centers. One representative of each Center and the representative of the UNEP Vienna – SCC will establish the CSTP Steering Group. The lead of the Steering Group will be elected for the first two years, starting upon the signature of the Agreement, from the representatives of centers and will rotate every two years.

Core tasks of the CSTP

Fundamentals for the operation of the CSTP are the two consecutive Action Plans of the Strategy. First of all the **Joint Action Plan** in chapter 3.2 of the Strategy, which outlines 24 actions, to be implemented with participation of two or more countries and its stakeholders in a trans-boundary and/or Carpathian wide manner. Furthermore, the CSTP shall assist the Parties to the Convention and its National Tourism Focal Points in the implementation of the 27 actions of the **Country Action Plan** through their National Tourism Task Forces.

According to the Strategy the first priority tasks to be executed are:

1. Establish a network of relevant stakeholders (e.g. local and regional governments, non-governmental organizations, science, tourism business sector)

The CSTP shall liaise with the relevant stakeholder networks and institutions covering the entire geographical scope of the Carpathians. These networks have to be established at horizontal and vertical levels.

For the tourism sector, the CSTP shall create a network of (a) destinations, (b) tourism institutions within their national sphere and (c) tourism institutions at Carpathian and European level. This network will ensure effective communication with the tourism stakeholders and the coordination of joint efforts to implement the strategy.

For the governmental sector, the CSTP shall receive the mandate from the WG Sustainable Tourism to directly liaise with the National Tourism Task Forces (NTTF) in each of the Carpathian countries. Communication with the NTTFs will ensure the effective development and implementation of relevant projects and initiatives of the strategy.

For the non-governmental sector, the CSTP shall ensure their full integration into the developed network in order to cover relevant topics such as conservation of biological diversity and the protection of cultural heritage. The NGO sector can provide the CSTP with information on innovative approaches in communication and project implementation.

2. Establish a structure for the implementation of the Joint Action Plan

The CSTP should cluster the 24 actions of the Joint Action Plan of the Strategy according to feasibility in time and financial capacity with regard to:

- Sustainable Product Development
- Sustainable Tourism Management
- Training, Education and Capacity Building
- Marketing and Promotion
- Monitoring

The current priorities in the Joint Action Plan are recommendations and might not fit to emerging situations in the countries and availability of funds. Therefore, the CSTP Centers are requested to submit an Annual Work Plan on the implementation of the Joint Action Plan to the WG Sustainable Tourism for approval.

3. Develop a financial overview and structure for the implementation of the Strategy

In line with item 2, the CSTP has to provide a continuous update on the financial structure for the implementation of the entire Strategy, so not limited to the Joint Action Plan. The CSTP will take over the database provided by ETE and continue to improve and update and ensure the public access to the gathered information.

4. Develop and implement a communication strategy

The CSTP shall draft a strategy on how to communicate their operation, networking and communication to the Parties to the Convention and the stakeholders of the Carpathians. This

communication strategy will be approved by the WG Sustainable Tourism and published on the CSTP homepage. The CSTP homepage should provide at least but not limited to an online exchange platform and databases on financial mechanisms, initiatives and projects. The CSTP will take over the database provided by ETE and continue to improve and update and ensure the public access to the gathered information.

5. Develop a reporting format and report on the achievements on a yearly basis to the WG Sustainable Tourism

During the first six months after establishment, the CSTP will submit a reporting format to the WG Sustainable Tourism for approval. The reports should integrate information e.g.

- Description of internal and external staff
- Financial spreadsheet
- Detailed actions of the strategy commenced and/or completed
- Forecast work plan

The CSTP shall use the indicators of each strategy action, developed by ETE.

6. Assist Parties to implement Country Action Plans

The CSTP shall undertake efforts to assist the National Tourism Task Forces and their stakeholders in the implementation of the Country Action Plan. It should be ensured through the CSTP homepage that NTTFs could exchange information on their initiatives to implement the Strategy.

7. Develop common principles and guidelines (based on available resources and projects):

- on tourism infrastructure and undertake activities to make them sustainable,
- for contributions by the tourism sector to the conservation of natural and cultural resources,
- for the support of sustainable local supply chains,
- of a common set of indicators on the effects of implemented policies and strategies for developing sustainable tourism in the Carpathians.

Annex 1:

Extract of the Strategy on Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians (chapters 3.1 and 3.2; pages 6-9)

3.1 Country Action Plan

Objective 1: ESTABLISHING OF SUPPORTIVE CONDITIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES, INCLUDING DEVELOPMENT OF A MARKETING SCHEME FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE CARPATHIANS AS A UNIQUE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DESTINATION		
	Activities	Proposed start¹
1	Initiate destination and/or country specific tourism product development (e.g. rural tourism, slow tourism, heritage tourism, ecotourism in protected areas, spa tourism, dark sky parks, social tourism and handicapped tourism), focusing on all seasons	Year 1
2	Identify and support the establishment of Carpathian wide authentic clusters of sustainable tourism products , e.g. thematic tours (e.g. architecture, cuisine, land use, mixed cultural/technical heritage etc.), agro tourism, hiking, cycling, ski touring	Year 1
3	Identify, assess, and where applicable, remove conditions unfavorable for the development of sustainable tourism	Year 1
4	Set principles and develop guidelines on sustainable tourism infrastructure and activities	Year 1
5	Support rural tourism which is maintaining traditional land use (e.g. beekeeping, food production)	Year 2
6	Support the establishment of regional Carpathian touristic (destination) brands contributing to the preservation of landscape character and tangible/intangible cultural heritage, possibly connected to a Carpathian brand	Year 2
7	Support the development of cross-border tourism cooperation , favorable visa regime where applicable, and linking of trails-implementation to joint cross-border tourism products	Year 4
8	Establish incentive measures for local tourism businesses developing and implementing sustainable tourism products, incl. measures for removing barriers to effective sustainable business operations	Year 4
9	Ensure participatory involvement (e.g. workshops, online consultations) of local communities in regional product development	Year 5
10	Develop programs for promoting and funding the preservation of local cultural and natural heritage through tourism	Year 6

Objective 2: DEVELOP INNOVATIVE TOURISM MANAGEMENT, FULLY INTEGRATING THE NEEDS OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND ECONOMIES AND OTHER SUPPORTING SECTORS, AND RESPECTING THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE		
	Activities	Proposed start
11	Establish the Sustainable Tourism Task Force as part of the Sustainable Tourism Working Group of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians	Year 1
12	Enhance the national coordination structure and encourage establishment of management centers on sustainable tourism, if applicable, in the Carpathians	Year 1

¹ Proposed start of the activities is after the adoption of this strategy at COP 4, e.g. Year 1 is 2014.

13	Support the integration of the Carpathian dimension into the national and regional coordination of sustainable tourism	Year 2
14	Zone the key touristic areas with a focus on carrying capacity issues, and implement assessment measures based on EIA process principles	Year 3
15	Contribute to a common set of indicators on the effects of implemented policies and strategies to develop sustainable tourism in the Carpathians	Year 3
16	Develop programs for promotion of local cultural heritage tourism in the Carpathian countries taking into account the specificity and diversity of all the regions and sub-Carpathian areas	Year 3
17	Enhance and support trans-boundary cooperation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> organizing „both-sides“ events (fairs, exhibitions, workshops, etc.) design trail network from „both-sides“ perspective introducing non-Schengen border crossings solutions for tourist movement (if applicable) new tourist border crossings, new bridges and footbridges over border rivers tourist business initiatives 	Year 4
18	Establish a working group for assessing tourism impact on natural and cultural heritage (including Protected Areas), also using the results of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) processes and other tools	Year 4
19	Support the establishment of destination management organizations (DMO) in key touristic areas (if applicable) to implement sustainable tourism management schemes with local stakeholders	Year 5
20	Develop a system of incentives to support the improvement and use of local supply chains to and from tourism	Year 6
21	Establish and support a Carpathian Coordination Platform , if applicable and based on available funding	Year tbd
22	Revise National Tourism Development Strategies by incorporating the principles of sustainable tourism and the Carpathian dimension	As appropriate

Objective 3: ESTABLISH A CONTINUOUS PROCESS OF AWARENESS RAISING, CAPACITY BUILDING, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT AT ALL LEVELS

	Activities	Proposed start
23	Create a platform for cooperation of farmers linked with tourism entrepreneurship (to be integrated into the common online Carpathian platform on sustainable tourism)	Year 1
24	Establish a system of continuous education and training for relevant target groups on sustainable tourism development, e.g. education programs at schools, raising awareness of the public in regards to natural and cultural heritage	Year 2
25	Enhance international cooperation of entities responsible for sustainable tourism development in individual Parties	Year 3
26	Implement campaigns , especially in the Carpathian part of the country, to raise the awareness among local population of sustainable tourism and the Carpathian Convention	Year 3
27	Contribute to a common Carpathian education, interpretation and awareness raising program	Year 6

3.2 Joint Action Plan

Objective 1: ESTABLISH SUPPORTIVE CONDITIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES, INCLUDING DEVELOPMENT OF A MARKETING SCHEME FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE CARPATHIANS AS A UNIQUE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DESTINATION		
	Activities	Proposed start
1	Develop, maintain and keep up to date a common online Carpathian platform on sustainable tourism, including products and services database, trans-boundary products and mapping, as well as good practices, with continuously updated information, and including the preparation of a Carpathian touristic map	Year 1
2	Create a Carpathian identity and make use of a logo/slogan compulsory for all those service suppliers who joined and were labeled under the Carpathian product-line	Year 2
3	Initiate and possibly create a certification and/or labeling system for sustainable tourism for the Carpathian Brand, supported by a Carpathian-wide marketing strategy	Year 3
4	Develop a Carpathian-wide quality standard system for local products and local services (e.g. “Local food”, “Local accommodation”, “Local experience – how to guide tourists”, “Code of Conduct for Tourists in the Carpathians”)	Year 4
5	Develop common principles and guidelines on tourism infrastructure and undertake activities to make them sustainable	Year 4
6	Establish a tour operators’ cooperation platform	Year 4
7	Design, where applicable, a common system of marking trails throughout the Carpathians	Year 5
8	Develop, maintain and keep up to date an online platform promoting labeled products , linking with the websites of NTOs	Year 6

Objective 2: DEVELOP INNOVATIVE TOURISM MANAGEMENT, FULLY INTEGRATING THE NEEDS OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND ECONOMIES AND OTHER SUPPORTING SECTORS, AND RESPECTING THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE		
	Activities	Proposed start
10	Initiate resource mobilization for the implementation of the strategy at national and international level involving all relevant stakeholders	Year 1
11	Develop a common communication paper on the Carpathian Brand	Year 3
12	Define the use of the Carpathian Brand and its management structure with relation to other sectoral or geographical brands	Year 3
13	Analyze the touristic resources of the Parties based on research, to identify the key-areas and products to be involved, and undertake further detailed research	Year 3
14	Develop guidelines for contributions by the tourism sector to the conservation of natural and cultural resources	Year 4
15	Develop a methodology for monitoring the impacts of existing and planned tourism development on biodiversity and landscapes, as well as the social, economic and cultural impacts	Year 4
16	Define and implement a common set of indicators on the effects of implemented policies and strategies for developing sustainable tourism in the Carpathians	Year 4
17	Initiate the establishment of an organizational unit (Carpathian Observatory on	Year 4

	Sustainable Tourism), contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Protocol and this Strategy by monitoring and evaluation of tourism activities in the Carpathians	
18	Develop methods for the protection of „brand-making“ elements of the Carpathians cultural heritage by implementing common projects on preservation of cultural heritage	Year 5
19	Support setting up of a common mechanism for the implementation of the strategy	Year 5
20	Develop common guidelines for the support of sustainable local supply chains	Year 6
21	Develop common guidelines for a monitoring system scheme on traffic to destinations and the flow of visitors within destinations	Year 6
22	Initiate the exchange of good practices and lessons learned from the operation of DMOs in terms of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians	Year 1

Objective 3: ESTABLISH A CONTINUOUS PROCESS OF AWARENESS RAISING, CAPACITY BUILDING, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT AT ALL LEVELS

	Activities	Proposed start
23	Create an online platform for education, training and sharing of best practices available to all stakeholders	Year 4
24	Create a program of workshops & conferences and study visits in order to exchange innovative experience on sustainable tourism development	Year 5
25	Exchange know-how on the contribution of tourism to biodiversity and cultural heritage conservation with other destinations	Year 6

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