

Carpathian Convention and the EU accession

The Carpathian Convention, a multilateral environmental agreement on protection and sustainable development of the Carpathian region was signed in 2003 by seven countries (5 EU Countries: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and 2 non – EU Countries: Serbia and Ukraine), entered into force in 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.

The Carpathian Convention provisions and its Protocols, consistent with the EU legislation, facilitate the implementation of the EU policies in all the Parties to the Convention and, therefore, the Carpathian Convention plays an important role in the framework of the EU environmental and regional policies. Furthermore, the Carpathian Convention strengthens regional cooperation between the five EU Member States in Central Europe and, at the same time, facilitates the integration process of strategic non – EU countries such as Ukraine and Serbia.

The Carpathian region faces many challenges which are of the European importance and, therefore, require better cooperation at the EU level. The accession of the European Union to the Carpathian Convention, as it is the case for other regional conventions such as the Alpine Convention or the Danube River Protection Convention and other, would allow for **better and more substantial cooperation in terms of preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, climate change and sustainable transition of the Carpathian region.**

In this respect the Carpathian Convention Parties would like to reiterate their strong desire of the EU's participation to the Carpathian Convention, and engage in discussion with the EU institutions on the relevance of the Carpathian Convention for promoting sustainable development and protection in Europe, giving an excellent example for regional cooperation at the European but also international level.

Formally, the invitation for the EU to join the Convention has been expressed, inter alia, in numerous official letters and COP's Decisions starting from COP1 in 2006 and is still maintained. Currently, the Parties to the Convention are in consultation with the Secretariat regarding the **next steps for the EU accession process** (see the Road Map towards the accession of the European Union to the Carpathian Convention below).

The accession to the Carpathian Convention by the European Union would contribute to raising the profile of the Carpathian region and its environmental challenges, supporting green and **sustainable future of the region for the benefit of both, the Carpathians and the European Union.** At the same time, the Carpathian Convention can play an important role as a **regional instrument for implementation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework** and a model for **mainstreaming biodiversity into other sectors.**

Support of relevant actors, such as the Parties, especially the Ministries responsible for the Environment and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, other EU Member States, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions, UNEP and other institutions, in this process will be instrumental for bringing it to successful conclusions.

Road Map towards the accession of the European Union to the Carpathian Convention:

- **11-13 December 2019, Budapest** - 10th meeting of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee, which is responsible for preparing COP's Decisions.
 - CCIC recommends engaging in the process;

- **19 December 2019, EU Environmental Council** - meeting of UNEP and the European Commission (*postposed*)
 - Clear political message from the Carpathian Countries should be communicated during the meeting.

- **March 2020, EU Environmental Council** - meeting between HU Minister, PL Minister and the EU Commissioner for Environment on the margins of the Environmental Council
 - The Carpathian Ministers will inform the Commissioner about the political will for the European Union accession to the Carpathian Convention, asking for consideration of this issue and inviting for COP6;

- **September 2020, 6th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP6)**
 - official request (tbc) made by the Heads of Delegations (in a form of a declaration, or a letter,) ideally in the presence of the Commissioner/other EU representative

- **October 2020, EU Environmental Council**
 - official request by the Polish Presidency to the Council for the accession of the European Union to the Carpathian Convention