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PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT · PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ



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

First meeting

Kyiv, 11-13 December 2006
Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Secretariat note on cooperation with the European Union

Introduction

1. The 11th Meeting of Ministers of Environment of the Visegrad Group Countries (20-21 May 2004 Siófok, Hungary) adopted a Joint Statement, including a section dedicated to the “contribution to the implementation of the Carpathian Framework Convention” (Annex I). The Romanian Minister of the Environment and Water Management participated in the meeting as an observer.
2. Furthermore, the Visegrad Group Environment Ministers signed a letter to the European Commissioners for Environment and for Regional Development, inviting the European Commission to consider the European Union's accession to the Carpathian Framework Convention, and support its implementation through the existing and the future financing mechanisms (Annex II).
3. At the 12th Meeting of the Environment Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries in Białowieża, Poland, 6-7 June 2005, the Visegrad Group Ministers adopted a Joint Statement (Annex III), reconfirming their earlier common position to invite the European Communities to join this legal instrument and to support its implementation. The Ministers called for high-level participation of the Contracting Parties as well as the European Communities at COP 1.

Implementation

4. On 23 May 2005, the Director, UNEP Regional Office for Europe and the Head of the UNEP Vienna - Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention visited HE Danuta Hübner, Commissioner of Directorate-General of Regional Policy, as well as the DGs TREN and Environment, and discussed the further involvement and support by the European Commission to the Carpathian Convention.
5. Commissioner Hübner welcomed the progress made by the Carpathian Convention and emphasized the interest of DG Regio in the promotion of this sub-regional cooperation. In addition to the possibility of supporting member States through cohesion funds, modalities of structurally supporting cooperation and activities under the Carpathian Convention could

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possibly be identified.

6. On behalf of the Parties and Signatories of the Carpathian Convention, the interim Secretariat submitted the Carpathian Project to the EU INTERREG III B CADSES Programme. The Project was approved by the CADSES Steering Committee in April 2006. Further information on the Project is contained in the attached “Agenda and Strategic Approach of the Carpathian Project” (Annex IV).

Proposed action by the Conference of the Parties

The Conference of the Parties may wish to consider the Secretariat note on cooperation with the EU and is invited to consider the following draft decision:

The Conference of the Parties,

1. Recalling the experience of the INTERREG III B Alpine Space Programme as a valuable framework for project development and implementation in support of the Alpine Convention;
2. Noting the European Council Regulation no. 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund;
3. Welcoming the INTERREG III B CADSES Carpathian Project as an essential instrument for shaping the transnational framework of and implementing the Carpathian Convention towards the sustainable development of the Carpathian Space;
4. Urges both the Parties and other stakeholders to fully use and support the networks created by the EU CADSES Carpathian Project in the common transnational framework of the Carpathian Convention, and to pursue the priorities for investment and follow-up action identified by the Carpathian Project, through the approval of follow-up projects within the existing INTERREG programmes;
5. Furthermore calls for the development of an operational programme by the EU, supporting the sustainable development of the Carpathian Space, building on the transnational framework of the Carpathian Convention;
6. Requests the interim Secretariat in close consultation with the Parties and the appropriate EU institutions, to develop the follow up projects and the operational programme, pursuant to paragraphs 4 and 5 above.
7. Invites the European Union to accede to the Carpathian Convention.

Annex I

JOINT STATEMENT**of the 11th Meeting of Ministers of Environment
of the Visegrad Group Countries****20-21 May 2004 Siófok, Hungary,**

The Minister of Environment of the Czech Republic, Minister of Environment and Water of the Republic of Hungary, Minister of the Environment of the Slovak Republic and Minister of Environment of the Republic of Poland, the countries of the Visegrad Group,

Recognizing the historical moment of the enlargement of the European Union and trusting that it will contribute to the improvement of quality of life and the environment in the new Member States, particularly, in our countries and that all EU-citizens will benefit from it,

Welcoming the continuation of the process of EU enlargement,

Appreciating the participation at the Meeting of the Minister of Environment and Water Management of Romania, Mrs. Speranta Maria Ianculescu, the Director and Regional Representative of UNEP Mr. Frits Schlingemann and Ms. Marta Szigeti Bonifert, Executive Director of the Regional Environmental Centre as observers,

Recalling the Guidelines of the "New Visegrad Declaration" adopted by the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries on 12 May, 2004 in Kromeriz, Czech Republic,

Reaffirming the interest to proceed in continuing co-operation within the Visegrad Group, as well as in regional project-based collaboration involving other interested countries in V4+ format,

have expressed the following:

Visegrad Group Countries, as member states of the European Union

1. The Ministers expressed satisfaction with the successful accession and pledged themselves to the constructive participation in formulation and implementation of the internal and external dimensions of the Community's environmental policies.
2. The Ministers emphasised their commitment to implement and enforce all pieces of environmental legislation in the most efficient way, parallel with active participation in the EU legislative work, contributing to the further development of the community law with special emphasis on the environment.

3. The Ministers attached great importance to the active participation in EU bodies and joint lobbying in the EU decision making mechanisms, in order to pursue national as well as common interests of the Visegrad Group Countries.
4. The Ministers expressed their willingness to maintain multi-level co-operation in identifying common Visegrad Group priorities and actions at various stages of the EU decision making process, with the active involvement of national environmental attachés, respective EU Departments and at ministerial level where appropriate
5. The Ministers expressed their willingness to convene their regular meetings annually and if it is necessary also in relation to the Environmental Council's meetings.
6. Furthermore they confirmed the interest in further participation in the regional consultative forum initiated by Austria in 2003 (Visegrad Group Countries, Austria, Germany and Slovenia), the next meeting to be held on 21-22 September, 2004 in Cejkovice, Czech Republic.
7. The Ministers confirmed the interest of their countries in the implementation of the "European Neighbourhood Policy" and development of a "New Neighbourhood Instrument" in order to promote the effective co-operation with neighbouring countries, in particular Ukraine, Western NIS and Western Balkan countries in the field of environment.
8. Given the significance of transboundary co-operation in the development and improvement of relations with the neighbouring countries and based on their own experiences of Phare CBC programmes, the Ministers welcomed the recently launched INTERREG III/A programmes, e.g. Hungarian-Slovakian-Ukraine programme, Hungarian-Romanian-Serbian programme.
9. The Ministers agreed to support the proposal of the Czech Republic regarding a jointly managed project on technical assistance in the field of environmental protection in the countries of the Western Balkans, in particular Serbia-Montenegro. They requested the Czech Republic to communicate this intention for consideration to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan following its proposal to the V4 co-ordinators.

Use of EU co-financing in the implementation of national environmental programmes and national development plans

1. Noting that the environmental advantages of Visegrad Group Countries as new member states – e.g. high level of biodiversity, bigger share of use of public transport, less intensive agricultural practices – should be emphasised in the enlarged EU, the Ministers welcomed the objectives and priorities of the 3rd Report on Economic and Social Cohesion and the Financial Perspective, and agreed that the contribution of the EU funds for the environmental pillar of sustainable development are proposed to be increased.
2. The Ministers emphasised the common interest of their countries in reinforcing and increasing the level of EU financial sources, available for the implementation of the EU environmental policy and integration of the environmental considerations into other policies as described in the 6th Environmental Action Programme for 2001-2010.

3. The Ministers agreed to share experience on the effective utilisation of EU funds so as to improve the absorption capacity of their countries and support each other in getting more assistance for environmental projects in the frame of the new cohesion policy for the period of 2007-2013.

Experiences in the establishment of Natura 2000 network

1. The Ministers agreed that tighter collaboration could promote the conservation of natural habitats and the wild fauna and flora of European Union interest, especially through the maintenance and restoration of the favourable conservation status of sites where animal and plant species and habitats of community importance occur.
2. The Ministers called the European Commission to provide for a more articulate support to the nature conservation authorities in fully implementing Natura 2000 network, including to help to develop mechanisms of sharing the responsibilities for European nature for all sectors, in particular agriculture, forestry, tourism, transport etc.
3. Noting that the LIFE-Nature program is a very important financial instrument for nature conservation and it is desirable to utilize it in a greater extent in the future, the Ministers agreed to prepare and submit joint projects of the Visegrad Group Countries..
4. The Ministers stress the importance of the continuation of the activities in relation to transboundary Natura 2000 sites and agree to keep each other informed on future management plans, habitat restoration programmes and species protection plans to be aimed at those Natura 2000 sites bordering a similar site of a neighbouring Visegrad Group Country.

Implementation of waste management policies and use of economic instruments

1. Taking part in the initiatives launched by the EU in the field of waste prevention and reduction policy (Environmental Technologies Action Plan, Ecodesign, Integrated Product Policy, Eco-labelling) and being aware of the complexity of the tasks related to their implementation, the Ministers agreed to explore possibilities of profiting from one another's experiences and to enhance co-operation between their countries, especially in the field of recovery of special waste streams generated from product charge based products.
2. The Ministers note that in order to comply with EU regulations on recovery, the future extent of product charges will have to be continually established so that the system should encourage to obtain an exemption through recovery.
3. The Ministers emphasise the role of deposit charge as a regulation instrument encouraging to reduce the volume of waste and note that the rate of product subjects to deposit charge needs to be stable and in medium-term to extend slowly, and the necessity of joint efforts for harmonising waste prevention policies, in particular deposit refund systems of beverage packaging.

Contribution to the implementation of the Carpathian Framework Convention

1. The Ministers agreed upon to make efforts for the ratification of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, signed in Kiev, 2003 by their countries by the end of this year, and encourage other Signatories to do the same, so as to promote its early entry into force. The Ministers invited the EU to consider joining this legal instrument, similarly to the Alpine Convention, and support its implementation.
2. The Ministers emphasised the importance to ensure stable and predictable financing to the Carpathian Framework Convention and its Interim Secretariat's activities, pledged to provide further voluntary contributions by their countries and acknowledged with high appreciation the financial support of donor countries, in particular Austria, Italy and Switzerland.
3. The Ministers appreciated the strengthening partnership between the Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Framework Convention facilitated by UNEP, encouraging the Alpine countries, international organisations and other donors to further support the ongoing activities under the Carpathian Convention, e.g. the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas, Carpathian Environmental Outlook.
4. The Ministers appreciated the efforts and scientific work carried out so far to define the geographical scope of the Convention and according to the mandate given by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries for Adoption and Signature of the Carpathian Framework Convention (Kiev, 22 May 2003) requested the Interim Secretariat to present the draft comprehensive report and proposal at the 1st Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Signatories (October 2004, Brasov, Romania).

The Ministers of the Environment welcome the invitation by the Minister of the Environment of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Jerzy Swatoń to attend the 12th Meeting of the Ministers of the Environment of the Visegrad Group countries to be in April 2005 in Poland.

Done in Siófok, on 21 May 2004

H.E. Mr. Libor Ambrozek
Minister of the Environment
Czech Republic

H. E. Mr. Miklós Persányi
Minister of the Environment and Water
Republic of Hungary

H.E. Mr. Jerzy Swatoń
Minister of the Environment
Republic of Poland

H. E. Mr. László Miklós
Minister of the Environment
Slovak Republic

Annex II



Madame Margot Wallström
EU Commissioner for the Environment
Mr. Jacques Barrot
EU Commissioner for the Regional Policy

21 May, 2004, Siófok

Dear Madame Wallström,
Dear Mr. Barrot,

We are pleased to inform you about the 11th meeting of the ministers of environment of the Visegrad Group countries held on 20-21 May, 2004 in Siófok, Hungary, the main issue of which was the future V4 environmental co-operation in the enlarged Europe. We attached high importance to strengthened sub-regional co-operation in the context of the EU New Neighbourhood Policy and Instrument. The Minister of Environment and Water Management of Romania and the Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe also attended this meeting as observers.

One of the items of our Agenda was the promotion of ratification and implementation of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, opened for signature at the "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Meeting held in Kiev, May 2003 and signed by all seven interested countries, among them our four countries which became recently EU members as well by Romania. The Carpathian Framework Convention represents a new sub-regional legal instrument for enhancing sustainable development transferring experiences and best practices of the Alpine Convention to which the European Union joined as a Party.

Therefore we are pleased to invite you to consider the European Union's accession to the Carpathian Framework Convention and support its implementation through the existing and the future financing mechanisms (Structural Funds, Cohesion Fund and other EU initiatives).

We are firmly convinced that the closer co-operation of EU member states and interested neighbouring countries will contribute to the stability, cohesion and improvement of the environmental quality and preservation of rich and diverse natural and cultural values of the Carpathians.

Please find attached the Joint Statement of our 11th meeting for your further information.

We are looking forward to fruitful co-operation with you.

Libor Ambrozek
Minister of the Environment
Czech Republic

Miklós Persányi
Minister of the Environment and Water
Republic of Hungary

Jerzy Swatoń
Minister of the Environment
Republic of Poland

László Miklós
Minister of the Environment
Slovak Republic

JOINT STATEMENT

of the 12th Meeting of the Environment Ministers of the Visegrad Group States

Białowieża, Poland, 6-7 June 2005

The Minister of the Environment of the Czech Republic, the Minister of the Environment and Water of the Republic of Hungary, the Minister of the Environment of the Slovak Republic and the Minister of the Environment of the Republic of Poland, representatives of the Visegrad Group States,

as well as the Minister of the Environment of the Lithuanian Republic, who participated in the meeting as an observer,

- recognising the historic moment of the accession of the Visegrad Group States to the European Union,
- supporting the continuation of the process of enlargement of the European Union,
- confirming their interest in the continued process of joint co-operation,
- bearing in mind the results of the previous Meetings of the Environment Ministers of the Visegrad Group States as well as the existing bilateral and multilateral agreements concluded among the Visegrad Group States,

have expressed the following

The EU policies on chemicals - REACH Regulation

The Ministers fully supported the initiative for the better EU regulation of the chemicals within the REACH system, which is to ensure that the production, placing on the market, import or use of chemical substances do not have adverse impact on human health and on the environment.

The Ministers recognised that it is necessary to develop such system in order to simplify and minimise the costs related to the registration procedure; to this end the concept of one substance – one registration is supported. The common understanding is that industry would take the responsibility for the safety of the use of chemical products.

The progress of negotiations and final results on the REACH Regulation should be considered in a broader context of international community efforts to agree on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), reflecting the goals of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

International cooperation to combat climate change

The Ministers welcomed the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol and they congratulate the Russian Federation on its ratification of the Protocol.

With a view to ensuring the full implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, the Ministers stressed the urgent need to start international negotiations on further steps to mitigate the global ghg-emissions, to develop medium- and long-term mitigation and adaptation strategies in order to limit the projected global warming, reflecting the 2°C target which was endorsed by the recent Spring European Council.

Due attention will be paid by the Visegrad Group States to the preparation of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth sessions of the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development as the respective themats cycle will be focused on climate change, energy for sustainable development, atmosphere and air protection and on industrial development.

The Ministers also underlined the importance of the review and renewal of the EU's ECCP which should take into account the implications of the enlargement, the need for the effective implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and preparation for the post-2012 period.

The Lisbon Strategy and the Gothenburg Strategy

The Ministers acknowledged the outcome of the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy and expressed their view that due attention to environmental protection and nature conservation should be paid within the framework of the refocused strategy for the sake of its effective implementation. Broader use of eco-efficient innovations, environmentally sound technologies and market instruments are key components in this context, but environment considerations should also be fully integrated in those specific policy areas which are highlighted in the framework of the new Lisbon Strategy.

Besides the Lisbon strategy, the revision of the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy was also launched and the Ministers expressed a strong interest to consider this process as the comprehensive determination of the long-term development perspectives of the European Community which should be based on the principles and the concept of sustainability.

An exchange of views and the development of a common position on the future of the Structural Funds

The Ministers emphasized that, in the course of the programming and negotiations with the European Commission, consideration should be given to the exceptional needs of the new Member States in relation to the construction of basic environmental infrastructure. The provision of financing for NATURA 2000 sites will also pose a challenge to the Visegrad Group States.

The Ministers underlined that the new Member States should be vitally interested in the fullest possible integration of the aspects of sustainable development and environmental protection into the regulations concerning the use of the EU Funds.

The Visegrad Group States welcomed the continuation and maintenance of the Cohesion Fund in the New Financial Perspective 2007 - 2013 as an important instrument of the EU Cohesion Policy and the Community environmental protection policy in the forthcoming programming period, especially regarding the extension of the priority areas to renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable transport.

Involved parties should support mutual exchange of experience and best practice in programming and implementation of the Structural funds and the Cohesion fund in the sector of environment. Ministers have called for expert level exchange of experiences regarding the funds in their respective countries.

The implementation of the new EC Waste Directives into the national legislation

With respect to the transposition and implementation of the provisions of the directives on packaging and packaging waste, on end-of life vehicles and on waste electrical and electronic equipment into the national legislation, the Ministers expressed their willingness to facilitate and encourage consultations on expert level concerning the legislative process.

They also called for exchange of experiences about the implementation and enforcement of existing waste related pieces of legislation, such as the transboundary shipment of waste, on the green list of wastes for recovery among the Visegrad Group States.

Exchange of experiences related to the management of the sites proposed for the European Ecological Network NATURA 2000 and their financing

The Ministers agreed that further co-operation in the area of the management of the sites proposed for the European Ecological Network NATURA 2000 and their financing should be concerned with:

- the organisational structure of the management of the NATURA 2000 Network,
- the development of measures allowing for the mobilisation of funds necessary for the functioning of the NATURA 2000 sites, the drawing up of conservation plans and the implementation of the related tasks, under LIFE +, the Rural Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Sectoral Operational Programme – Environment, the Regional Operational

Programmes or the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance in the new financial perspective for 2007-2013,

- the principles and scope of the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of conservation tasks on the NATURA 2000 sites.

The Visegrad Group States agreed to exchange information on the location of Natura 2000 sites along their common borders and to strive for ensuring connectivity of these sites across their borders where feasible and reasonable from the ecological point of view. They agreed to discuss possible extensions of national lists of SACs. Meeting of Nature Directors on this topic will be hosted by the Czech Republic.

The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians

The Ministers agreed to make further efforts for early ratification of the Convention by encouraging countries that have not yet done so. The Ministers reconfirmed their earlier common position to invite the European Communities to join this legal instrument and to support its implementation.

They called for high level participation of the Contracting Parties as well as European Communities at COP 1.

The Ministers appreciated the efforts and scientific work carried out so far to define the geographical scope of the Convention. The Ministers agreed to follow a holistic and integrated (multi-criteria) approach and encouraged the Interim Secretariat to prepare recommendations on the geographical scope for decision by the first meeting of the Conference of Parties, which reflect both the main goals and principles of the Convention and relevant EU policies and directives (eg. Natura 2000, Water Framework Directive, draft Mining Waste Directive etc.)

Others

The Ministers exchanged their opinions about the introduction of Genetically Modified Organisms and recalling the precautionary principle expressed serious concern in this context.

The Ministers agreed to make appropriate steps in their respective countries in order to encourage the submission of more environment related projects to the Visegrád Fund.

The 13th meeting of Ministers of Environment of the Visegrad Group States.

The Ministers of the Environment have accepted the invitation from Mr. Laszlo Miklos, the Minister of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, to participate in the 13th Meeting of the Environment Ministers of the Visegrad Group States, which will be held in Slovakia in 2006.

Done in Białowieża, 7 June 2005

His Excellency Mr. Libor Ambrozek
Minister of the Environment
of the Czech Republic

His Excellency Mr. Miklós Persányi
Minister of the Environment and Water
of the Republic of Hungary

His Excellency Mr. Tomasz Podgajniak
Minister of the Environment
of the Republic of Poland

His Excellency Mr. Laszlo Miklos
Minister of the Environment
of the Slovak Republic

Annex IV

AGENDA AND STRATEGIC APPROACH OF THE CARPATHIAN PROJECT

1. Background

The Carpathian region – which spans the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic and Ukraine – is one of Europe’s largest mountain ranges, harbouring a unique natural and cultural heritage, providing a haven for wildlife and acting as an ecological link within Europe. The diversity of the natural heritage is one of the biggest assets of the Carpathian region with a view to sustainable development. The Carpathians are a living environment for millions of people in the heart of Europe, yet their biodiversity and natural heritage are subject to a variety of threats and adverse impacts from land abandonment, habitat conversion and fragmentation, deforestation, large scale migration on the one hand, and from industrialisation, pollution and overexploitation of natural resources on the other.

The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians enshrines a common vision, integrates developmental and environmental goals, provides objectives for action and constitutes the strategic framework for cooperation to address these challenges in a transnational context.

The Carpathian Project¹ has been developed in 2005 by UNEP Vienna - Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention and RTI Polska together with Carpathian Convention Signatories and the broad project consortium of partners from 11 countries. The project builds upon the intergovernmental cooperative platform of the Carpathian Convention. UNEP Vienna - Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention leads the project with the support of the seven Carpathian Convention Signatories.

In establishing priorities and elaboration of the project, the aims and objectives of the **EU Neighbourhood Programme** have been taken into consideration. Its main objectives are:

- promoting sustainable economic and social development in the border areas;
- working together to address common challenges, in fields such as environment, public health, and the prevention of and fight against organised crime;
- ensuring efficient and secure borders; promoting local, “people-to-people” type actions².

The concept of the Neighbourhood Programme is to support the cross-border and transnational cooperation along the external borders of the EU in the framework of existing INTERREG programmes.

The Carpathian Project supported by the EU Community Initiative INTERREG IIIB CADSES³ Neighbourhood Programme aims to prepare for the implementation of the Carpathian Convention as a transnational tool for regional cooperation and spatial development. The project originates from a fusion of the Carpathian Convention process with the conclusions of the INTERREG II C Vision PlaNet project⁴.

¹ Full title of the project is “Protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians in a transnational framework”

² “Paving the way for a new Neighbourhood Instrument”(COM (2003) 393 final).

³ **CADSES** - Central Adriatic Danubian South Eastern European space. Among the INTERREG III B areas, the CADSES - is the largest and most complex in Europe. It includes 18 countries, from the Baltic Sea - Poland and Germany - to the Mediterranean, through Austria, western Italy and the Balkans, down to Greece, touching the eastern countries from Ukraine to the Accession Countries.

⁴ **Vision PlaNet** is an INTERREG IIC-CADSES project initiated by Austria, Germany and Italy, comprising the Central European, Adriatic, Danube and partly the Southeast European space. This project aimed at a better mutual understanding of spatial development processes, instruments and institutions in this part of Europe. Within the Vision PlaNet a challenging identification of the CADSES

A comprehensive preparatory process was conducted by the Carpathian Convention as well as the Vision PlaNet and European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional/Spatial Planning (CEMAT)⁵ cooperation networks. The preparations include assessments, preparatory research, governmental consultations, participative stakeholder meetings and international conferences, drawing upon the resources of a wide range of organizations and partner institutions.

2. Integration of the EU spatial development policies: Carpathian Space vision

The Carpathian Project adopts a strategic approach. In this respect, its first task is to determine **common strategic vision** in order to build consensus and develop strategies and policies according to the principles of the Carpathian Convention, aiming at achieving higher territorial and economic integration within the co-operation area, and promoting a more balanced and harmonious development of the “Carpathian Space”.

The strategic approach aims at the development of an innovative Carpathian area – **the Carpathian Space** with a common strategic vision of sustainable development. In this regard, the project will analyze and consolidate the information base, develop strategies and policy instruments, implement and test pilot activities in continuous cooperation with local and regional stakeholders.

The project builds on the existing structure of the Carpathian Convention, providing a transnational framework for the application of EU policies throughout the Carpathian region.

Starting from European transnational and national spatial development concepts, ensuring regional and local anchorage and by applying a proper transnational spatial development approach, the project will integrate European spatial development policies with the management of the Carpathians’ fragile mountain ecosystems in a transnational context.

Consequently, the historically marginalized mountain regions partly situated in remote border areas of the Carpathians should become powerful unifiers across borders between nations and peoples, in one of the most dynamically developing regions of Europe.

Experiences e.g. of the **Alpine Space** clearly demonstrate that mountains can offer considerable potentials for development respecting the value of rich natural and cultural heritage and its preservation for the future.

Full participation and the involvement of mountain communities in the development of policies implemented on local, regional, national, international and European levels will be crucial to balance interest of stakeholders involved. The Carpathian Project will provide an interface between top-down and bottom-up approaches.

3. Objectives, actions, expected results and follow-up

Overall objective: The project shall develop the Carpathian Convention into an operational and truly transnational platform, allowing for the implementation of most relevant EU policies across

transnational areas, including the Carpathian Development Region, has been elaborated. The Carpathian Development Region was identified as a transnational development area for future actions.

⁵ **CEMAT** - Conférence Européenne des Ministres responsable de l'Aménagement du Territoire/European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional/Spatial Planning. The Council of Europe’s CEMAT brings together representatives of the 45 Member States of the Council of Europe, united in their pursuit of a common objective: sustainable spatial development of the European continent. The activities of the Council of Europe, relating to spatial planning, began in 1970 in Bonn where the first CEMAT was held.

the Carpathian region. The project shall demonstrate that environmental and developmental objectives can go hand in hand, if the future is built upon the region's advantages and potentials and typical mountain challenges are addressed in a coordinated manner.

The long-term objective of the project is to strengthen the protection and to accelerate the sustainable development of the Carpathian region by improving the internal as well as European cohesion of the area and by preserving its natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

Actions

In 2003, the Carpathian Convention was signed, calling for the development of coordinated spatial planning policies aiming at the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians. Actions under the project cover an area which has not been so far comprehensively examined by spatial factors and for which no consistent vision of development has been created.

The project will provide a comprehensive assessment of the needs, strengths, weaknesses and constraints of the Carpathian region and its people. It will analyze mountain constraints in the context of economic transition and European integration, and deliver strategies and best practices for development, building on the region's potentials while safeguarding its natural and cultural heritage. Elaborated strategies can be forged by the meetings of the **Intergovernmental Platform** into agreed policy instruments, such as thematic Protocols to the Carpathian Convention.

Without the thematic Protocols related to particular sectoral policies, the Carpathian Convention would remain only the "framework" for cooperation between the Convention's Parties, and might have little influence on shaping the future of the Carpathian region.

Therefore, Carpathian Project will facilitate and contribute to the development of proposed Protocols to the Carpathian Convention, such as in the fields of biological and landscape diversity, sustainable tourism, sustainable agriculture, forestry and rural development and related action plans. The Protocols and regional strategies will support the harmonized implementation of all relevant EU legislation and policies across EU borders, in particular the Natura 2000 network or the 6th Environmental Action Programme, through planning and management measures, as well as of other sector EU policies (Water Framework Directive, Trans-European Transport Networks) in the overall spirit of CEMAT.

The project generates a comprehensive data platform through preparation of the Carpathian Atlas and collection of environmental information, which will be consolidated in databases and made publicly accessible through the project website's GeoPortal.

A general strategic process produces multi-sectoral strategic environmental assessments and the Carpathian Spatial Development Vision.

Expected results and follow-up

1. The Carpathian Project will contribute to implementation of the work programme of the Carpathian Convention for the period of its duration from 1 September 2005-31 August 2008.
2. The Carpathian Project will result in the improvement of the information base through the collection and systemizing of the presently scattered information on the Carpathian region, including environmental information. The transnational cooperation process and its outreach as well as information campaigns will strengthen regional implementation mechanisms for the future.
3. The Carpathian Project will create networks of partners aimed at cooperation and interaction in a long-time perspective.
4. Deepened analysis of key socio-economic sectors as well as the preparation of informal Strategic Environmental Assessments of those sectors will result in a Carpathian Spatial

Development Vision and a Carpathian Environment Outlook. Results and experiences of pilot activities will provide the best practice examples for implementing the policy instruments.

5. Based on the generated comprehensive information base and strategies, appropriate policy instruments will be developed and agreed upon by the Intergovernmental Platform in a participatory process, in continuous interaction with local and regional stakeholders.
6. The Carpathian Project will develop proposals for follow-up investments, and concrete regional strategies and policies, to be endorsed by the Intergovernmental Platform.
7. The Carpathian Project will submit the Carpathian Spatial Development Vision to the Second Meeting Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP2) constituting the project's Intergovernmental Platform, which will launch the follow-up programme.