



CNPA STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

30 June 2022, 9:30 – 10:45, ONLINE MEETING

Minutes

Participants: Mircea Verghelet (Romania), Jan Kadlecik (Slovakia), Martin Strnad (Czech Republic), Przemek Wasiak (Poland), Hryhorii Parchuk (Ukraine), Ivan Svetozarevic (Serbia), Andera Kurta, Csontos Šimoňáková Zlatica,

Carpathian Convention: Harald Egerer, Klaudia Kuras, Eleonora Musco, Uta Fritsch

Eurac Research: Isidoro De Bortoli

1. Opening of the meeting

Harald Egerer, the Head of the UNEP Vienna Programme Office – Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, opened the meeting and handed over to the Chair of the CNPA Steering Committee, Mircea Verghelet. The representative from the Ukraine made a statement on the difficult situation in Ukraine due to the ongoing war. Many collaborators of the protected areas were mobilized, particularly the employees of the ranger services, into the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Hundreds of thousands of refugees from the war-torn regions are presently sheltered in the west of Ukraine, where the protected areas provide them with accommodation and all possible support.

2. Presentation of the results of the CNPA Questionnaire 2022

Klaudia Kuras, UNEP Vienna Programme Office – Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, thanked the CNPA SC Members for supporting the engagement and responses from the Carpathian protected areas to the questionnaire. With around 80 responses received, the questionnaire exercise proved a great interest in cooperation within the Network, including a large support of the protected areas of the Carpathians for establishing the CNPA association.

From the results presented, it is clearly understood that CNPA activities in the future should focus on further facilitating communication among the CNPA Members, facilitating exchange of knowledge and promoting best practices within CNPA and with other networks/partners, establishing, co-ordinating and facilitating thematic working groups, organizing trainings, as well as project development and implementation. Regarding the main topics for CNPA thematic cooperation, the results showed great interest of the CNPA

Members in ecological connectivity and wildlife conservation, ecosystem restoration, sustainable forest management and environmental education. Regarding the idea of the CNPA association, almost 90% of responders were in favour of establishing one, however some legal and financial constraints might occur.

Full results of the CNPA Questionnaire 2022 are available in the annex 1.

3. Exchange of views on the questionnaire results, particularly on the establishing of an CNPA association
4. Discussion on the legal situation in the countries/protected areas in respect to joining an CNPA association – need for analysis
5. Discussion on the legal situation in the countries for establishing an association – need for analysis (*all 3 issues were discussed together*)

Based on the results of the questionnaire and the number of participating CNPA Members, the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention underlined the showed interest of the Carpathian protected areas in cooperation within the CNPA, including the massive interest establishing an CNPA association. In this light, the Secretariat offered its assistance in undertaking relevant analysis needed for further considerations of the CNPA association. Since the association shall be built by CNPA Members, the participants were asked to provide their view on the idea of the association and the legal and financial conditions and possibilities in their countries:

Romania

There is already an existing association for all protected areas in the whole territory of Romania. It is functioning having voluntary staff, annual meetings, and small projects. It is useful for lobbying. For a CNPA association two options should be considered: 1) create a new association or 2) modify the statute of the Romanian association to accept PAs from other Carpathian countries.

It will be strategically important to register the association in a country that has access to relevant EU funding programmes (Interreg Central Europe, Danube Region Programmes) like Hungary, Slovakia or the Czech Republic.

Slovakia

Since April this year the administration of protected areas in Slovakia changed, currently the national parks are legal subjects under the Ministry of Environment (new department for national parks), and are separated from the State Nature Conservancy. The results of the questionnaire will be sent to the MoE department dealing with the national parks, asking for closer look and its results and closer cooperation within the CNPA. Concerning

participation of Protected Landscape Areas, which are still under State Nature Conservancy, as some of them are not legal subjects there might be problems in joining the association as individual members. In this respect, a collective membership which would allow for participation of PLA and other PAs administrations under nature conservation agencies in the association, should be considered. An example for membership of the SNC SR in the EUROPARC Federation could be considered.

Czech Republic

Similar situations like in Slovakia: all protected landscape areas are under one roof of the Nature Conservation Agency that is under the Ministry of Environment. The Czech Republic has only 3 protected landscape areas within the scope of the Carpathian Convention and all are positive to join an association. However, as in the case of Slovakia, the collective membership would be preferred. From a legal point of view, it should be ok to join the CNPA association. Although the fees for the association is now under governmental approval, a small fee should not be problematic.

Poland

In terms of becoming a member it is similar in Poland like in Czech Republic and Slovakia, all protected areas in the country are managed by one director. The decision of an association has to be made on the level of the Ministry. They would need a very precise description of the association, its members and purposes. The national parks from Poland do have a legal personality. This is important for the condition for becoming a member, but the approval of the ministry is needed. It would be much easier if some protected areas could join together.

Ukraine

Ukraine supports the idea of establishing the CNPA association. It should be possible to pay some limited fees. The Ukraine suggests a similar implementation like the "Primary beach forest" contract. Therefore, different ways of participation would be possible. Ukraine underlined is great interest in the CNPA association.

Harald Egerer summarized the overall positive attitude towards establishing an association. There will be the need for a common coordination (half-time or full-time position) that could be financed by the fees. He suggested that the Secretariat can support the process with a help of intern who will be checking the situation country by country in terms of legal aspects of joining the association and establishing the association. This analysis shall be done in close cooperation with the CNPA SC Members. The members of the CNPA SC agreed

on this suggestion. Austria should also be included to the comparative analysis for establishing the association. The analysis includes:

1. What is the legal situation in each country for joining the CNPA association?
2. What is the legal situation in each country for establishing an association? What is available, what is the cost? What are the requirements?
3. Analysis of statutes from existing networks of protected areas
4. What funding programs exist (resource mobilization analysis) and who are the potential project partners?

It was agreed that once the analysis is ready, the CNPA SC Member should meet again.

6. Updates on the dissemination of the Centralparks results

The Carpathian Convention has established a Facebook page (please join and distribute: <https://www.facebook.com/CarpathianConvention>) where the results from the Centralparks project are still disseminated. Slovakia reported on the national stakeholders meeting where, among other topics, information about the Centralparks project were shared, specifically the Carpathian Tool Kit for Ecosystem Services.

7. Any other updates from the CNPA SC Members

- A new CNPA website is being established and will be available for a first review by the CNPA SC soon.
- On 1. June 2022 a memorandum between Poland (Ministry of Climate and Environment) and Ukraine (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources) in the field of nature protection was signed.
- In autumn 2022, Poland will host the Carpathian Convention Ministerial Conference with the main focus on biodiversity and the crisis in Ukraine.
- There is a UNEP representative located in Kiev dealing with the environmental assessment of the war. The Secretariat will connect this person with the representatives of the Ukrainian CNPA and Carpathian Convention Focal Point for collaboration and exchange.
- Contact the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention if you are planning to apply for project funding related to protected areas.

8. Next steps

- The CNPA Steering Committee decided to work further on the idea of establishing an association protected areas in the Carpathians

- The Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, in cooperation with the CNPA SC, will prepare an analysis of the legal situation in the different countries for joining the association, an analysis of establishing an association in each Carpathian country, collecting and analysis of statutes of other networks of protected network, and an analysis of possible partners and funding programs for establishing an association. Eurac Research is one of the possible partners for that.
- The dissemination of the Centralparks project will continue.
- Next meeting of the CNPA SC should be scheduled for October/November 2022 in order to discuss the results of the undertaken analysis.

9. Closing of the meeting