

EEA/Carpathian Convention Cooperation

Meeting of 24th September 2012 at EEA

Provisional minutes

Participants:

- EEA: Branislav Olah, Stefan Jensen, Milan Chrenko, Stéphane Isoard, Silvia Giuliotti, Nihat Zal
- Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention c/o UNEP Vienna: Harald Egerer, Giacomo Luciani
- Science for Carpathians: Astrid Bjoernsen, Lubos Halada

Point 1, Welcome

At the invitation of the European Environment Agency (EEA), EURAC, S4C and UNEP Vienna - ISCC met EEA to discuss possibilities to enhance network-enabled knowledge management in support of the Carpathian Convention information system, and related cooperation between the EEA, the Carpathian Convention (CC) and S4C.

EEA welcomed the participants and presentations were given by each participant in order to better focus its background and contribute to the on-going cooperation.

Point 2, introduction to EEA/Alpine and EEA/Pyrenees partnerships

With regard to the EEA/Pyrenees partnership, participants were informed by EEA of the activities carried out so far. The EEA has been collaborating since more than one year with the Pyrenees Working Community (CTP) on the basis of a Partnership Agreement (PA). The main objective such agreement is focused on is to build on existing scientific and technical knowledge regarding climate change and to provide concrete solutions that can limit the impact of this phenomenon, while improving public awareness on it. According to this agreement both partners, EEA and CTP, are cooperating in three main areas:

- Adaptation
- Structuring information
- Expert reports and management.

In such a context a significant role is played by the Pyrenees Climate Change Observatory, which was established as a permanent platform for monitoring and exchange of scientific information and knowledge among stakeholders within the CTP area.

With regard to the EEA/Alpine Convention partnership, EEA informed the participants on the on-going activities. These are basically referred to the contents of a PA signed between the EEA and the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention (PSAC), which includes also a work plan for the years 2012-2013 as an attachment. The PA represents the legal framework in order to exploit and create synergies in light of the similar tasks and means to accomplish the respective missions in the geographical area of the Alps, concerning environmental observation and information and their interoperability, especially at a European level.

The implementation of this PA will rely on cooperation and mutual contributions meant to improve the quality of the work of both EEA and PSAC. In terms of cooperation aims, both institutions are expected to cooperate with regard to regular sharing of information and experiences, data flow and development of relevant indicators, and input to different activities according to the relevance of the topic addressed. For the next year all this will concern, in particular, the drafting of a further chapter of the report on the state of the Alps and monitoring of the Climate Action Plan of the Alpine Convention, as well as issues on natural risk assessment and management, soil protection, also with regard to river basins. Comparable to the ongoing fruitful cooperation of EEA with the Alpine and Pyrenees regions, also the Carpathians are seen by the EEA as a natural “mountain reference area” of European relevance.

Point 3, Carpathians Convention Activities

The Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention informed the participants of the activities carried out so far.

Biodiversity, forests, tourism, sustainable transport and a strategic approach to climate change represent issues of main interest for the Carpathian Convention, whose next Conference of the Parties will take place in 2014.

Being the Carpathian one a framework Convention, the Parties adopted a Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity (Biodiversity Protocol) and signed the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism (Tourism Protocol) and Sustainable Forest Management (Forest Protocol). With regard to this latter activities related to the development of an inventory of virgin forests in the Carpathian area as well as multifunctional forestry management has been initiated.

Efforts are also being put by the Contracting Parties for the development and negotiation of a Protocol on Sustainable Transport, as well as for a joint Carpathian Information System.

Concerning environmental information, several publications were issued under the patronage of the Carpathian Convention such the Carpathian Environment Outlook (2007) and the Atlas of the Carpathian macro region.

Efforts were also put in developing a comprehensive analysis of the Carpathian Region (VASICA) and the research agenda for the Carpathians, as well as for the development of the European Transnational Cooperation Programme South East Europe BIOREGIO Carpathians project on integrated management of biological and landscape diversity for sustainable regional development and ecological connectivity in the Carpathians.

The cooperation with the Carpathian Convention will probably follow a similar model as the cooperation between EEA and both Alpine and Pyrenees Conventions targeting priority fields/issues identified; such as the priority areas biodiversity, forests, water, climate change, tourism, transport. Possible areas of cooperation include:

- data flow between EEA and Carpathian Convention, for instance inclusion of Carpathians into EEA reports etc.
- Indicators (harmonized with other mountain regions)
- Cooperation with EIONET Focal points (e.g. possible submission of draft Carpathian Convention Protocols or other CC related documents to sectoral EIONET subgroups for comments and inputs)
- Long term idea of a European mountain network
- Support by EEA topic centers e.g. in the field of BD reporting (reporting template etc) and / or Green Infrastructure in the Carpathians

Much of the discussion evolved around taking indicators as a joint basis for collaboration. For this purpose, indicators should be developed, possibly using the experience from the indicator mapping in the Alps.

Point 4, Science for Carpathians' activities (S4C)

The representatives of the S4C presented the network of scientific stakeholders that have been contributing on a voluntary basis for 6 years to the enhancement of the environmental research and information on the Carpathian Mountains area.

According to the 'Research Agenda for the Carpathians' (2011), the priority topics for the Carpathians are Climate Change; Chemical Environment; Water; Natural Hazards; LUCC; Forests; Biodiversity; Ecosystem services; Integrated land resource management; Urban and rural development; Tourism; and Traditional Knowledge. Currently, S4C supports the ISCC in the development of the Carpathian Convention protocols on sustainable transport and agriculture.

Apart from the organization of the Forum Carpaticum every two years, members of the S4C community launched in the meanwhile a cooperation project on "land cover changes in the Carpathian area" has been initiated in collaboration with the NASA and the University of Wisconsin.

Currently the various S4C members is also being involved in the preparation of two further projects, within the context of the 7 Framework Programme Environment, that concern landscape observation and a strategy on Danube region.

Point 5, discussion on possible further cooperation

The point addressed how to organize the future cooperation between EEA and the Carpathian Convention – including major stakeholders, as S4C- both with regard to contents and legal terms.

Concerning contents, on its side, the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention confirmed that a technical support by the EEA on managing the issue of biodiversity and other cross-cutting environmental themes, in terms of periodical reports, would be largely appreciated by the Contracting Parties, also in the forms of sharing the experience of the EEA in achieving regular

environmental reporting. The possible support of EEA in the development of specific indicators for the Carpathian Area was also discussed.

As far as a possible contribution of the EEA is concerned, a first point of cooperation could be set on the development of the inventory on forests taking into consideration the availability of a high resolution layer for forest coverage. Furthermore the EEA would consider the possibility of including a specific chapter on Carpathian mountain issues into the mountain section of the next SOER 2015.

The EEA encouraged the S4C representatives to pay particular attention to the development of indicator sets by organizing, for instance, joint workshops.

In this regard EEA can facilitate contacts between the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention and EIONET Focal Points and European Topic Centres (ETC) competent for the identified areas of cooperation.

Concerning formal and legal arrangements, as a starting point, both the EEA and the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention agree on referring to the model of cooperation that the EEA adopted towards the Alpine Convention, trying to adapt the text of the PA to the specificities of this new cooperation between the EEA and Carpathian Convention.

Both the EEA and the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention could then try to also draft a sort of biennial working plan as an addendum to the possible PA. The green infrastructure has been identified as possible priority area of cooperation to be included in the PA and in the subsequent biennial working plan.

All the participants agreed on the following:

1. The EEA will circulate the minutes and the model of the PA in order to receive feedback and inputs from the Carpathian side and react as well within a month, starting from the 24th September 2012.
2. To clarify whether to sign the PA / Memorandum of cooperation with Carpathian Convention (as a programmatic or political document of cooperation) or with UNEP (in the case of a legal or financial agreement).
3. The role of S4C would also need to be taken into account. S4C Steering Group members will be contacted to comment the draft agreement between EEA and ISCC once a draft is ready (October).

Written by Silvia Giuliatti, Copenhagen, Oct 1 2012