

Long-term Vision 2030 towards combating climate change in the Carpathians

Carpathian Convention Working Group on Climate Change

Introduction

A mountain range such as the Carpathians encompasses transboundary ecosystems, which play a critical role for providing essential goods and services, including water supply, biodiversity, leisure and landscape, and are important income sources for communities through agriculture, tourism, health and the use of natural resources. Agricultural and forest ecosystem services also provide a crucial component for carbon sequestration which stresses the importance of sustainable practices for protection and management towards their essential contribution for climate regulation. While climate change and variability in mountain systems have had impacts on lowland communities throughout human history, the needs and ability to track and manage these impacts has majorly emerged in recent decades.

The transboundary dimension of climate change and its corresponding risks need to be better understood to ensure effective collaboration towards achieving global goals on climate change (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement) and disaster risk reduction (Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction) as well as the Sustainable Development Goals. Climate impacts in one country can create risks and opportunities – and therefore may require adaptation – in other countries, due to cross-border connectivity within regions and globally.

As mountains are particularly vulnerable to climate change, protecting important sites for mountain biodiversity is vital for ensuring long term and sustainable use of mountain natural resources and their services especially in the Carpathians with their large number of protected ecosystems and species.

In order to steer progress towards building resilience and supporting collaborative action on climate change in the Carpathians, a structured approach for setting priorities, defining strategic goals and finding solutions in response to accelerating tendencies of climate risks and impacts is needed.

Carpathian Convention and its Article 12bis on Climate Change

The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention) was adopted and signed by the seven Parties (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Ukraine) in May 2003 in Kyiv, Ukraine, and entered into force in January 2006.

The Carpathian Convention unites seven Carpathian countries in a unique partnership, providing a transnational framework for cooperation and multisectoral policy integration, an open forum for participation by stakeholders and the public, and a platform for developing and implementing transnational strategies, programmes and projects for protection and sustainable development of the region.

Thematic intergovernmental Working Groups are subsidiary bodies of the Carpathian Convention, involving experts and representatives of Ministries concerned, from all seven Parties to the Convention, which are established in order to assist and support implementation of the Carpathian Convention providing technical assistance, information and advice on specific issues related to the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians.

Eight thematic Working Groups currently support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention:

- Working Group on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity
- Working Group on Spatial Development
- Working Group on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD)
- Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management
- Working Group on Sustainable Industry, Energy, Transport and Infrastructure
- Working Group on Sustainable Tourism
- Working Group on Cultural Heritage and Traditional Knowledge
- Working Group on Climate Change

The Conference of Parties to the Carpathian Convention, at its Fifth meeting (COP5 - Lillafüred, Hungary, 10-12 October 2017) adopted an amendment to the Carpathian Convention, the **new Article 12bis on Climate Change** in order to emphasize the importance of the climate change issues in the Region. Most of the Parties are currently undergoing the ratification process of this amendment.

Article 12bis on Climate Change addresses both climate change mitigation and adaptation. It requests Parties to pursue policies aiming at climate change mitigation in all sectors relevant to the Convention as well as policies aiming at climate change adaptation. For adaptation, it highlights in lit.b that Parties to the Convention shall, inter alia, promote transnational cooperation and, and foster local adaptation planning processes and the implementation of actions, especially in the most vulnerable areas and sectors. Article 12bis also addresses disaster risk reduction by particularly promoting to take integrated measures for risk reduction, especially of extreme weather events.

Vision towards achieving climate-neutral and climate resilient development in the Carpathians

The Carpathian Convention's vision for combating climate change is to strengthen collaborative efforts towards a climate-neutral path that delivers climate-resilient and sustainable development in the Carpathians

The vision entails to accelerate joint efforts for steering the Carpathian region onto a sustainable and climate-proofed path. Ultimately it aims to establish effective and joint responses to adverse consequences of climate change, both through mitigation and adaptation, towards supporting Carpathian mountain communities to conserve, restore and sustainably manage the key ecosystem goods and services on which their region's economy depends. It seeks to develop and implement integrated approaches that address multiple goals for sustainable development simultaneously and take due account of climate change risks and opportunities. In this holistic perspective, the vision promotes mainstreaming of climate change considerations throughout the relevant Carpathian Convention's operations and workstreams addressing interlinked environmental and socio-economic opportunities and constraints at the same time.

Climate action and sustainable development are inextricably linked and reciprocal: taking due account of current and future climate risks through effective mitigation and adaptation measures will deliver more resilient development outcomes; vice versa securing sustainable development is inevitably dependent on the making of choices for climate action. Therefore, the vision seeks to secure a balance between climate action, environmental protection while promoting socio-economic prosperity of the Carpathian region.

The vision foresees to support national efforts towards achieving global goals on climate change (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement), disaster risk reduction (Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction) as well as the Sustainable Development Goals by complementary transboundary cooperation activities in the Carpathians. Further exchange and collaboration with other mountain regions of the world shall be actively promoted to increase international awareness regarding the particular vulnerability of mountain areas and the urgent need for appropriate climate action.

Strategic Objectives and related Targets

Collaborative efforts shall be strengthened and closely aligned with the implementation of the Article 12bis on Climate Change of the Carpathian Convention in order to achieve **the following Strategic Objectives:**

Objectives:

- (1) Climate Action in **mountain areas** is given **higher attention** through **targeted outreach** and by **fostering collaboration with other mountain and neighboring regions**;
- (2) Regional cooperation and interaction among the Parties of the Carpathian Convention are strengthened through **identifying common priority actions** and **harmonizing them with ongoing regional and national efforts** on climate change in the Carpathians;
- (3) Possible **areas for transnational climate action in the Carpathians** are identified with concrete options for climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- (4) **Interlinkages between climate issues and other relevant areas of work** of the Carpathian Convention are taken into account;
- (5) **Climate research** on both qualitative and quantitative levels is **promoted**, including fostering the application of its results;
- (6) **Science-policy - practice interfaces and innovative approaches** are further explored and promoted;
- (7) Joint efforts are taken on **identifying funding opportunities** and drawing the attention of donors towards the benefits of greater regional cooperation.

In the following **concrete Targets** are highlighted to achieve the above listed Strategic Objectives:

Towards objective (1) *Climate Action is given higher attention in mountain areas through targeted outreach and by fostering collaboration with other mountain and neighboring regions:*

- Develop approaches to **raise the attention to climate change in mountain areas at the global level** (e.g. at designated events; through national representation of the Parties under global commitments; through targeted communication and outreach activities);
- Collaborate with **other regional frameworks/platforms/initiatives** and **related institutions and organizations**, especially from mountain and neighboring regions, for knowledge exchange, common developments and learning.

Towards objective (2) *Regional cooperation and interaction among the Parties of the Carpathian Convention are strengthened through identifying common priority actions and harmonizing them with ongoing regional and national efforts on climate change in the Carpathians:*

- Identify common priority areas of concern and facilitate mutual support in **meeting national commitments stemming from EU and international agreements** under all climate related policy frameworks¹ through information exchange and collaboration;
- Identify **mechanisms** for all contracting Parties to **duly consider the Carpathians in their respective climate and other related strategies and action plans** at all relevant levels. Harmonizing climate policies across all governance levels will ensure successful outcomes towards a climate-neutral and climate-resilient development.

Towards objective (3) *Possible areas of transnational climate action in the Carpathians are identified with concrete options for climate change mitigation and adaptation:*

- Establish **areas for transnational climate action** that **complement national and sub-national approaches** taking into due account the **interlinkages between climate, environmental, nature conservation and socio-economic opportunities and constraints**;
- Ensure – through enhanced exchange and cooperation – to **avoid potential overlaps between diverging transnational, national and/or regional approaches** towards overall **optimizing the use**

¹ In particular: UNFCCC, 2015 Paris Agreement; Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction; 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework; European Green Deal

of human, informatic and financial resources for climate action and creating a higher impact for increasing resilience;

- Explore for a **wide spectrum of concrete mitigation and adaptation options**, including ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) and Nature-based Solutions (NbS), to be **best implemented at transboundary scale;**
- **Identify and select types of activities** that **provide synergies and generate co-benefits** with other sectoral policies and cross-cutting topics of sustainable development and foster respective application.

Towards objective (4): *Interlinkages between climate issues and other relevant areas of work of the Carpathian Convention are taken into account:*

- Strengthen close **cooperation and exchange with the other thematic Working Groups of the Carpathian Convention** to **ensure mainstreaming of climate action and information exchange in all relevant areas of work;**
- Develop **mechanisms for identifying, developing and implementing joint activities.**

Towards objective (5): *Climate research on both qualitative and quantitative levels is promoted, including fostering the application of its results:*

- Identify and close **knowledge gaps** and **encourage transnational research needs** for the Carpathians to improve the understanding of future climate and other socio-economic developments and provide a solid decision-making basis;
- Support **gathering, processing and harmonizing research results** to be taken into account for planning and policy processes.

Towards objective (6): *Science - policy - practice interfaces and innovative approaches are further explored and promoted:*

- Foster science – policy – practice interfaces to **making full use of available data, relevant research and practical experiences** so that **decision-making is evidence-based, well supported and informed;**

- Focus on finding and showcasing **practical and innovative approaches for sustainable and climate-resilient mountain development** (within the Carpathian region and beyond) to **support mutual action learning**;
- Improve and operationalize **effective tools for sharing experience, good practice and lessons learnt as well as for scientific exchange** regarding climate change in the Carpathians.

Towards objective (7): Joint efforts are taken on identifying funding opportunities and drawing the attention of donors towards the benefits of greater regional cooperation:

- Identify **funding opportunities** for implementation of concrete climate action proposals in the Carpathians (linking to financing single or combined activities proposed under Strategic Objectives 2-6), support **project development** and cooperate on **resource mobilization** with relevant organizations, stakeholders and donors.