

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE SCIENCE FOR THE CARPATHIANS NETWORK (S4C) AND THE SCIENTIFIC NETWORK FOR THE CAUCASUS MOUNTAIN REGION (SNC-mt)

The Science for the Carpathians (S4C) network¹, established in 2008, connects scientists focusing on defining research priorities for the Carpathian region (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Ukraine). The goal of the network is to coordinate research and collaboration across disciplines and national boundaries, advocating a pan-Carpathian research area, facilitating development of research capacities and fostering dialogue between research, policy and practice. Since 2010, the S4C has organized an international conference – Forum Carpaticum – on a biennial basis in a different Carpathian country.

S4C is represented by the Executive Committee of the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC).

The Scientific Network for the Caucasus Mountain Region (SNC-mt)², established in 2014, is an open network of researchers and other stakeholders interested in disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research on the Caucasus region and academic collaboration. SNC-mt seeks to improve research capacity for and within the Caucasus region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Russian Federation, Turkey), to make the Caucasus more prominent in European and global contexts, to strengthen the nexus between scientists, practitioners and decision-makers and to link research to the needs of sustainable development and environmental protection. The Caucasus Mountain Forum, the open conference organized by the network, took place in 2016 and 2019, with the aim of continuing on a biennial basis.

SNC-mt is represented by its Scientific Steering Group.

Preamble

In consideration of the fact that:

Mountain regions around the world share similar features, constituting unique centers of natural and cultural diversity. These regions are facing similar challenges, including, but not limited to, climate change, environmental degradation, economic marginalization, limited opportunities for livelihood improvement of local populations.

¹<http://carpathianscience.org/>

²<http://caucasus-mt.net/>

A number of international policy documents, including Chapter 13 of Agenda 21³, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment⁴ and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁵, as well as many scientific publications,⁶ recognize the importance of mountain ecosystems and sustainable development of the mountainous areas;

The Carpathian and the Caucasus regions share a number of similar features and challenges, specifically, a historical legacy⁷ as well as dependency on financial instruments and development cooperation priorities from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) funding members. Dependency on key academic actors predominantly located in these countries, therefore, raises the need for empowerment of academic and scientific institutions in the Carpathian and the Caucasus regions and the establishment of pre-requisites to level the playing field for research and development;

The research agendas of both S4C and SNC-mt contain many similar focus areas aimed at understanding of the socio-ecological systems of the respective mountain regions during the period of economic transition and at facilitating their long-term sustainability;

S4C and SNC-mt have cooperated to date in several fields, especially in mutual participation in conferences organized by partner network and in the research agenda development;

Both S4C and SNC-mt consider the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the elaborated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and principles of Education for Sustainable Development⁸ agreed by the international community, as relevant for the aims and activities of both networks;

Both networks are supported by and cooperate with the UNEP Office in Vienna, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, which works on international mountain ecosystems, invested time and resources in the promotion of both networks and is a partner of both networks;

Both S4C and SNC-mt coordinate their activities and cooperate with the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI), the International Scientific Committee on Research in the Alps (ISCAR) and other relevant scientific networks, but at the same time, are committed to developing scientific and transdisciplinary approaches fitted to the respective context of the Carpathian and the Caucasus regions;

Development cooperation institutions of some Carpathian Countries, such as PolishAid, SlovakAid, etc., are promoting cooperation with countries of the Caucasus region in order to better understand common developmental challenges and the opportunities this provides for cooperation and to support joint research among scientific communities in both regions;

³ United Nations (1992) Agenda 21. Programme of Action for Sustainable Development. United Nations Conference on Environment & Development. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>

⁴ Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2003) Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: A Framework for Assessment. Island Press, Washington, DC.

⁵ United Nations (2015) Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015. United Nations General Assembly (A/68/100). <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2006future.pdf>

⁶ For example, Maselli D (2012) Promoting Sustainable Mountain Development at the Global Level. Mountain Research and Development 32: S64–S70. doi: [10.1659/MRD-JOURNAL-D-11-00120.S1](https://doi.org/10.1659/MRD-JOURNAL-D-11-00120.S1).

⁷ Including aftermath of geopolitical conflicts, challenges of dealing with the post-Soviet past of several countries in each region.

⁸ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development>

Now therefore the Signatories agree as follows:

Objective of cooperation

The objectives of cooperation are the exchange of information and experience, sharing success stories as well as elaboration, financing and implementation of joint activities, with the aim of reaching these objectives for both S4C and SNC-mt networks.

The cooperation of S4C and SNC-mt should contribute to reaching common aims, especially with respect to:

- promoting and consolidating knowledge and understanding about mountain regions and helping confront transnational challenges, following the tradition from other mountain regions around the world, where scientific networks have emerged;
- promoting research collaboration that generates knowledge on mountains to support sustainable development, especially sustainable use of natural resources;
- exchanging knowledge and sharing best practices with other mountain regions;
- fostering dialogue between research, policy and practice and addressing the needs of sustainable development of mountain regions;
- linking scientists working in the Carpathians and the Caucasus with those from other countries and mountain regions;
- enhancing research and generating knowledge for promoting and advocating sustainable mountain development at different levels – national, regional and international;
- drawing on indigenous local knowledge from the Carpathians and the Caucasus to address sustainable use of natural resources under climate change;

Cooperation activities and responsibilities

- Bi-lateral and multi-lateral networking and exchange of information, activities and events prepared and implemented by each network
 - Each network will share information as well as links to relevant events and activities in its respective region;
 - Each network will provide regular updates, highlighting potentially interesting and relevant activities for cooperation and involvement of researchers from both networks, including:
 - funding opportunities and relevant grants or requests for proposals,
 - upcoming and ongoing projects, relevant for the other region,
 - information on relevant or key⁹ recent research results and initiatives, results of work relevant for each respective region;
 - Each network will support its members seeking contacts and collaboration with members of the other network as well as promote and support cooperation between institutions from both networks;

⁹ The criteria for selection of key and relevant research to be shared shall be determined jointly by the networks.

- Cooperation during the open meetings of the networks, Forum Carpathicum and the Caucasus Mountain Forum, respectively
 - Each network will encourage the participation of members of the other network in its open conference, via the organization of sessions, workshops, presentations and keynotes;
- Facilitation and development of joint projects, exchange, capacity building
 - Each network will promote joint activities among representatives of both networks, including:
 - scientific and transdisciplinary projects and events
 - exchange of students and staff
 - joint publications
 - training for staff, students, young scientists, such as summer schools and vocational educational training;
- Mutual representation in other networks and events, as relevant
 - Whenever necessary, the networks can represent each other during meetings, and memberships in wider networks, events and fora, such as MRI, Carpathian Convention, IUFRO, GLP, etc.

Concrete means of implementation

The representatives of the S4C Executive Committee and the SNC-mt Secretariat shall appoint two responsible focal points, who will ensure providing relevant information, as described above, to the other network.

Mutual updates will be shared on a regular basis (to be determined *a priori*) and, whenever relevant, information and possibilities of joint actions should be shared as they come up.

Supplemental Agreements

- Collaboration activities to be carried out, pursuant to any Supplemental Agreement, will be:
 - Subject to the availability of funds and resources;
 - Approved by the relevant body of each Signatory and undertaken in accordance with the Signatories' respective established policies and procedures;
 - The Signatories' performance of Supplemental Agreements shall be subject to and in accordance with the terms and conditions provided for in each such Supplemental Agreement.

Effective Date of Agreement

This MOU shall become effective on the date of signature by both Signatories, and shall remain in effect for five years from the date of signature unless renewed in writing for a different term or terminated by either Signatory. It will be automatically renewed for a successive five-year period unless either Signatory notifies the other Signatory in writing of

its intention to terminate the MOU up to six (6) months before its expiration. Either Signatory may terminate this MOU by giving the other Signatory a written six (6) months advance notice of termination.

In witness whereof, the undersigned, being duly authorized to do so, have executed this MOU in the English language in two counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, and which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

For the Science for the Carpathians

signed by

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Dr. Katalin Mázsza

Chair of S4C
in the name of the S4C Scientific Committee

Date:

For the Scientific Network for the Caucasus Mountain Region

signed by

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