



## Serbian Report - Consultations for Carpathian Heritage

### Background

Two years ago the Young Researchers of Serbia organized the first stakeholder meeting under the title "Implementation of the Carpathian Convention in Serbia", which was supported by ANPED and organized in co-operation with REC Country Office in Serbia. Since that time Serbia has ratified the Carpathian Convention (in November 2007), however, we have not witnessed a significant improvement in the implementation of the Convention in Serbia.

The main motivation for the Young Researchers of Serbia to carry out this project was to promote the recognition of the Carpathian region as one of the most valuable parts of Serbia, in terms of high biodiversity, cultural identity and traditions. At the same time, it must be noted that this region is isolated, with a high level of depopulation and a high unemployment rate (caused by the bankruptcy of the few state companies that were previously the backbone of the local economy). Regarding the level of economic development (measured by GDP per capita), the region has 59% of the Serbian average GDP per capita. The region receives low levels of domestic and foreign investments. The area is also recognized as bad environmental hot spot. Air emissions from the Mining and Smelting Company are a major environmental problem for the region, since SO<sub>2</sub>, arsenic and heavy metals levels are continuously present in high concentrations, even when the smelter plant does not work at full capacity.

Although the Carpathian Convention is not yet sufficiently known among the local population, some activities in the area and the opportunity to be involved in some Carpathian Convention related projects, is very stimulating for the local people.

The identification of the key stakeholders for cultural heritage in the Serbian Carpathian region was a large challenge. Citizens of the Carpathians, especially those who are living in villages and remote areas, are a unique source of information and "living museums". However, as they have specific life style and life dynamic, it's not easy to approach them.

For this current stage of work we decided to involve representatives from local communities and experts who already worked with local people and could represent them. The first analysis showed that organizing one large meeting would be difficult, due to both the current situation in the country (the current political instability) and the busy schedule of most of the stakeholders (this made it difficult for them to travel to the Carpathian region, where initially the meeting was planned). Therefore we modified our methodology slightly. Three smaller meetings with stakeholders were organized and consultations with individuals were carried out as well.

In order to stimulate participation in the project a project note was sent to all stakeholders, which was followed by numerous phone calls.

Together with the project co-ordinator from the Young Researchers of Serbia, a representative from the local NGO Eco Ethno Movement "Gorun", from Rudna Glava, the Majdanpek Municipality was sub-contracted for conducting part of the consultations. The final list of stakeholders included representatives from authorities (from both the local and national level), as well as from the National Park, institutions, national NGOs and various civil society organisations from the region. Unfortunately, some of the invited participants could not attend the meetings but they expressed interest to participate in our future work.

**Stakeholder Meetings Venue** The meetings were organized in three locations, accessible for the participants : Belgrade, Donji Milanovac and Majdanpek.

**Dates** January to February 2008

### **Meetings agenda**

- Opening of the Meeting, Welcoming Words
- Introduction of the Participants (institution/organization, description of activities, projects, responsibilities etc.)
- Information on the Implementation of the Carpathian Convention in Serbia; Presentation of the Project
- Suggestions and Recommendations of the Participants for the Article 11 of Carpathian Convention (Topics covered included : Criteria according to which the Carpathian Culture and Heritage List should proceed within each country; Key organizations to be involved; Which basic elements need to be in place to make the Carpathian List operational; What support would be helpful for local communities and how and where should this be targeted)
- Discussion

**Note :** The approach during the consultations process was similar to the meeting agenda.

The participants were informed about the history of the Carpathian Convention, the processes in Serbia and future plans in the framework of the Convention. During the meetings all the participants presented their work in general, and specified their activities in the Carpathian Region.

The suggestions and recommendations for Article 11 of Carpathian Convention has been integrated in further two documents : "Overview of the experts, local materials and knowledge on cultural heritage and its links to sustainable development in the Carpathian region in Serbia" and "Summary plan for elements important for the establishment of a Carpathian Culture and Heritage List".

The general issues stressed during the meetings with the stakeholders will be the focus of this report. It was concluded that the following actions would assure proper implementation of Carpathian Convention in Serbia:

- **Strengthening the cooperation on national level**

Most of the participants said that the present level of co-operation is unsatisfactory although some of them had already participated in projects and meetings related to the Carpathian Convention. The participants felt they did not have sufficient knowledge concerning the activities of other institutions/organizations and individuals. It would be useful to establish at least an email-list at the national level, which would serve as an information base. The co-operation also has to be specifically strengthened among the relevant Ministries in government.

- **Ensure better visibility and understanding of the Carpathian Convention**

Even though a lot of information and materials about the Carpathian Convention exist, it is not very visible at the public level. One of the problems, which has been already stressed during previous meetings with stakeholders, is the non-existence of the Carpathian Convention text in local languages. The text of the Carpathian Convention should be translated to local languages and made available to people in the region. Numerous civil society organizations have websites and they would like to participate in raising the awareness of local people and in promotion of the Convention.

- **Stimulate more joint projects in the Carpathian Region**

Involvement in projects is very stimulating for local communities. Projects on the national level and with cross-border areas (in Romania) can help to promote engagement with local people, leading to “learning by doing” and good practices exchange.

- **Encourage the participation of local authorities**

Local decision-makers have to be more involved in the process and to act as communication channels between local communities and governmental representatives.

The discussion in the meetings was dynamic, as the topic was very interesting for the participants. Some of the representatives expressed their interest to participate in events and present the traditions from Carpathian region in Serbia.

Tamara Petrovic, from the Centre for the Study of Cultural Development, who has a lot of experience in organizing presentations of the Vlach culture, with women societies from the region, stated that they would be glad to take part in future activities.

Radomir A. Krisanovic, from the NGO Ethno Eco Movement “Gorun” from Rudna Glava village was also interested in presenting the traditional knowledge from villages during future events.

The participants also stressed that numerous events which are organized in region (e.g. the Village Olympic Games in Rudna Glava, the traditional fishing competition “Bucka” etc.) should be more promoted and an invitation should be sent to all Parties of the Carpathian Convention.

The tourism organization of Majdanpek Municipality is working on promotion of local traditions. They think that the development of sustainable tourism in the region is a good approach for local development.

The Djerdap National Park, as the manager of a protected area, is willing to stimulate and participate in all actions that would lead to improved conservation and promotion of culture and heritage in area.

The Representatives of Governmental institutions (Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Environmental Protection) also expressed their support for such future processes.

The general conclusion and hope expressed after the meetings, was that the capacities for implementing Article 11 of Carpathian Convention in Serbia exist and the process should continue.

## List of Interviewed Persons and Participants in the Stakeholders Meetings

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