

## PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

for the Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP)

Updated 27.09.2018

**Reporting period:**

**Date: 30.06.2019**

### I. Project details

<b>Project title:</b>	Integrating nature protection and sustainable tourism development into the Carpathian region via science-policy-practice interface
Target country/region:	Carpathian region: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Serbia, Romania
Recipients of advice (incl. contact details):	Science for the Carpathians Network, young scientists, governmental and non-governmental experts in the field of biodiversity conservation, sustainable tourism development, sustainability sciences, and agritourism from the Carpathian countries, including from the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA) and the Tourism Platform
Project partner in target country:	Centre for Ecological Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences; Eszterházy Károly University (Hungary); Institute of Geography, Pedagogical University, Kraków, (Poland); World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Danube-Carpathian Programme; Eurac Research (Eurac)
Project duration:	17.09.2018 – 30.06.2019
Implementing organisation(s):	UN Environment, Vienna Programme Office, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention
Project number:	112045

### II. Rapporteur's details

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### III.1 Activities performed to achieve project outputs

The following activities have been conducted during the project:

**The preparatory meeting** for the organization of the Forum Carpaticum (FC) was held in Budapest, Hungary on October 1<sup>st</sup> and was useful to discuss organizational and substantial issues, as well as to pre-discuss follow-up activities.

**The Forum Carpaticum Conference** has been held, as planned, in Eger, Hungary on October 15-19<sup>th</sup>. The Conference Programme and Book of Abstracts can be downloaded from the conference website (<http://fc2018.hu/>). The Forum has been implemented as planned for the most part. The challenges included lack of participation of colleagues from Serbia, due to the short notice of the funding available, as well as some small organizational deviations, and the challenge of reporting by the Hungarian organizational company after the Forum Carparicum, due to legal unclarities. The expenditures have been lower than expected due to a lower than expected number of participants.

**Two Carpathian sessions have been co-organized on November 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> during the Congress on Agritourism in Bolzano, Italy (November 7-9, 2018).** During the first interactive session, followed by a framework setting presentation of the Carpathian Convention, participants from various Carpathian countries, representing different aspects of the Agritourism sector (practitioners and researchers, as well as participants involved in governance) presented information about the main challenges of agritourism development in the Carpathians. Discussion followed involving all session participants. During the second session the results of the discussion have been presented, and information about Forum Carpaticum, and specifically its aspects linked with Agritourism have been presented, followed by a scientific presentation focused on potential for agritourism development in Hungary. In addition to presentations focused on the Carpathians, case studies from other countries have been shared, which resulted in an international exchange on good examples and challenges in the field of agritourism. **A summary paper based on the Carpathian sessions** has been submitted to the Congress proceedings volume, under preparation by EURAC research, to be published by Springer. *This is an additional deliverable, not envisioned in original outputs of the project.* Moreover, the co-organizers and participants of the sessions followed up by organizing **training workshops on “Digital and Marketing Ecotourism”, which took place in Hungary in February 2019** and on **“Social Enterprises and Community Development in Rural Areas,” which took place in Poland in May 2019**, supported by the Visegrad fund<sup>1</sup>.

**WWF held a meeting „Gift to the Earth”** on 8 November 2018 in Vienna, Austria, and presented the Carpathian Convention with the prestigious WWF “Gift to the Earth” Award<sup>2</sup>. Science for the Carpathians steering committee members from Hungary and Slovakia attended the meeting. Before the meeting an interview with Dr Lubos Halada, Deputy Director of the Institute for Landscape Ecology at the Slovak Academy of Science and a representative of Science for the Carpathians (S4C) was released by WWF, in order to discuss the state of Carpathian biodiversity, with respect to the global situation depicted in the WWF 2018 Living Planet Report. The statement pointed to the results of the Forum Carpaticum conference that recently took place on 15-18 October 2018 in Eger in Hungary, and can be found following this

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<sup>1</sup> Further information: <http://www.humtour.com/for-partners/projects/carpathian-rural-tourism/workshops/>.

<sup>2</sup> Further information: [http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved\\_project\\_public/0001/26/b15bff2ead1dc47603aebd8b318bb7c8ba24bddb.jpeg](http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_public/0001/26/b15bff2ead1dc47603aebd8b318bb7c8ba24bddb.jpeg).

link in the footnote<sup>3</sup>. *This is an additional event, contributing to the project outcomes, but not envisioned in the original project application.*

**A meeting of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (CCIC) was held in Vienna on 17 - 19 December 2018.** Main recommendations from the FC have been presented by the 2 representatives of the S4C, and discussed there. The results of the Carpathian Sessions held during the Agritourism Congress have also been presented and discussed. Both of these are reflected in the Progress Report of the Carpathian Convention, finalized at the meeting, and mentioning also the support by the AAP programme. The details of the CCIC meeting and all documents can be found at the website of the Carpathian Convention<sup>4</sup>:

- At the CCIC it has been decided that stronger collaboration between the S4C and the Carpathian Convention is welcome, and could take place of S4C members presenting at Carpathian Convention meetings and contributing to the decision-making.
- Moreover, Hungary offered to organize a seminar in 2019 on the issues on environmental and sustainable development education and awareness with the aim of exchanging best practices in the Carpathian region and exploring of further cooperation. Participants considered the outcomes of the workshop on Education for Science and Society in the Carpathians, which was organized with support of the Secretariat at the Forum Carpaticum 2018, specifically the opportunity to broaden up the seminar as an opening for better recognition of the education, especially ESD, in the Carpathian Convention's agenda.

*\*The CCIC meeting and the resulting interaction is an important outcome of the project and provides evidence of the important contribution the project made to strengthening the science – policy – practice interface in the Carpathian region. This event was not a specific part of the project application – however, it is an additional outcome and the resulting events point to the dynamic nature and the sustainability of the Carpathian Convention activities.*

Subsequent to the offer of Hungary to hold the ESD Seminar, the Hungarian Ministry of Human Capacities has requested the Secretariat to support the organization and participation of a number of Carpathian participants in the Seminar. Due to the fact that some funds were left over from the Forum Carpaticum, a request for project amendment has been submitted and approved.

**The follow-up S4C meeting has been organized and held on April 15-16, 2019 in Budapest, Hungary.** The meeting had an aim to discuss lessons learned from the organization of FC 2018 and the stronger integration of S4C and CC, as well as planning of FC 2020 and the potential of applying for the Visegrad funds. Moreover, follow-up on the reporting of Forum Carpaticum took place.

- Participants decided on the preliminary dates, venue, and programme outline of the FC 2020, to be organized in Brno, Czech Republic, on June 23-26, 2020.
- It has been decided to apply to the Visegrad Fund for the forum. The project would include a preparatory meeting, a follow-up meeting, a FC summer school and participation in Carpathian Convention activities by S4C representatives.
- It has been agreed that closer collaboration with the Convention Working Groups should take place, and the S4C in cooperation with the CC should explore a potential new format for more collaborative interaction.

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<sup>3</sup> Further information:

[http://wwf.panda.org/knowledge\\_hub/where\\_we\\_work/black\\_sea\\_basin/danube\\_carpathian/?338710%2FCarpathian-Mountains-significant-losses-in-Europes-biodiversity-hotspot&fbclid=IwAR3z0bnc2LBe29FzqtPyBalmYUt5oAjPuk6V6TN0\\_cCNAMZ1LERU4oduXzM](http://wwf.panda.org/knowledge_hub/where_we_work/black_sea_basin/danube_carpathian/?338710%2FCarpathian-Mountains-significant-losses-in-Europes-biodiversity-hotspot&fbclid=IwAR3z0bnc2LBe29FzqtPyBalmYUt5oAjPuk6V6TN0_cCNAMZ1LERU4oduXzM).

<sup>4</sup> Further information: <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/eventdetailccic/events/ninth-meeting-of-the-carpathian-convention-implemetation-committee.html>.

*\*The importance of this follow-up meeting was that Science for the Carpathians network has not had a chance before the support by AAP to meet together physically and discuss cooperation and joint events. The face-to-face meeting provided an opportunity to follow-up on many ideas and to make important decisions about the next joint steps, such as developing an application for the Visegrad funds, planning the Forum (with strong participation of the local community), and other events, such as the summer school for young researchers.*

**The ESD Seminar has been organized and held on April 16-18, 2019 in Budapest, Hungary.** The Carpathian Convention Seminar on Education of Sustainable Development took place on 16 – 18 April 2019 in Budapest, Hungary. The seminar was organised by the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary in strong collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary and the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention. Professionals from all Carpathian Countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic and Ukraine), including teachers, teacher educators, researchers and ministry officials as well as international experts came together to exchange experience and discuss the challenges of implementing ESD in their respective countries and on the regional level. The seminar's mission was to establish a new and enduring tradition of transdisciplinary networking and cross-country exchange in ESD. One of the workshops, organized by the S4C in cooperation with the Secretariat, focused on identifying main barriers, most suitable competences and how S4C/research can support ESD in the Carpathians. At the end of the meetings participants discussed policy follow-up and have recommended to establish a WG on ESD of the Carpathian Convention, and develop a protocol.

**The meeting of the Working Group on Biodiversity was held in Ostrava, Czech Republic, on May 30-31, 2019.** The meeting was preceded by a multi-sectoral workshop on minimising the impact on birds from powerlines, held on the 29.05.2019, in which representatives of scientific institutions, the industry, and the focal points of the Carpathian Convention took part. The meeting was concluded by a workshop on cooperation of the S4C with the Biodiversity WG held on May 31, 2019. The workshop with S4C was initiated by 2 presentations (first by the Polish scientists, second - joint presentation of the S4C participants), and then continued in intense discussion rounds, in which specific questions and formats of cooperation between the S4C and the working group members, as well as focal points of the Carpathian Convention was discussed. This format was much appreciated by the Secretariat, the focal points and the scientists. WWF colleagues and other S4C members who could not attend provided inputs before the workshop, which have been integrated into the discussion.

*\*Another unplanned outcome of the project is that the transdisciplinary, multi-sectoral synergies and strengthened science-policy-practice interface will be reflected in the research agenda for the Carpathians, to be redeveloped in a participatory manner by the S4C for 2020-2030.*

The meeting was followed by a S4C working session in the afternoon of May 31st, in which the application to the Visegrad Fund to organize the Forum Carpaticum 2020 and additional activities to strengthen science-practice-policy interface and inter- and transdisciplinary research in the Carpathians has been further developed by the S4C participants. It has been decided, due to the short timing before submission, to develop the application further and submit it on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019.

All of the above activities were conducive to achieving the planned project outputs. Some of the activities described above have not been envisioned in the original project application (CCIC, ESD Seminar and participation of the S4C in the WG on Biodiversity), but have emerged during the project implementation, and reflected in the amendment request. The project has been extended based on saved funds and in order to integrate the additional activities, as well as to allow for a better prepared and elaborated follow-up. In this respect, the follow-up meeting of the S4C has taken place later than expected in the original application, which allowed more in-depth reflection on the results of the FC and facilitated preparation of the transdisciplinary exchange during the Working Group on Biodiversity meeting, described above.

## **Contributions of project partners to project implementation:**

- Centre for Ecological Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences:
  - Main organizer of the Forum Carpathicum, provided major organizational and some financial contribution.
  - Hosted both the preparatory meeting and the follow-up meeting of the S4C. Contributed to the follow-up and reporting.
  - Participated in the WWF event and the CCIC meeting in Vienna.
- Eszterházy Károly University, Hungary:
  - Co-organized the ESD workshop and session at Forum Carpathicum, participated in the elaboration of the recommendations.
  - Provided feedback on the ESD Seminar;
  - Participated in the S4C meetings;
  - Participated in the WG on Biodiversity, in the joint presentation and exchange, and elaboration of the recommendations.
- Institute of Geography, Pedagogical University, Kraków, Poland:
  - Supported organization of the Workshop on ESD and session on ESD during Forum Carpathicum, as well as during the ESD Seminar.
  - Supported organization of the S4C - WG exchange and presentation at the Biodiversity WG.
  - Participated in S4C meetings and supported elaboration of the follow-up after Forum Carpathicum, as well as development of the application to the Visegrad Fund.
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Danube-Carpathian Programme:
  - Provided substantial inputs and feedback on the project development;
  - Colleague from Romania played an important part in the Large Carnivore workshop during Forum Carpathicum and also during the WG on Biodiversity;
  - Communicated project information in order to facilitate participation of protected areas colleagues in the project events;
  - Presented at the WG on Biodiversity.
- Eurac Research (Eurac):
  - Facilitated integration of the Carpathian Sessions into the programme of the Agritourism Congress;
  - Waived fees for participants of the Carpathian Sessions in order to facilitate their participation;
  - Participated in the Forum Carpathicum, meeting of the S4C at the Forum, and in the WG on Biodiversity.

### III.2 Project outputs achieved

Planned outputs	Outputs actually achieved	Explanation of deviations if applicable
<p>Inter- and transdisciplinary interventions during sessions on biodiversity conservation, tourism development and education for sustainable development organized during Forum Carpathicum in October 2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Members of the S4C Steering Committee and experts from various disciplines and interdisciplinary fields (agri-)tourism, ESD, nature protection, large carnivores, and transdisciplinary approaches) provide active contributions from all Carpathian countries, including Ukraine and Serbia, as well as from outside the Carpathian region, such as Georgia and Armenia (the Caucasus mountain region), Germany, Scotland and Switzerland. The names of all supported participants will appear on the agenda and conference-related reports.</li> </ul> <p>The sessions and workshops will involve both scientists and practitioners in the respective fields, including members of the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas, and staff of the Tourism Platform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contacts established among the experts</li> <li>- Ideas of further transdisciplinary synergies and science-policy-practice interface developed;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not only presentations during these and other sessions, but also keynote presentations have been focused on inter-and transdisciplinary approaches and on science – policy-practice interface</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Session on Large Carnivores was converted into a workshop, in order to strengthen a practice-oriented focus. WWF colleagues participating at the workshop created a link to the ESD component, by providing a contribution at the participatory ESD workshop the day after.</li> <li>- Presentations at the ESD and Tourism sessions from practitioners from the Carpathians and the Caucasus also provided a transdisciplinary component to the workshop</li> <li>- All supported participants to the Forum Carpathicum provided an active contribution: Keynote speaker/session leader/presenter. All names appear at the Forum programme accordingly.</li> <li>- The keynote speakers provided contributions specific to issues of ESD, transdisciplinarity and science-policy-practice interface, as planned.</li> </ul> <p>Steering Committee members provided both organizational support and substantial presentations, as well as chaired sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Prof. Elena Matei, chair</b> - Bucharest University, Faculty of Geography, Dept. Human and Economic Geography, Romania - oral presentation and session leader at the conference, contribution in organization of the conference</li> <li>- <b>RNDr. Ľuboš Halada, CSc.</b> - Institute of Landscape Ecology, Slovak Academy of Science, Slovakia - oral presentation and session leader at the conference, contribution in organization of the conference,</li> <li>- <b>Prof. Ivan Kruhlov</b> - Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukrain -oral presentation and session leader at the conference, contribution in organization of the conference <b>Joanna ZAWIEJSKA, PhD</b> Institute of Geography, Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland - oral presentation and leader of three sessions at the he conference, contribution in organization of the conference <b>Katalin Némethné Mázsza PhD</b> - senior researcher and scientific manager of the MTA Centre for Ecological Research - leading organizer of the FC2018 conference, co-author in oral presentation</li> </ul>	

<p>Non-EU Carpathian countries: 5 from Ukraine and Serbia;</p> <p>Caucasus countries: 1-2 from Armenia/Georgia;</p> <p>EU countries: 3-4 from Germany, Scotland and Switzerland;</p> <p>EU-Carpathian countries: 10-12 from total from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic</p>	<p>no one from Serbia could take part in the conference, but 2 participants from Ukraine, as well as young scientists from other Carpathian countries (Hungary, Poland) presented at the meeting, otherwise participants have represented the countries, as planned</p>	<p>No participant from Serbia was available to attend</p> <p>Not all participants required full support, some have been partially supported by the S4C or by their institution.</p>
<p>Younger scientists and practitioners participating in the Forum (around 8 scientists, up to 35 years old):</p> <p>2 Total from Ukraine and Serbia, 6 Total from Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic (1- 2 per country)</p>		<p>No participant from Serbia was available to attend</p> <p>The country distribution of the young scientists was only slightly different than originally expected (8 from the Carpathians, but none from Serbia, 1 from Armenia)</p>
<p>Sustainable tourism excursion conducted back-to-back with the Forum Carpaticum, in order to illustrate the links between sustainable tourism and nature protection, as well as science and practice</p>	<p>2 excursions were organized, one of them combined a visit to the oak forest management project with a visit to a village, where a balance between local traditions and tourism is being attempted.</p> <p>The LIFE4OAK FORESTS project aims to promote the regeneration of the forests and to restore the diversity of forest structure, native tree species composition and micro habitats.</p> <p>The Old Village of Hollókő is an example of a deliberately preserved traditional settlement, exhibiting traditional forms of rural life, generally abolished by the agricultural revolution in the 20th century. Next to it a traditional castle ruin is situated.</p>	



<p>Conference materials available in electronic and printed form;</p>	<p>The conference programme was available in electronic and printed form.</p> <p>The book of Abstracts is only available in the electronic form and can be downloaded via the website of the Conference, as well as via the APP created by the organizing company.</p>	<p>Making the book of abstracts only electronic in the end was a deliberate decision by the organizers in order to print less materials in line with environmental guidelines of the implementing organizations.</p>
<p>Recommendations produced by the partners in cooperation with the CC Secretariat for follow-up actions, to be integrated in follow-up projects and into the research agenda for the Carpathians;</p>	<p>Recommendations have been proposed by all session leaders based on the presentations and discussion in each session and workshop. The recommendations have been collected and presented at the CCIC meeting to the Carpathian Convention focal points.</p> <p>Enhanced recommendations in the field of Biodiversity, with inputs from WWF, have been presented also to the WG on Biodiversity, held in Ostrava, Czech Republic in May 2019.</p>	

<p>Results from the workshops and session presented during the Carpathian Session of the Agritourism Congress in Bolzano in November 2018;</p> <p>10 representatives from the Carpathians, including S4C Steering Committee and participants of the Forum Carpaticum sessions described above participating in the Carpathian session of the Agritourism Congress. Names of all supported participants will be included into the programme of the session, as well as the report.</p> <p>2 from Ukraine and Serbia; 8 from other Carpathian Countries (about 3 per country)</p>	<p>The results have been presented at the Carpathian Session, as planned.</p> <p>9 participants from the Carpathian countries needed the funding to attend the Congress. 1 additional participant from the Agrarian university in Romania could cover their participation from other funds.</p> <p>No one from Ukraine and Serbia could attend.</p> <p>Tamara Mitrofanenko was asked to represent S4C as well as UNEP Vienna, due to her involvement in Forum Carpaticum. Her contribution also involved coordinating writing and submission of the session summary, to be included into the proceedings of the Congress.</p>	<p>No participant from Ukraine and Serbia were available to participate in the session.</p> <p>This information has been communicated to the donor in advance.</p> <p>The S4C Steering Committee members could not join the Congress, due to having to attend the WWF event held in Vienna at this time and described above</p>
<p>Results communicated to the Carpathian Convention partners by the Secretariat.</p>	<p>The results have been communicated both by the Secretariat and by the S4C network at the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee meeting, held in Vienna in December 2018. The results have been also integrated into the Report on the implementation of the Convention 2018.</p>	

### III.3 Reaching of the project outcomes (target-performance comparison)

Project Objectives as described in the application	Comments
<p>Facilitating integration of the results of biodiversity conservation (particularly the conference on large carnivores) and sustainable tourism development (Establishment of the Tourism Platform and tourism centres, elaboration of the tourism strategy), into the long-term implementation of the Carpathian Convention, and follow-up on these results in synergy with the broader sustainable development framework.</p>	<p>A Workshop on Large Carnivores has been organized during Forum Carpathicum, and its participants have contributed to the discussion during other sessions of the forum;</p> <p>The coordinator of the Romanian tourism platform has presented the platform and how organizations and individuals can engage with it during the Tourism session of the Forum Carpathicum</p> <p>Discussion of sustainable tourism and sustainable development in the Carpathians at the special sessions of the World Agritourism congress further contributed to this objective</p> <p>At the ESD seminar a number of presentations from the Carpathians dealt with integration of biodiversity topics into the educational programmes.</p> <p>The presentation of S4C and an interactive workshop at the meeting of Biodiversity working group of the Carpathian Convention was the latest step contributing to this objective. The participants discussed the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity information to other working groups of the Carpathian Convention, including on Forestry, tourism, transport, etc.</p>
<p>Strengthen synergies among biodiversity conservation and protection of large carnivores, sustainable tourism development and science-policy-practice interface in the Carpathian region.</p>	<p>Discussion about the synergies happened during the FC among the participants of the Large Carnivor workshop, the Secretariat staff and other participants of the Forum</p> <p>More synergies were created during the ESD Seminar as well as during the meeting and workshops of the working group of</p>

<p>Establishing synergies among experts working on biodiversity conservation and protection of large carnivores with those working in the field of sustainable tourism development, agritourism, as well as ESD in the Carpathians.</p>	<p>Biodiversity of the Carpathian Convention, during the presentations of the S4C and the interactive world café sessions.</p> <p>Moreover, these discussions and synergies will be integrated into the next Forum Carpathicum 2020, further activities of the S4C, including the redevelopment of the research agenda for the Carpathians for 2020-2030.</p>
<p>Organize sessions and presentation during the plenaries of the FC focused on synergies and linkages among research and practice in the field of biodiversity conservation, sustainable tourism development and agritourism in the Carpathian region.</p> <p>Organizing inter- and transdisciplinary keynote speakers for the FC specialized in the above fields.</p>	<p>Most sessions of the Forum Carpathicum dealt with interdisciplinary and intersectoral linkages, as evident from the programme and the book of abstracts.</p> <p>The invited Keynote speakers have addressed these issues in their presentations:</p> <p><b>Prof. Bill Slee</b> - Emeritus Fellow of the James Hutton Institute and an associate of the Rural Development Company, Scotland - social innovation and rural development</p> <p><b>Jörg Balsiger</b> - Director of the Institute and Hub for Environmental Governance and Territorial Development, Univ. of Geneva - global mountain research</p> <p><b>Prof. Joerg Müller</b> - Professor for Animal Ecology, University Würzburg, Deputy Head of the Bavarian Forest National Park - forest ecology</p> <p><b>Zsolt Molnár DSc</b> - senior researcher, MTA Centre for Ecological Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences - traditional ecological knowledge and land management</p>
<p>Support the participation of students, PhD student and early career young scientists in the FC</p>	<p>A number of younger participants (8) have been supported, as planned – even more came with support from their institutions</p>

<p>The total Number of participants in Forum Carpaticum have been estimated between 110 and 160 in the original application (110 registered participants taking part in the sessions and workshops, and 160 attending the gala dinner, including potentially local stakeholders /administration and non-registered organizers)</p>	<p>The actual number of participants was estimated at 120: 108 were registered (coming from at least 15 different countries), and the additional 12 were Hungarian organizers and supporters of the conference, who were not registered.</p>
<p>Supporting participation of the S4C and Carpathian Convention in the Carpathian session during the Agritourism Congress in Bolzano, Italy.</p>	<p>9 presenters from the Carpathians have been supported at the Agritourism Congress, including a representative of the S4C, nominated by the S4C steering committee, who is also a young scientist/researcher working in the field of agritourism and women empowerment in the Carpathians. One participant from Romania came supported from another project</p>
<p>Communicating the results to the Carpathian Convention partners, and integrating them into the Carpathian Convention documents</p>	<p>The key messages from the FC and from the Agritourism Congress to the Carpathian Convention have been presented to the Carpathian Convention Implementation committee and included into the CC implementation report 2018. Further follow-up focused on Biodiversity, science-policy-practice interface, forestry and ESD took place at the meeting of the WG on Biodiveristy. A new format for discussion and cooperation has been tested and appreciated by the Convention focal points and the other participants, and will be continued in the future. Results of the events held in 2019 will be integrated into the CC implementation report of 2019.</p>

### **III.4 Assessment of the project by the recipients of advice, and of the collaboration with other partners in the target country**

The project received especially strong appreciation at the Forum Carpathicum, by the organizers and the supported participants. This was a highly needed and welcome contribution to the organization and participation at the FC. The appreciation for support was highly recognized at the opening of the FC in several opening statements by the Hungarian organizers and by the Secretariat. The organizers especially appreciated the support for participants from Ukraine, who often lack the funds to join the FC, as well as other Carpathian Convention events.

The S4C organizers expressed that the project contributed to a more balanced conference - with respect to the thematic focus, important topics from the social sciences and inter- and transdisciplinary fields have been included into the sessions (such as social innovation in the mountain regions) and via the contribution of the keynote speakers. This was the first time Forum Carpathicum embraced these approaches to such an extent. Support to participants from a Swiss-Ukrainian cooperation project focused on developing and implementing green energy solutions facilitated both NGO representatives and local authorities attending the Forum. Many of the Ukrainian participants were supported by the AAP funds.

The only challenging aspect was the late timing of receiving the funds, which kept a number of participants who needed support waiting to find out whether or not they would be able to take part in the FC – however, all project partners were aware of this challenge in advance, and of the administrative challenges with funding agreements, etc, so this was a very minor issue in comparison to the benefits brought by the funds.

The president director of EURAC as well as the head of Institute of Regional Development, who welcomed and thanked the support of AAP at the opening of the World Agritourism Congress. Without this contribution, participants from the Carpathian countries could not have attended the Congress, and this would have resulted in cancellation of the Carpathian session. Both these officials reiterated their appreciation in bilateral discussion with the Carpathian Convention secretariat.

Moreover, there was highly positive feedback at the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee meeting from the Carpathian Convention focal points. The lack of interaction between the scientists and the other stakeholders of the Carpathian Convention had been acknowledged before, and all CCIC participants were happy to see a stronger exchange and cooperation, which was facilitated by the project. Both the S4C and the focal points have agreed on the need to continue the stronger cooperation in the future.

Focal points of the convention especially praised the ESD seminar. They were happy that it took place and that the Carpathian Convention secretariat found a way to support this topic - there was a very big gap previously in exchange among the Carpathian Countries on ESD, as well as between ESD and other sectors. All Carpathian Convention focal points received highly positive feedback from the representatives of the Carpathian countries, who took part in the seminar.

The participants of the ESD seminar, including those from Serbia, appreciated highly this event and the opportunity for exchange (it is sometimes a challenge to involve official Serbian participants in Carpathian Convention events, due to the fact that Carpathians occupy a very small part of Serbia, however, ministerial official representatives took part in the ESD seminar).

5 out of 7 Carpathian Convention focal points participated in the exchange between the S4C and WG on Biodiversity, and they were very enthusiastic, potentially considering continuing with

such approach (presentations followed by World Café exchange) in the future, and even considering to integrate this highly interactive format into other Carpathian Convention activities.

The S4C steering committee members highly appreciated the opportunity to have a face-to-face meeting following the Forum Carpathicum, it helped the decisions for the application for Visegrad fund, and discuss a lot of issues for the organization of the next Forum Carpathicum, including introducing more innovative approaches into the FC.

A number of positive experiences and findings have been made while collaborating with the recipients and other partners in the Carpathian region:

- S4C is an established network, and the members of the steering committee are committed to the organization of the FC and are open to innovative ideas. They are open to stronger science-policy-practice interface, and to the integration of transdisciplinary approaches, even though they need still support and international collaborations to strengthen these aspects.
- During presentations at Forum Carpathicum in several sessions it became clear that there exists interdisciplinary research in the Carpathians, and there are researchers using participatory methods in their work – the only challenge is to facilitate the networking among them, and integrate their work into the CC implementation.
- During the ESD seminar representatives from all countries expressed willingness to actively contribute to further exchange on ESD, and participants from Poland expressed willingness to potentially organize such a seminar in Poland in 2020.

At the same time, certain challenges have been encountered, including the lack of time and capacity on behalf of beneficiaries to be fully self-sufficient with respect to application for funds.

### **III.5 Lessons learned and recommendations**

- More efforts should be made to involve and train younger participants in the S4C, who might be eager to learn new approaches and skills, including those related to accessing project funds, and will be able to apply them in the future. The latter has been a challenge, due to the many barriers the younger scientists are facing with respect to the lack of time, having a lot of pressure to publish and sometimes having to work overtime extensively in order both to earn enough and to advance their career.
- Due to the fact that the network is voluntary, not all executive committee members are active, which constitutes a challenge, and the challenges expressed above prevent more young scientists from joining. However, the committee is aware of this and is trying to take measures to involve more young and active members
- We have learned about the strong barriers to interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary work, which are increasing in some Carpathian countries, due to certain governmental reforms, which favour stronger separation between disciplines.
- The Convention Secretariat provides an important link among experts working in various institutions both within each Carpathian country and among the countries via activities of the Carpathian Convention.

- Part of the challenge regarding access to funds by the Carpathian partners is that many funding agencies often favour better known universities from “western” countries. In order to overcome this barrier, it is important to form more cooperation between Carpathian partners with those from the west. Such cooperations are already growing and were evident during the ESD conference and some have also contributed to the Forum Carpathicum – but it is important to facilitate more. In order to do so, we have made contacts with Leuphana University Lüneburg and will try to integrate some of the Leuphana researchers into the work of the Carpathian Convention and activities of the S4C.
- Summer Schools could provide one way of reaching out to the early career scientists, and also to build new networks and partnerships. S4C plans to integrate a summer school into the application for the Visegrad fund.
- Cooperation with the Caucasus region and with the Scientific Network is welcome by the S4C. The presentations from Armenia and Georgia made at the Forum (also supported by AAP), were highly appreciated and initiated discussions also across the regions. A number of S4C colleagues indicated interest to participate in the Caucasus Mountain Forum, which will take place in Ankara, Turkey on Oct 30- November 2, 2019.
- Due to the fact that the Carpathian Convention is a working and dynamic process, many additional activities emerged during the project. It was very important that the donors were open to consider an amendment and a project extension - the additional activities contributed substantially to the project outcomes! At the same time, we learned that these dynamic emerging outcomes could be envisaged to a certain extent in the application already, which might potentially simplify the process and avoid the need for an amendment.
- Supporting such inter-sectoral dynamic processes as in the case of the given project might be challenging due to the fact that a certain flexibility is needed in applying the budget, in order to allow for emerging outputs and facilitate more effective outcomes. It would be helpful if the programme could allow for more flexibility in this respect. However, in our experience the AAP colleagues were highly supportive in helping us adjust the realities of project implementation, the administrative challenges, and the emerging needs to the programme requirements and limitations.
- We would strongly recommend AAP to count participation in interactive discussion formats, such as world café, among activities considered “active participation” - such formats often yield more fruitful results than individual presentations. More innovative formats are currently adopted by conference organizers – specifically to encourage more discussion and networking, instead of just individual presentations, which often tend to run overtime and not allow for fruitful discussion and exchange. Moreover, these formats are much more likely to contribute to transdisciplinary and inter-sectoral discussions and outcomes.