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**Third Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Agriculture  
and Rural Development (SARD) 20 – 22 April 2015  
Stara Planina, Serbia**

**REPORT**

The Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, in cooperation with the European Academy of Bolzano (EURAC), with the kind support and hospitality of Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection of Serbia, organized the third Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD), held on 20th – 22nd April 2015 in Stara Planina, Serbia.

**Background information**

During the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP4), the Countries reiterated the call for the possible development of a Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development by the related CC Working Group. With this aim, they requested the Secretariat to coordinate the preparation of a “background analysis and documentation that will substantiate a decision on the need to conclude a Protocol” (DECISION COP4/4 para. 5).

With the financial support of the UNEP Trans-boundary Institutional Mechanisms (TIM) project, the Secretariat started the process to implement DECISION COP4/4 para.5 with the preparation of the above mentioned background analysis and documentation. In this regards, seen the previous cooperation with EURAC on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development issues, the common development of the "Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions (SARD-M) synthesis report" in 2008 and EURAC expertise in the field, EURAC supported the Secretariat to achieve this task.

**Opening remarks, election of the chair, adoption of the Agenda**

Mr. Harald Egerer, Head of the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, opened the meeting welcoming the participants together with Mr. Dragan Mirkovic, Minister Assistant, and Mr. Slobodan Erdeljan, Minister Assistant, the Ministry Agriculture and Environment Protection of Serbia.

After the common agreed election of the Chair of the meeting, Mr. Dragan Mirkovic, and the adoption of the agenda, an introduction round of the meeting participants was held.

Mr. Egerer presented the meeting objectives and underlined the importance of having a very open discussion in order to collect ideas on the common problems and needs of the Carpathians, which can be addressed through cooperation among the Countries.



The WG SARD emphasized that a possible Protocol:

- needs to be based on Article 7 of the Convention
- should be in line with the EU acquis and the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) but also support EU accession and association
- should be thematically and territorially flexible and focused on exchange of information and good practices.

## **EURAC Presentation**

Ms. Eleonora Musco presented the background analysis and documentation to substantiate a decision on the need to conclude the SARD Protocol, developed by with the EURAC Institute for Regional Development and Location Management in cooperation with the Secretariat.

WG SARD expressed its appreciation to the European Academy (EURAC) for preparing and presenting the background analysis and expressed some comments:

-Hungary suggested to include the structural lack of entrepreneurship in Carpathians as a further point of the SWOT analysis. Hungary stressed the need to update data used in the background analysis.

- Poland informed that statistical data on Polish agriculture are out of date and should be updated according to Polish official statistical data. There is no need to develop national agriculture strategy for Polish part of the Carpathians.

-Romania informed about the Strategy on Mountain Areas, including agriculture aspects, which has been in force for three years. However, there are some difficulties to introduce it effectively.

-FAO mentioned that in Hungary since 2001 the Rural Development Programme has been implemented, which should be reflected in the study.

The WG appreciated the inputs by Observers. The WG SARD also emphasized the possibility of linking the work under the Carpathian Convention with the regional cooperation of mountain areas in South East Europe (Balkans).

It was agreed by the meeting participants that the focus should be on development of the Protocol, however the study needs to be updated. The Parties shall submit their comments and updates to the Secretariat respecting the time plane indicated further below.

The WG SARD recommended the following draft structure for a SARD Protocol to the Carpathian Convention:

### Preambula

- Importance of agriculture and rural development for the Carpathian region in terms of economy, social aspects, environment and cultural heritage;



- Promotion of measures and programs which reduce rural poverty and provide and diversify incomes to local population;
- Sustainable development should be based on local resources;
- Aspects of sustainable development include SDGs etc.;
- Recognition of many threats coming from impacts of global changes
- Major objective should be the viability of rural region and improvement of quality of life (to keep people in the area)
- Recognition of the big diversity among and within the Countries of agriculture practices;
- Recognition of the role of agriculture on prevention of erosion and land degradation and contribution to risk management.

### Chapter I – General Obligations

- Integrated approach to land resource management- implementing appropriate tools such as rural development strategies;
- Management of land traditionally cultivated in a sustainable manner;
- Designation and implementation of inclusive agricultural and rural development policies taking into account specific conditions of mountains as less favored areas;
- Protection of mountain ecosystems and landscapes and importance of biodiversity.

### Chapter II –Geographical Scope and Definitions

Defining the mountain areas and national extension (repeating Convention text).

### Chapter III – Specific Measures

- Promotion of extensive and organic farming in particular through crucially important agri-environmental programs in the Carpathians;
- Enhancing integration of environmental concerns into agricultural policies and local development plans (land management plans);
- Consideration of the high ecological importance of Carpathian mountain ecosystems;
- Promotion of ecological networks, landscapes and traditional land-use;
- Preservation of natural and semi-natural habitats including grasslands e.g. through traditional pastoralism;
- Linking agriculture and tourism (local products, agro-tourism);
- Conservation of agro-biodiversity and genetic resources including local breeds of domestic animals and cultivated plant varieties;
- Promotion of traditional farming practices and traditional knowledge;
- Promotion and maintenance of traditional rural architecture, infrastructure and rural arts and crafts;
- Product processing and marketing, Carpathian label(s), e.g. marketing strategies for traditional quality food, promote denomination of geographic origin in the Carpathians
- Environmentally sound agricultural measures assuring appropriate retention of precipitation in the mountains with a view to better prevent flooding;
- Role of agriculture on flood prevention and pollution reduction;
- Promotion of sustainable rural innovation;
- Fostering entrepreneurship within rural societies;



- Local renewable energy resources;
- Adaptation to climate change;
- Promotion of formal and informal education including intergenerational learning;
- Access to local public services.

#### Chapter IV – Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

- Implementation and national coordination, institutional setting
- International cooperation
- Stakeholder participation
- Education, information and public awareness
- Monitoring

#### Chapter V – Final Provisions

(to be further developed)

The WG SARD agreed also a time plan. As follows, in order to successfully develop the Carpathian Convention Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development:

- Circulation of the EURAC study and the above draft protocol structure **after the Third WG SARD meeting**
- Deadline for inputs to the EURAC study by **21<sup>st</sup> May 2015**
- Deadline for inputs to the above draft protocol structure by **12<sup>th</sup> June 2015**
- Circulation of the first draft of protocol by **September 2015**
- Fourth WG SARD meeting in the **second half of the year**
- Fifth WG SARD meeting at the **beginning of 2016**
- Pre-final draft of the protocol for internal consultation by **May 2016**
- Final draft officially circulated for COP approval by **September 2016**

#### **Closure of the meeting**

Mr. Egerer summarized the main outcomes of the meeting and made the concluding remarks. Mr. Dragan Mirkovic and Mr. Egerer thanked the participants for their contribution to the Working Group meeting discussion and welcomed further cooperation in the field.