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Development of the Carpathians

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## STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR THE CARPATHIAN AREA



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## INTRODUCTION

Today, European analysis and debates focus on major political reforms, which should address various economic, social and environmental challenges. The European Union composed of 27 Member States, has to face increasing challenges which require appropriate political responses.

Territorial disparities can be observed all over the European Union, they belong to the most important challenges and need relevant actions, which should encourage harmonious and balanced development of the European territory, in its diversity. Thus, several analyses and papers have been dedicated to this issue, such as the *Territorial Agenda* (adopted during the German Presidency of the EU in 2005), followed by the Green Paper *Turning Territorial Diversity Into Strength* (October 2008).

These developments served as a basis for the article 174<sup>1</sup> of the Lisbon Treaty (ratified in December 2009), which recognizes the territorial dimension as a complementary part of the economic and social dimensions of development. From now on, the territorial cohesion appears as one of the fundamental objectives and needs concrete propositions.

The development of *macroregional strategies* offers a possibility of a more coordinated and coherent approach in addressing territorial realities. They appear as a part of a wider reflection on the future EU Cohesion Policy. The recently adopted *Macroregional Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region* and *Macroregional Strategy for the Danube Region* appear as very inspiring examples in this field.

According to this logic, a macroregion can be defined as a coherent geographic area, covering various countries and regions which share common features or challenges. In this sense, the Carpathian area forms a macroregion as well. **This coherency should serve as a basis for more integrated and efficient actions and better coordination of objectives and priorities, based on already existing links and cooperation.**

With reference to this the European Union Strategy for Danube Region (EUSDR) makes ample reference to the Carpathian Area offering rich environmental assets including exceptional fauna and flora, precious water resources and outstanding landscapes. The EUSDR calls for specific action in the Carpathian Area in the fields of renewable energy and biomass, tourism, water, environmental risk management such as from mining activities, and management of biodiversity and landscapes, with a view of promoting the Carpathians as an area of economic, social, and environmental progress and sustainability<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to promote its overall harmonious development, the Union shall develop and pursue its actions leading to the strengthening of its economic, social and territorial cohesion.

In particular, the Union shall aim at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favored regions.

Among the regions concerned, particular attention shall be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as the northernmost regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions.

<sup>2</sup> See ANNEX I *European Union Strategy for the Danube Region – Relevant parts for the Carpathian Area*;

## COHERENCY - COMMON REALITIES AND CHALLENGES OF THE CARPATHIAN AREA

The Carpathians are one of the largest mountain ranges in Europe, shared by seven Central and Eastern European countries: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic and Ukraine.

The total length of the Carpathians is over 1,500 km, and the width of the mountain chain varies between 12 km and 500 km. Their highest range is the Tatra group with Gerlachovský štít, at 2655 m in Slovak territory near the Polish border. The Carpathian mountains cover a territory of 190,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and are one of the most extensive mountain systems in Europe.

In the context of the Carpathian Project<sup>3</sup>, a wider area has been delineated as the "Carpathian Space". It covers also the forelands of the mountain chain and all related entities in direct connection to the mountainous area, where a large part of the services, serving the mountain population are located. In order to have a larger database for analysis and to enable the participation of regional governments with their whole administrative area in projects, the area is further delineated according to the administrative regions of the Carpathian area (NUTS2 regions in Poland and Ukraine, NUTS3 regions in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Serbia) This outlined area comprises a much larger area (470 thousand km<sup>2</sup>) than the area of the Carpathian mountains (190 thousand km<sup>2</sup>). This area is home to a population of nearly 53 million inhabitants accounting for approximately 7.6 % of the European population, and covering less than 5 % of the European territory<sup>4</sup>.

Since the 1st of January 2007, five Carpathian countries out of seven are members of the European Union. But the other two - Ukraine and Serbia - are still of key importance for the European security and development.

**The Carpathians benefit from various assets based on their exceptional natural and cultural heritage, which offer great development opportunities. This could bring more prosperity to this region and would consequently contribute to the development of the entire European territory. Their development potential can also be very relevant to accomplish main European priorities.**

**TOURISM AND LOCAL ECONOMY:** There are several places in the Carpathians having well equipped and relatively easy accessible recreation and seasonal sport facilities. The Carpathians are also rich in medicinal mineral water sources and spas. Tourism is one of the most dynamically developing branches of the economy in the Carpathians that could be developed further in a more sustainable way. Moreover, this area benefits from a great potential of traditional professions, local SMEs and sustainable industries, relevant for a diversified mountain economy and its endogenous development.

<sup>3</sup> Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians in a Transnational Framework, INTERREG IIIB CADSES Programming Period 2000-2006;

<sup>4</sup> VASICA – Visions and strategies in the Carpathian area;

**FORESTRY:** The Carpathian area is rich in forests. This is of special importance for Central Europe where a rather small share of surface area is forested (e.g. 60 % of all the forested area of Ukraine is situated in the Carpathians). This could serve as a basis for a competitive wood-processing and furniture industry. Competitiveness could be enhanced by the cooperation of enterprises in the different Carpathian countries and by coordination of their strategies. Moreover, the recreational function of forests and the attraction of Europe's largest stands of virgin forests justifies a balanced and respectful development approach.

**RIVERS AND HYDROPOWER:** The Carpathian area is rich in rivers, which are suitable for sustainable tourism and production of renewable energy, especially small hydroelectric power. Given all the services water provides, it is of central importance for the spatial planning and development in mountain areas, in particular the following sectors:

Economic and tourism development, environmental conservation, energy, and management of natural risks. As most river basins are stretching over state borders, these developments require transnational coordination.

**NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE:** The Carpathian area is rich in landscapes and sites of specific natural and cultural value, some of them are part of the UNESCO World Heritage List. Additionally, the Carpathian area belongs to these European regions where old rural architecture and different rural arts and professions have been preserved. These traditions should be promoted and could boost the local economic development. For centuries, the Carpathians has been an area of meeting and transit of Eastern, Western, Northern and Southern cultures, religions and traditions - many examples of socio-cultural variety can be found. This natural and cultural heritage of global importance deserves to be promoted as a relevant basis for regional development.

Besides common geographic and cultural realities, this area shares similar languages and a common history, very much related to the communism era and its harmful consequences. Nearly forty years of communist centrally planned economy has caused substantial damage to the Carpathian area. The system of central planning applied uniform methods and standardized planning targets without considering the specificities of the mountain areas. Serious deforestation took place in Ukraine and Romania. Collective farms were not an appropriate approach for quality agriculture and farming in less favoured areas. Serious industrialization was implemented in the Slovak Carpathians and in some parts of the Romanian Carpathians, mainly consisting of arms industries. The mountain areas could offer great opportunities for tourism, but this sector was not a priority within the socialist economy. A large part of the Carpathians is part of the border area. Crossing the borders is a difficult and time consuming activity, both from technical and administrative point of view. These types of borders were also serious obstacles to economic cooperation and integration. For centuries, the large part of the Carpathians was a peripheral and neglected border area.

As the Carpathian Mountains are situated in a political, economical, environmental and from the point of the European security important place in the middle of Europe; their situation calls for specific attention and for more efforts in valorizing their assets and dealing with their difficulties.

**A number of initiatives have already been undertaken and multiple challenges have been addressed within different European projects and have strongly encouraged cooperation in this area.**

## **COOPERATION - EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN THE CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS**

Since their accession to the EU, the Carpathian States have been participating to different European projects, which confirm their strong motivation in the field of integration and cooperation. They have been particularly proactive in cross-border and transnational projects. According to the European nomenclature, these historically centralised states have been divided into new administrative entities and have undertaken necessary and difficult adaptations.

Since 2006, the Carpathian region belonged to the CADSES (Central European, Adriatic, Danubian and Southeast European Space) programme area. By preparing the next programming period (2007-2013), the European Commission and some member states considered this space too large for trans-national cooperation and divided the CADSES area into two cooperation areas: Central Europe (including Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia), and Southeast Europe (including Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine). Thus, the Carpathian area has been divided into two parts. Despite the division of the Carpathian area into two programme spaces, there are possibilities for the implementation of comprehensive Carpathian projects and participation. Nevertheless, opportunities for cooperation in the frame of a potential *Carpathian space*, equivalent to the Alpine Space programme, would certainly be more appropriate.

The added value of the Alpine Space programme is based on its territorial approach, covering the whole Alpine area. It encourages projects specifically adapted to the mountain dimension. This makes it different and more efficient than other transnational cooperation programmes. It also encourages a better cooperation between urban and rural areas, which is also a key challenge for the Carpathian Mountain Range.

Furthermore, a larger emphasis should also be given to neighbourhood programmes, including the participation of non-member states in the Carpathian area. The participation of the neighbourhood countries, such as Ukraine, in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes should be facilitated in order to develop an integrated programme for the Carpathians.

The most complete analysis on cooperation and challenges in the Carpathian area has been provided by the ***Carpathian project – Interreg III B CADSES***.<sup>5</sup> The project experiences have shown that the most suitable cooperation in the Carpathians is the transnational cooperation. The topics, which have been analyzed, are mainly related to spatial planning, social and economic development, sustainable transport and accessibility, natural and cultural heritage, as well as natural risk prevention and mitigation.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.carpathianproject.eu](http://www.carpathianproject.eu)

According to this analysis and European guidelines, further projects and policies should be developed in the following priority areas:

- Tourism and local economy: encourage specific economic sectors and SMEs based on traditional knowledge and great tourism potential, which would benefit to mountain inhabitants by reversing depopulation and making their territory attractive by respecting their traditions and environment at the same time;
- Nature conservation and natural risks prevention: environment protection and adaptation to climate change, integrated management of protected areas, rational use of natural resources, maintenance of biodiversity;
- Agriculture and forestry: reorganization of mountain agriculture markets, promotion of mountain quality products and labelling, common forest management against illegal logging, promotion of agri-environmental practices and traditional products, implementation of forest-environmental schemes;
- Transport, accessibility, communication: finalization of the planned TENT Corridors, preservation of traditional mini-railways in forests, development of multimodal transport systems, respect of eco-corridors, development of modern communication services;
- Sustainable industry and renewable energies: implementation of technological innovations and development of existing industries (electronics), valorization of renewable energies (e.g. hydropower or biomass).

A list of different European projects in abovementioned fields should be gathered in a coherent and complete *action plan for the Carpathians*, adopted by the European Commission and constituting the main substance of a macroregional strategy. **Specific attention should be paid to the coherency and territorial impact of the proposed actions and policies, in order to preserve and develop the region's potential and specificity, while increasing its sustainability** (i.e. combine the conservation of nature with economic use of natural and cultural resources etc.)

Only this kind of approach can lead to long term sustainable development and create strong added value for the EU. Such evident problems as the territorial impacts of mass privatization, and overpopulation in large cities, mass poverty and minority problems cannot be ignored. Responsible and coherent policies can also avoid adverse impacts from land abandonment, habitat conversion and fragmentation, deforestation, climate change, large scale migration, and also from industrialization, pollution and exploitation of natural resources..

**These negative impacts can not only be overcome, but these historically "convergence regions" can become a strategic territory for the EU's priorities: contribute to smart and inclusive growth.**

**The success of such approach will depend on political coherency and on a closer dialogue and cooperation between various stakeholders.**

## COORDINATION - A RELEVANT AREA FOR AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY

One of the most important challenges is to raise awareness of European and national decision-makers to this unique European region, to its strengths and weaknesses, to its development opportunities, and to the threats of non-action in this area. It requires responsible, adapted actions and appropriate policies to support sectoral developments, taking into account the global, regional and local context and their interlinkages. Various cooperations have been developed at different levels, from the European to the local level. Presently, there are about 20 Euroregions (more than 20 % of all organisations in Europe)<sup>6</sup> and several Working Communities acting in the Carpathian area.

The *Carpathian Project* contributed strongly to the implementation of the *Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention)* by forming a strategic basis for the transnational political platform.

The Carpathian Convention provides a coherent framework for transnational cooperation, for the implementation of various activities and development of relevant projects throughout the Carpathian region. Different Working Groups of the Carpathian Convention gather ministerial experts from the Carpathian countries. Together with other common networks and initiatives involving relevant stakeholders at different levels, such as the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA)<sup>7</sup> or the Carpathian Wetland Initiative, they provide a forum for dialogue between various stakeholders.

It creates a crucial link between different territorial cooperation programme areas, supporting their implementation at the pan-Carpathian scale.

Furthermore, the ongoing cooperation of the Carpathian Convention with other relevant Conventions, such as the Alpine Convention, and organizations acting at different levels in other mountain regions facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices for the development of projects and initiatives in the Carpathian region. Therefore, further efforts to strengthen the only existing transnational Carpathian framework will be highly beneficial.

The Carpathian Project benefited from the existing transnational basis of the Carpathian Convention. It brought together the Ministries of the seven Parties (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Ukraine) and observers (Alpine countries, international organisations, national, regional and local authorities, nongovernmental organizations); coordinated by the Lead Partner, the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention<sup>8</sup>, serviced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and hosted by the Republic of Austria at the Vienna International Centre.

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<sup>6</sup> VASICA – Visions and strategies in the Carpathian Area;

<sup>7</sup> [www.carpathianparks.org](http://www.carpathianparks.org);

<sup>8</sup> [www.carpathianconvention.org](http://www.carpathianconvention.org);

In the frame of the INTERREG IIIB CADSES Carpathian Project a *Follow-up Platform* was established. It serves as a standing platform for regions, local authorities and NGOs, in order to coordinate, identify or draft possible spin-off and follow-up projects and actions (coordinated by the UNEP Vienna – Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention). In this sense, it is essential to reinforce the participation of all relevant actors, encourage their dialogue and balance the decision-making process.

The European Association of Elected Representatives from Mountain Regions (AEM) will continue to develop the cooperation between different national associations of local and regional authorities, encourage their political involvement in the Carpathians based on multilevel governance, and support the European and transnational dimension of national debates on sustainable development in mountain territories.

**Following this analysis, a common action plan should not only create an “umbrella” for all undertaken policies and projects in the Carpathian area, but also raise concrete propositions to multilevel governance principles.**

## CONCLUSION – RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to achieve sustainable development of the Carpathian area, it is recommended to undertake concrete actions in the field of:

- ***More coherent approach in implementation of policies by considering territorial specificities***
  - Share a common vision of the prosperous Carpathian area, based on the balance between economic development and environmental protection, according to the territorial cohesion objective;
  - Coordinate the implementation of sectoral policies (Agriculture and Forestry, Tourism, Transport and Communications, Environment and Energies etc.) and cross-cutting policies (Cohesion Policy, Rural Development), in order to guarantee a more balanced territorial effect;
  - Take into account specific geographic conditions that lead to additional costs and efforts and need appropriate proportional and flexible tools and means;
  - Consider and apply relevant policies throughout the Carpathians, which should be considered as a macroregion, as common challenges do not stop at borders;
  - Integrate sustainable development of mountain regions into national and regional policy making and development strategies, by involving local, regional and national authorities, private sector and civil society in their design and implementation;
  - Manage and implement various policies and programmes for mountain regions in the most decentralised manner and in full respect of the subsidiarity;
- ***Stronger territorial cooperation***
  - Encourage **cross-border, interregional and transnational cooperation projects** in the Carpathians with the participation of stakeholders from the Carpathian regions;
  - Promote priority actions listed in Annex II;
  - Use territorial cooperation as a tool to address the identified priorities;
  - Consider the establishment of a “Carpathian Space Programme” equivalent to the “Alpine Space Programme”, which has shown its efficiency in addressing mountain challenges specific for the Alps and shared by the whole area;
  - If appropriate, use of legal instrument that provides responses to management challenges related to the territorial cooperation, such as the

- European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), already in place in several regions of the Carpathian area;
- Increase and reinforce the establishment of proactive multilevel networks between political entities, such as Working communities and Euroregions, NGO representatives, Research institutes, Parks etc.
  - ***Better coordination and dialogue between relevant actors based on multilevel governance***
    - Develop multi-level governance principles and encourage the cooperation between international, national, regional and local levels of governance, as a tool of territorial cohesion;
    - Strengthen the transnational framework provided by the Carpathian Convention; develop further this carpathianwide platform for Working Groups, specific meetings and dialogue; follow up of related projects;
    - Recognize the role of local and regional authorities for the implementation of the Carpathian Convention;
    - Organise high-level meetings, including various Ministries (environment, regional development, social affairs, transports, energy etc.) in order to coordinate macroregional initiatives in the Carpathians;
    - Encourage local and regional authorities to enter into partnerships, participate in networks and develop concrete actions, in cooperation with private sector and civil society representatives.

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## ANNEX I

### EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION - Relevant parts for the Carpathian Area

The following actions and project examples included in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region are relevant for the Carpathian Area:

#### PART A: CONNECTING THE DANUBE REGION

##### Energy efficiency and renewable energy

**Action - “To reinforce the Carpathian Convention to share best practices on using biomass for energy purposes”.** The Carpathian Convention includes a provision that Parties shall pursue policies aiming at introducing environmentally sound methods for the production, distribution and use of energy, which minimises adverse effects on biodiversity and landscapes, including wider use of renewable energy sources and energy-saving measures, as appropriate.

**Example of project - “To set-up a cooperation mechanism between the regions of the Alpine Convention and the regions of the Carpathian Convention for the transfer of best practices, best available technologies, environmental and social know-how”.**

##### To promote culture and tourism , people to people contacts

###### **Presentation of the issue**

As the most international river basin in the world, the Danube features numerous touristic and heritage highlights. These include world class cities along the Danube River as well as attractive landscapes (e.g. the Delta as a UNESCO World Heritage Site). They range from the developed tourism destination of the Austrian Wachau to emerging destinations such as the Iron Gate, the Carpathians and the Delta. Measures should secure the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism sector- reinforced through cooperation- as well as regional benefit from new developments and investment.

##### To restore and maintain the quality of waters

###### **Presentation of the issue**

The Danube Basin covers an area of over 800,000 km<sup>2</sup>, stretches over 19 countries, 1441 of which are contracting parties to the Danube River Protection Convention (DRPC) signed in Sofia in 1994. Besides the Danube itself, the Basin includes other major European rivers such as the Sava, Tisza, Drava and Prut as well as smaller ones such as the Inn, Morava, Váh, Velika Morava and Siret. The drainage area of the Danube is also influenced by two major mountain chains: the Alps and the Carpathians.

**Action - “To establish the Danube Region as important European tourist destination”** by developing an environmentally-friendly tourism strategy for the whole of the region (including cities and communities, cultural heritage, nature and economy). In particular, it could be interesting to develop a Danube Region label (building on the "brand" being developed more generally) which could open up the international tourist markets (e.g. in the USA, Asia). This could also include managing tourist destinations jointly through joint marketing, joint events and internationally recognised quality certification (especially in ecological terms). It can promote international tourist projects

such as cycle and hiking trails from the Black Forest to the Black Sea. Using modern means of communication such as the Internet can help to make the Danube better known as a tourist destination and to develop it for a new clientele of tourists. The Carpathians should also be promoted as a destination with tourist infrastructure and services to be further developed.

## **PART B: PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE DANUBE REGION**

### **To manage environmental risks**

#### ***Presentation of the issue***

As the industrial accident spills (arsenic, cyanide, alkaline sludge) of 2000 in Baia Mare and Baia Borsa and of 2010 in Ajka show, severe pollution incidents are a concern. In particular, various mining activities which take place in the Carpathians present serious danger.

**Action - “Anticipate regional and local impacts of climate change through research”.** Initiatives in this research field should address specific concerns in the Danube Region. Research projects on the impacts of climate change on infrastructure, health, food security and the environment should be initiated. Furthermore, the international scientific cooperation in this field should be supported, while ensuring close coordination with overall action at EU level. A preparatory action “Climate of the Carpathian Basin” will be launched before the end of 2010. This action will contribute to regional climate variability and change studies, and applied climatology. It will also encompass an analysis of the vulnerability of water and ecosystems of the region to climate change impacts and other man-made pressures and on identifying potential adaptation measures, focusing on adaptive water management and ecosystem-based approaches. This work should be used at basin level.

### **To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils**

#### ***Presentation of the issue***

The Danube Region is one interrelated and interdependent ecosystem, incorporating a rich and unique flora and fauna. It is diverse, including not only the immediate river Danube, its tributaries, lowlands and the remarkable delta, but also the major part of the Carpathian Mountains, the Balkans and part of the Alps.

**Action - “To manage Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas effectively”.** Natura 2000 sites designated under the Birds and Habitats directives, as well as other protected sites should in principle have their own management plans or some other kind of contractual framework. But in practice, they often work in isolation and not efficiently enough. The effective management helped by transnational cooperation (networking) is necessary. The action should include exchange of experience and capacity building for protected areas/Natura 2000 sites administrations; community involvement; visitor management and tourism development; coordinated management planning, implementation and evaluation. It is also indispensable to increase public awareness about Natura 2000 sites and protected areas, with the help of e.g. the National Ecological and Rural Networks or the European Network for Rural Development. The action could be implemented e.g. through the existing Danube Network of Protected Areas and the Carpathian Networks of Protected Areas. ALPARC can serve as successful examples.

**Action - “To protect and restore most valuable ecosystems and endangered animal species”.** Enhanced protection of the remaining natural ecosystems, such as

the Danube Delta or the Carpathians, wetlands restoration, afforestation of non-arable land, protection of marginal forests, bioremediation of highly impacted areas, supported by environmental research, are desirable. This is also crucial for endangered animal species protection, such as the Danube sturgeon, brown bears, wolves, lynx and wild horses living in the Danube Delta. Research, inventory, and monitoring of species and habitats of European and national importance is an important part of this

*Example of project - “To develop the Alpine-Carpathian Corridor”* - This project aims to reconstruct and improve the function and permeability of the traditional wildlife corridor within the urban agglomeration Vienna-Bratislava for red deer, lynx, wolves or bears by means of “traverse support” and green bridges. A cross border project in cooperation between Austria and Slovakia is already in the implementation phase (Lead: Upper Austria)

*Example of project - “To implement the VASICA - Visions and Strategies in the Carpathian area”*, including the BIOREGIO Carpathians project. VASICA is the first transnational spatial development document for the entire Carpathian Space. Its main objective is to support the Carpathian Space as an area of economic, social and environmental progress and sustainability. BIOREGIO Carpathians will promote the regional development and improve the ecological connectivity in the Carpathian region. (Lead: Carpathian Convention UNEP Office).

## ANNEX II

### Updating the Carpathian Follow Up Platform<sup>9</sup>

#### “Priority actions for the Carpathian Space<sup>10</sup>, including contributions to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region”

##### - **Tourism and local economy**

*Proposed initiatives and project ideas:*

- Development of a “Strategy for the Future Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians”\*
- Carpathian Tourism Cluster Development – Enhancing European Competitiveness (“Via Carpatica”, “Greening the Carpathian Tourism Industry – Ecocertification and Marketing Scheme”)\*
- Development of projects promoting education on sustainable tourism and best practices of environmentally – friendly tourism in the Carpathians\*

##### - **Nature conservation and risk management:**

*Projects approved:*

- “Alpine-Carpathian Corridor” (Programme: Austria – Slovakia EU-Cross-border cooperation)\*
- “BIOREGIO Carpathians – Integrated management of biological and landscape diversity for sustainable regional development and ecological connectivity in the Carpathians” (Programme: South East Europe)\*
- “ClimAlpTour – Climate Change and its Impacts on Tourism in the Alpine Space” (Programme: Alpine Space )
- “CLISP – Climate Change Adaptation by Spatial Planning in the Alpine Space” (Programme: Alpine Space)
- The prevention and protection against floods in the upper Siret and Prut River Basins, through the implementation of a modern monitoring system with automatic stations-EAST AVERT (Programme: ENPI Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova, 2007-2013)

*Projects being developed:*

- “ACUTE – Adjusting protection policies for the sustainable development of exposed Alpine valley regions” (Programme: Alpine Space)
- “ALPSTAR – Carbon Neutral Alps 2050” (Programme: Alpine Space)

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<sup>9</sup> The Carpathian follow-up platform is a continuously updated list of EU co-funded projects (approved, submitted or to be developed) and initiatives that represent a follow-up of the INTERREG IIIB CADSES “Carpathian Project” and are linked to the implementation of the Carpathian Convention. This list is indicative and will be periodically updated upon suggestions of members of Carpathian Convention Working Group on Spatial Development and other Working Groups of the Carpathian Convention. Proposals to be sent to the Secretariat [unep@unvienna.org](mailto:unep@unvienna.org).

<sup>10</sup> Congress of Regional and Local Authorities, Recommendation 296 (2010) – See Annex III

- “C3-Alps – Capitalizing Climate Change Knowledge for Adaptation in the Alpine Space” (Programme: Alpine Space)

*Proposed initiatives and project ideas:*

- Develop projects and initiatives aimed at preventing environmental risks resulting from mining activities in the Carpathian Area\*
- Promote territorial cooperation projects on climate change impacts and vulnerability in the Carpathians under the specific Calls launched by the European Union\*
- Strengthen the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas as a platform for the development of projects in the field of biodiversity and nature protection in the Carpathians and as an important tool to facilitate the management of NATURA 2000 sites in the Area\*
- Promote projects aimed at strengthening the cooperation between the Alpine and Carpathian regions on the basis of the model of the Alpine – Carpathian corridor project\*
- Develop follow-up projects of “BIOREGIO Carpathians” project, aimed for example at establishing an ecological networks in the Carpathians\*

- **Agriculture and forestry:**

*Proposed initiatives and project ideas:*

- Promote projects aimed at establishing an inventory of Carpathian virgin forests and at ensuring their protection
- Biomass use in sensitive areas
- Promote the establishment of a label for Carpathian quality agricultural products
- Research for sustainable forest management in the Carpathians

- **Transport, accessibility, communication**

*Projects approved:*

- “ACCESS2MOUNTAIN - Sustainable Mobility and Tourism in Sensitive Areas of the Alps and the Carpathians” (Programme: South East Europe)

*Proposed initiatives and project ideas:*

- Promote projects aimed at transferring transport of goods from road to rail in the Carpathian Area
- Green infrastructure in the Carpathians

- **Sustainable industry and sustainable renewable energies**

*Proposed initiatives and project ideas:*

- Establish a permanent platform among the Alpine and Carpathian Regions for the transfer of best practices, best available technologies,

environmental and social know-how in the field of renewable energy and energy efficiency on the basis of the model of the existing platforms established in different sectors within the Alpine and Carpathian Convention\*

- Establish a partnership among research institutes in the Carpathians to facilitate the development of projects in the field of renewable energy in the Area\*
  - Alpine-Carpathian biomass partnership
  - “Greening” the ski industry – sharing best practices
- **Social identity, security, governance, capacity building**
- Facilitation of crossing borders among Carpathian Countries

*Activities marked with a “ \* “ concern developed/proposed initiatives and project ideas according to the priority actions and areas of intervention relevant for the Carpathian Area indicated by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region;*

## ANNEX III

### **The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities 19<sup>th</sup> SESSION**

26-28 October 2010

### **Sustainable development of mountain regions and the experience of the Carpathian Mountains**

Recommendation 296 (2010)<sup>1</sup>

1. The importance of mountain areas in the European landscape is often undervalued. They are important homes of natural and cultural heritage and they also provide crucial ecosystem services for the entire population. Their economic development is a priority that requires actions compatible with the protection and respect for the environment.
2. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe reiterates its commitment to an integrated and specific approach to the development of mountain regions which are facing particular structural challenges, notably in environment, transport and socio-economic development. It reaffirms the principles contained in the draft European charter for mountains<sup>2</sup>.
3. It also recalls that regional authorities should be mobilised into undertaking an active role in the management of the mountain massif. An integrated sustainable development strategy is required to conserve these regions' natural resources in the face of such problems as pollution, unplanned development and the unsustainable use of natural resources.
4. Strategies for the development of mountains need to have social cohesion at their heart to meet the challenges posed, in particular, by high unemployment, depopulation and population aging. Respecting and preserving the cultural heritage and linguistic diversity of mountain populations also needs to be taken into consideration.
5. A perspective of territorial cohesion needs to be brought to these integrated policies with a need to renew multi-level governance and to reinforce cooperation between different levels of governance, international, national, regional and local. Territorial cohesion will be strengthened through cooperation and solidarity links between towns, peri-urban zones and rural areas in mountain regions.
6. Furthermore, as almost all Europe's mountain regions have transnational boundaries, these policies should take into account the entire massif and should be implemented at macro regional and international levels
7. The Carpathian mountain range covers seven countries,<sup>3</sup> it is home to 16 million people and possesses exceptional natural and cultural wealth. This region faces particular environmental and socio-economic challenges which are exacerbated by the isolation of the region. Indeed, some parts of the mountain range are border areas which are poorly connected to urban centres in the lowlands. The total population and area are comparable to other European mountain regions and the position of the region is strategic within the European continent. Therefore, the Carpathians should receive much more attention and appropriate support from the European Union.

8. The Congress congratulates the signatory member states of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention) for the work already achieved and the steps that have already been taken towards the conservation and sustainable development of the mountain range, through initiatives such as the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA).
9. Nevertheless, the Congress is convinced of the important role that local and regional authorities have to play in the implementation of the Carpathian Convention. It calls, in respect of the principle of subsidiarity and of multi-level governance, for their better integration from the very definition of projects.
10. The Congress fully supports the call of the Ministerial Declaration<sup>4</sup> for the creation of a stand-alone 'Carpathian Space' in the programme of the European Territorial Cooperation Programme, such as exists for the 'Alpine Space', to support the general objectives of the Carpathian Convention and of other stakeholders engaged in the region. Indeed, the 'Alpine Space Programme' has given rise to many projects, networks and tools on territorial spatial development and economic development for the Alpine regions. This experience and knowledge could be of direct benefit to the Carpathians.
11. The Congress welcomes the consultation process currently underway for a European Union strategy for the Danube Region and believes that a chapter of the strategy should be devoted to the Carpathian Region. Local and regional authorities should be mobilised to take an active role in the implementation of this strategy bringing it to the level closest to the citizens.
12. *Consequently, the Congress recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe ask member states, in particular, member states from the Carpathian region:*
  - a. to integrate sustainable development in mountain regions into national and regional policy-making and development strategies through mountain-specific policies and involving local and regional authorities in their design and implementation;
  - b. to recognise that for mountain-specific policies to be effective they have to be applied throughout the massif and in a transversal manner; high-level meetings, involving various ministers (environment, social cohesion, regional planning, energy for example), as well as local and regional authorities and civil society should be organised to coordinate macro regional actions in the massif;
  - c. to ensure that the management and implementation of special policies and programmes for mountain regions are carried out in the most decentralised manner possible and to ensure that the powers and financial resources of local and regional authorities are strengthened in order to promote these policies;
  - d. to sign and ratify Protocol No. 3 to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities concerning Euroregional Co-operation Groupings (CETS No. 206) in order to actively encourage transfrontier cooperation and to enable local and regional authorities to enter into agreements and develop concrete actions;<sup>5</sup>

- e. to improve the sustainable development and management of mountain regions through appropriate policies which respect the “polluter pays” principle and promote the use of renewable energy, the creation of sustainable tourism and sustainable forest management.
13. *The Congress also urges the member States signatory to the Carpathian Convention to increase the participation of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the Convention.*
14. *The Congress furthermore invites the European Union:*
- a. to pay particular attention to the challenges faced by the Carpathians in the forthcoming Danube Strategy and ensure the involvement of local and regional authorities and their communities;
  - b. to create a ‘Carpathian Space’ in the European Territorial Cooperation Programme to support the objectives and implementation of the Carpathian Convention throughout the entire massif including in countries that are not members of the European Union.

<sup>1</sup> Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 26 October 2010 and adopted by the Congress on 28 October 2010, 3<sup>rd</sup> sitting (see Document [CPR\(19\)2](#), explanatory memorandum) Rapporteur: M. Kichkovskyy, Ukraine (R, EPP/CD).

<sup>2</sup> Recommendation 130 (2003) on the European Charter for Mountains.

<sup>3</sup> Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic and Ukraine.

<sup>4</sup> Ministerial Declaration from the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (17-19 June 2008, Bucharest, Romania).

<sup>5</sup> Recommendation [Rec\(2005\)2](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on good practices in and reducing obstacles to transfrontier and inter-territorial cooperation between territorial communities or authorities.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

EU - European Union

EUSDR - European Union Strategy for Danube Region

CADSES - Central European, Adriatic, Danubian and Southeast European Space

SME – Small and Medium Enterprises

TENT – Trans - European Network for Transport

CNPA - Carpathian Network of Protected Areas

UNEP - United Nations Environment Programme

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

AEM - Elected Representatives from Mountain Regions

EGTC - European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation

VASICA - Visions and Strategies in the Carpathian Area

EURAC – European Academy of Bolzano

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

DRPC - Danube River Protection Convention

ENPI – European Neighbourhood Policy