



Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform

REPORT

OF THE CARPATHIAN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PLATFORM

2021

v..1.2

Methodological remarks

The report covers the period from January 2021 to the end of October 2021 and coincides with the period of performing the function of Coordinator of the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform (CSTP) by the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland.

The report is composed of four parts: the Report on the co-chairmanship by the Department of Tourism of the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of the Republic of Poland to the Working Group on Sustainable Tourism of the Carpathian Convention, in 2021, the Report of CSTP Poland, Report of National Authority in Tourism (member of the CSTP Romania), the Report of the CSTP Romania.

On 27 February 2021, during the conference of the "Europe of the Carpathians", a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the CSTP - Centre PL/Carpathian Euroregion - Poland and the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention for the coordination of sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians.

Coordination of the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform by the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion – Poland allows even more effective activities for the supporting development of the Carpathian region as a sustainable tourism destination of global significance. The activities of the Platform are in line with the mission of the Carpathian Brand CARPATHIA which was developed/is implemented by the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland.

The report is divided thematically according to the key priorities adopted by the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland to be implemented during the Polish Presidency of the Carpathian Convention until end of 2023.

The report covers the period of restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and thus it should be evaluated through the prism of the limited possibilities of performing activities by the CSTP.

Introduction

Analysis of the problem

The basic problems in achieving the vision of socio-economic development of the Carpathian Region through the implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy in the Carpathian Region are, on one hand, the lack of an effective network of cooperation between institutions - potential partners, low institutional potential of various actors in the process, with the lack of coordination function at the forefront and the lack of stable sources of funding for activities in this field. Therefore, the mission of the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform will be **"Coordination of activities of public, private and non-governmental sector partners for the implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy in the Carpathian Region"**. The purpose of the CSTP is **"Creating the Carpathians a destination for sustainable tourism of global character"**.

The Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy in the Carpathian Region, adopted by acclamation by the Parties to the Carpathian Convention, assumes broad cooperation of tourism sector units of all the Carpathian countries for the performance of tasks specified in the Strategy. In order to create a network of partners and ensure their implementation of tasks resulting from the Strategy, it is necessary to create an effective coordination center for partners' activities.

The Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland will use for strengthening of the platform both its institutional potential, more than 28 years of experience in international cooperation in the Carpathian Mountains, its cooperation network (about 1000 subjects from the Carpathian area), as well as professional preparation and management of international development strategies, programs and projects.

Challenges for the CCSTP

- Cooperation at the international level within the CSTP was very limited, with no links between the various nodes of the CSTP structure. It is also incomplete.
- It is necessary to redefine the goals of the CSTP and design a cooperation system architecture based on participants/partners determined to cooperate.
- It is necessary to prepare a program for institutionalization and professionalization of the CSTP with options for business financing models.
- It is necessary to closely identify the CSTP customers and offer them services that meet their needs.
- It is necessary to apply the concentration principle - identify and focus efforts on up to three objectives and priorities.
- It is necessary to ensure effective lobbying and promotion of the CSTP activities.

Proposed priorities until 2023

During the 10th meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism, which took place on 15 April 2021, the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland proposed an arrangement of three priority areas to be implemented during the Polish Chairmanship of the Working Group on Sustainable Tourism, as well as the Polish Presidency of the Carpathian Convention, which include:

I. **Institution building – revitalization** of the cooperation system within the CSTP. In the n+3 perspective there is a professional, complete CSTP Cooperation System, able to act autonomously and coordinate in real time rather than in project cycles the development processes in sustainable tourism in the Carpathian Region. The task of reactivation of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism, also falls under this thematic category.

II. **Carpathian Tourism Observatory** – creation of the Carpathian Center and Information System for the tourism sector. In the n+3 perspective, there is a professional institution managing information necessary for the coordination of sustainable tourism development in the Carpathian Region. It conducts services, analyses and manages information in terms of a sustainable tourism client (tourist), as well as an institutional customer participating in development policy.

III. **Carpathian Nature and Culture** – creation of a product offer based on the natural and cultural resources in the Carpathian Region within the Carpathian Brand aimed at "premium" customers. In the n+3 perspective, on foreign markets and internal market (CC area) there are offers, packages of inbound tourism to the Carpathian Region based on cultural and natural resources together with functioning professional business structures responsible for their development with due consideration of principles of sustainable tourism development.

Report by the Department of Tourism of the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of the Republic of Poland - the Co-chair of the Working Group on Sustainable Tourism of the Carpathian Convention, 2021.

The report covers the period from January 2021 to the end of October 2021

During this period, the following tasks were completed:

1. Organization of the Polish Sustainable Tourism Task Group of the Carpathian Convention operating to the Ministry of Development and Technology and to the CC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (WGST), on March 31, 2021. During the meeting chaired by Andrzej Gut-Mostowy, Secretary of State, among others:

- the results of the 6th Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention for Tourism were presented,
 - the work plan of the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform (CSTP) for 2021-2023 was presented, developed by CSTP - Center Poland by the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland, which took over the coordination of the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform operating under the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention
 - a discussion was held and participants were invited to submit proposals for improving the above-mentioned work plan
 - the plan prepared by CSTP – Center Poland and by the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism, has been approved to be presented at the CC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism,
2. Co-chairing the 10th Working Group on Sustainable Tourism of the Carpathian Convention on April 15, 2021:
- the meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Dominik Borek, director of the Tourism Department,
 - the meeting allowed the consideration and discussion of appropriate priorities and ideas for organizing the work of the bodies and initiatives related to the implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism - for the current implementation period 2021-2023.
 - at the meeting, Mr. Dawid Lasek, presented the CSTP Work Plan Draft for the years 2021 - 2023, which was proposed by CSTP-Center Poland (currently CSTP coordinator).
 - during the 10th meeting of CC WG on Sustainable Tourism, the parties presented activities related to the implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism.

Report by CSTP Poland

Slovakia (Priority area I)

In the reporting period, the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland performed intensive activities, depending on objective opportunities (COVID-19 pandemic) aimed at creating a functioning basis for the cooperation system within the priority area 1 "Institution Building". Due to the pandemic restrictions, the focus was on bilateral activities with Slovak partners. In the period from 06 – 10.2021 the representatives of the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland organized and participated in numerous meetings with Slovak partners - local governments and non-governmental organizations. During the meetings the plan of work within the CSTP was discussed and the assumptions of the created cooperation system were presented. As a result of intensive consultations and agreements, the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland signed the cooperation agreement with the Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia - an organization which unites 90% of territorial self-governments of the Slovak Republic (Annex 1). One of the points of the signed Memorandum is the promotion of the Carpathian Convention and cooperation with the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform. At the same time, the meeting was held with Mrs. Katarína Bruncková , State Secretary in the Ministry of Construction and Transport of the Slovak Republic, which focused on the prospect for establishing the CSTP Slovakia Center and the coordination of cooperation for the development of tourism in the Carpathian Region.

Cross-border Functional Areas (Priority area I)

Another field of structural activities is the issue of creating Cross-border Functional Areas in the Carpathian Region. In this regard, from November 2021 teams responsible for the preparation of the Strategy will be established, on the basis of which cross-border Integrated Territorial Investments will be designed. Additionally, in October 2021 during the meeting with the heads of local authorities another CBFA with cross-border character - Spiš - was initiated. It is

expected that due to the specificity of cross-border areas in the Carpathian Region, sustainable tourism will be the main development profile in the CBFA.

XXX Economic Forum in Karpacz (Priority area I)

CSTP topics were also presented during the XXX Economic Forum in Karpacz, where, on 9 September 2021 the Secretary General of the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland was a moderator of the Panel entitled: "New climate policy in the Carpathian Mountains - how to effectively protect the natural heritage in the Carpathian Mountains. The potential of national parks".

Cooperation with the World Tourism Organization (Priority area I)

On 15-16 October 2021 the Secretary General of the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland met with Mr. Zurab Pololoshvili Pololikashvili, Secretary General of the UN World Tourism Organization. The meeting, which took place in Povazska Bystrica, concerned cooperation with the World Tourism Organization in the field of promotion of the Carpathian Brand and activities to support sustainable tourism in mountain areas. In this context, the idea to build cooperative solutions between the Carpathian Mountains and the Caucasus regions was born. By the end of 2021 a working meeting is planned at the World Tourism Organization headquarters in Madrid.

Small Project Fund INTERREG PL-SK 2021-2028 (Priority area I)

On the 23th of October 2021 the Polish-Slovak Working Group on the INTERREG PL-SK 2021-2027 Program made a decision related to the system of implementation of small project funds on the Polish-Slovak border. On the basis of this decision, the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland will be responsible for managing the fund in the priority 4.6 "Increasing the role of culture and tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation". This means an opportunity to financially support public sector and non-governmental entities from the field of implementation of projects supporting sustainable tourism. The Euroregion plans to open the first call for proposals in the second half of 2022.

Cooperation with higher education institutions in the Carpathian region (Priority area I)

A key element of the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland and the creation of an integrated cooperation system within the CSTP is the involvement of higher education institutions in the Carpathian region. The intellectual potential, as well as scientific and research facilities of these entities will constitute the success of the CSTP mission. In the reporting period, the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland established contact with several academic centers in the Carpathian region. Among others, the meeting with the Rectors of the Technical University of Košice and Košice University took place on 6 October.

Carpathian Tourism Observatory (Priority area II)

In the second priority area the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland performs intensive conceptual and organizational activities. The establishment of a professional Carpathian Tourism Observatory (CTO) is a goal of strategic importance. In this respect the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland cooperates with the Institute of Tourism/ HES-SO Valais -Wallis in Sierre, Switzerland, which developed and implemented the Territorial Model of Tourism Observatory (<https://www.tourobs.ch/>). In Poland, the main partners of the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland are the Statistical Office in Rzeszow and the Cracow University of Technology. The Statistical Office, using its resources, experience and cooperative ties with statistical offices of the Carpathian countries, supports the CSTP in developing the functionality and architecture of the CTO system. "In the years 2018-2020 the Statistical Office in Rzeszow, together with 7 European countries, implemented the international project ESSnet Big Data II:

Workpackage J - Innovative tourism statistics. The aim of the project was to create, based on the integration of data from various sources, the concept of a prototype system for monitoring changes in tourism. In the course of the project, the model was developed to link data sources in the field of tourism for both the demand side (related to tourist travels) and the supply side (related to accommodation facilities). The prototype uses data from statistical and administrative sources, as well as from websites obtained using the author's web scraping method. As a result of the analysis of online resources, high information potential of booking and airline websites was demonstrated, which have a large amount of data changing in real mode. On their basis, among other things, quick estimates in the field of tourism were prepared and the space-time disaggregation method of travels of Polish residents to overseas countries was developed. The solutions can be used and developed as part of the tasks performed by the Carpathian Tourism Observatory".

EtnoCarpathia Project (Priority area III)

Source of funding:

- European Regional Development Fund, Cross-border Cooperation Program Interreg V-A Poland-Slovakia 2014-2020.
- Financed by the National Institute of Liberty - Civil Society Development Center from the funds of the Civic Organization Development Program for the years 2018-2030.

Completion period: 01.11.2019-30.06.2022.

Project Partners:

- Municipal Cultural Center in Vranov (PP1)
- District Museum in Rzeszow (PP2)

Total value of the project: EUR 844,701.74 EUR (100%), SEKP: EUR 515,370.00

Idea and short description of the project:

The main idea of the project is to develop and promote the cultural heritage of the Polish-Slovak borderland through the development of the EtnoCarpathia tourist product based on the resources of the Carpathian culture. Traditional folk culture of the ethnographic groups existing in the area of the borderland until World War II is an important factor of tourism development in the Carpathian Mountains. Therefore, the activities planned in the project are aimed at increasing the attractiveness and recognizability of the borderland through the use of cultural heritage resources of 7 Carpathian cultures (Pogorzans, Dolinians, Lemkos, Boykos people from Šariš, Zemplin and Zamagurie regions). The EtnoCarpathia product will be developed under a common, already existing international Carpathian brand and will offer tourists the opportunity to get to know the authenticity and multiculturalism of the Polish-Slovak part of the Carpathian Mountains, diverse crafts and unique traditions. As part of the project, the inventory of ethnographic resources was carried out, publications, website, e-guide was developed, and the CarpathiaEtnoDesign competition for young designers was organized, which was the opportunity to meet "old and new", combining traditional design and modern trends, and also actively involved young people in the project. Handicraft workshops (Lemko necklaces (krywulka), Boyko necklaces (sylvianka), felting, cross-stitch embroidery) addressed to all enthusiasts of Carpathian crafts or local artists, photography workshops on product photography or those concerning modern marketing tools, as well as information meetings on the creation and importance of territorial brands - these are the next activities in the project. In addition, the project will be promoted during events (EtnoWeekend), study visit and final gala, which will take place in 2022.

"InterVentures" Project (Priority area III)

Source of funding: European Regional Development Fund, Interreg Europe Program

Completion period: 42 months from 01.08.2019 to 31.01.2023 (Phase 1 – 30 months, Phase 2 – 12 months)

Project Partners:

- Pannon European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (Hungary)

- Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Crafts of Lombardy (Unioncamere Lombardy)
- Rzeszow Regional Development Agency
- European Business and Innovation Center of Burgos (CEEI-Burgos)
- Klaipėda ID
- Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)
- Administration of Klaipėda City Municipality
- Society for the Development of the Province of Burgos (SODEBUR)

Total value of the project: EUR 1 376 708

Idea and short description of the project:

The idea of the project is to use the potential of enterprises located in the border areas in order to increase their degree of internationalization and thus to increase their competitiveness. INTER VENTURES brings together partners from five European border regions (Poland, Hungary, Spain, Lithuania, Italy) representing different stages of evolution of SME ecosystems, ranging from occasional cooperation through more structured networking to international clustering. In the course of the project, partners intensively share their experiences and learn together through two thematic good practice visits and four interregional meetings combining training and discussions. Regional stakeholders are involved in the project. On the other hand, the project is expected to contribute to the improvement of the existing business support mechanisms (policies related to EU funds available for SMEs). As a result of the project, locally tailored regional action plans will be developed and implemented, which can lead to the desired improvement of the five selected regional EFRR programs in order to strengthen the internationalization of SMEs.

"Between the Fjords and the Carpathian Mountains - the platform for the exchange of experiences in tourism education" (Priority area III)

Source of funding: "Education" program under the Norwegian and EEA funds in Poland (Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area - Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway)

Completion period: 01.02.2022-31.01.2024

Project Partners:

- Bronislaw Markiewicz State Higher School of Technology and Economics in Jaroslaw (PWSTE)
- Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland
- Nord University

Total value of the project: EUR 229,370.00 (100%), SEKP: EUR 36,585.00

Idea and short description of the project:

The project aims to increase the quality of higher and secondary vocational education in tourism in the border area of the Polish part of the Carpathian Euroregion, using Norwegian models. The activities of the project will ensure raising the level of knowledge both of students, pupils (thanks to new curricula at the professional level) and people working in the tourism sector (participation in quality circles). Through the organization of periodic meetings, cooperation between the education and tourism sectors in the region will be strengthened. On the other hand, through the transfer of knowledge and innovation, ensured by ongoing cooperation with the Norwegian partner and participation in the study visit, local entrepreneurship of the sector will be strengthened. The project will also influence the strengthening of professional competences of the region's tourism sector staff and managers, as well as will ensure the exchange of good practices. Innovative elements of the project will include professional education programs in tourism on the basis of Norwegian models and ensuring the implementation of "Carpathia" brand strategy. In addition, the project will include innovative meetings such as co-creations stimulating cooperation between students and representatives of the tourism sector and meetings such as quality circles aimed at raising the level of knowledge of people involved in management and service of the tourism sector in the Carpathian Euroregion. Groups of target recipients of the project include: staff and students of the PWSTE, staff and students of secondary vocational schools, representatives of the

tourism sector (tourist organizations, associations, facilities, departments of offices), tourists visiting the border area of the Carpathian Euroregion, teaching staff from other vocational schools in the project area, centers and sections related to the development of education, as well as local governments from border areas.

Report by National Authority in Tourism (member of the CSTP Romania)

I. Danube Cycle Plans project - <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/danube-cycle-plans>

Partners from 4 Carpathian Countries - Czech Republic, Slovakia, Serbia, and Romania represented by the National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism as partner and the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism as strategic partner, addresses these challenges by setting actions to strengthen the three main pillars of cycling promotion:

1. Facilitate the development of cycling policies at national and transnational level supported by National Cycling Plans based on a common transnational Danube Cycling Strategy;
2. Support the provision of adequate cycling infrastructure by defining the Danube Cycle Route Network, developing common standards and deriving an investment plan to upgrade current conditions;
3. Increase the awareness of relevant stakeholders for the needs of cyclists and increase their capacity to promote cycling in the whole Danube region by implementing a mentoring system, inspiration events and national cycling conferences.

Romania carried out and have under development within the project the following activities:

Performed activities:

1. elaboration of the "Status Quo Questionnaire" study for Romania (with information about transport activities and cycling, policies related to the activities mentioned above, roles and responsibilities, infrastructure, bicycle touring, communication and marketing, good practices);
2. identification of the current situation regarding the tracks for cycling in Romania (by counties) represented graphically in the form of a map;
3. establishment of the Working Group for the Development of Bicycle Tourism and Cycling (2 meetings so far);
4. mentoring/training sessions, with the help of mentors from Austria and Slovakia;
5. the official leaflet of the project;
6. promotional video, through a Danube Cycle Ambassador (to raise awareness among stakeholders and the general public, about the benefits of using bicycles for cycling activities, daily mobility but also as a form of leisure).

Ongoing activities:

1. identification of the national network of cycling routes, based on a methodology developed within the project;
2. the first audit of bicycle use policies in Romania, through the BYPAD methodology;
3. catalog of standards for "cycling-friendly" infrastructure;
4. cycling national plan.

II. The draft Government Decision for the approval of the Methodological Norms regarding the creation, arrangement and homologation of the pedestrian, equestrian and cycling tourist routes

III. The draft normative act on amending and supplementing H.G. no. 77 of 2003 on the establishment of measures for the prevention of mountain accidents and the organization of rescue activity in the mountains

IV. A collaboration protocol is signed with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for the promotion of rural tourism and the capitalization of Romanian agri-food products

V. At regional level, local gastronomy textbooks, guides for healthy lifestyles, textbooks for sustainable landscaping in the Carpathian sheepfolds for tourism

VI. At the national level an Alliance for Tourism (with main stakeholders from the National Tourism Taskforce and regional DMO's from Romania) was established to bring legislative amendments necessary to support the special law of DMO's, respectively the Fiscal Code and the Fiscal Procedure Code, as well as the abrogation of the current regulations contained in Ordinance no. 58/1998 regarding the organization and development of the tourism activity in Romania, modified, with the last modification intervened by Law no. 275/2018 and was active in 2021 in proposing measures within the Romania's National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

Report by the Brasov County Council (member of the CSTP Romania):

In the COP 6 Decisions it is mentioned that the CSTP is encouraged to bring updates on the implementation of the Thematic Trail Trigger_the Interreg Europe project implemented by the Braşov County Council.

Braşov County is a partner with Livorno Province - project leader, Tuscany Region, Central Finland Regional Council, Malta Planning Authority, Kujawsko Pomorskie Voivodeship, Tenerife Island Local Government, Vas County Hungary Government Administration, Hessen Gmbh Central Regional Management in the Thematic Trail Trigger - ThreeT project which aims to amplify the performance of different local, regional and European policies in order to make better use of resources, acting as an investment multiplier in the sense of protecting and developing the tourist heritage by identifying local solutions to improve accessibility and tourist mobility, cooperation for the exchange of practices between partners, the intention to generate new thematic routes in the county or to connect the existing ones to be, through the measures taken, more visible and more accessible.

The first stage of the ThreeT Project Interreg Europe, came to an end in May 2021. The final conference presented the Action Plans of the partner countries (Finland, Germany, Romania, Poland, Malta, Hungary, Spain and Italy).

The Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/threet/library/> - contains the project short profile, newsletters, Territorial Context Analysis carried out by each partner, Presentations of documented Good Practice experiences, reports of the 8 Study Visits, tutoring sessions organised in 2021 and Action Plans of each partner to be implemented in the period June 2021 - November 2022

In the process of implementing the Pilot Action "Silence as a tourist attraction", within the Thematic Trail Trigger-ThreeT project, the three European partners (Livorno Province and Tuscany Region in Italy, Kujawsko-Promorskie Region in Poland and Braşov County, Romania) have agreed with the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet) to create a strategic cooperation partnership at European level.

For Romania Phase 1 of the ThreeT Project, carried out between June 2018 and May 2021, involved the development of an Action Plan based on information and examples of good practice presented during study visits and tutorial sessions. The ThreeT Action Plan proposes the following major actions for tourism development of the destination:

1. Action 1 - Public Policies for the improvement and development of a sustainable tourism in Braşov County on the following development directions:

- Development and connection of bicycle routes in Braşov County
- Development and connection of hiking trails in Braşov County - E8 - Carpatius High Mountain Ultra Trail & Persani Mts. UltraTrail Volcano
- The Network of Local Gastronomic Points in Braşov County
- Operationalization of the Fortifications Route in Braşov County
- Integrated development of sustainable tourism along the Olt River

2. Interreg Europe pilot action - Quiet areas as a tourist attraction in Braşov County

A pilot action, approved for additional funding through the Interreg Program, with partners from Italy, Poland and Romania, aims to implement a sustainable tourism product idea developed by Braşov County based on the methodology proposed by the Regional Council of Central Finland as a good practice. The concept of quiet areas as tourist attractions in Europe is piloted as an engine for local sustainable development, especially after COVID 19. The first stage of testing the new approach will be to characterize the important conditions for the delimitation of quiet areas (noise sources). Moreover, Romania wants to test the initialization and operationalization of the route or thematic areas on this concept (silence - defined as sustainability and responsibility to nature) as a tourist product, promoting the exploration of local nature and connecting people to nature with beneficial effects on health, using this concept as a tool for the development of sustainable tourism and for increasing the tourist potential in areas where quiet areas develop (including urban ones).

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The decision of the strategic partnership was taken following several consultative meetings between the three European regions in the ThreeT project and the representatives of the EEA and EIONET. The partnership pursues several objectives, such as cooperation and the regular exchange of data and information between the partners of the pilot action, the EEA and Eionet in regular meetings, correlating methodologies for defining quiet areas.

The European Environment Agency (EEA) is an agency of the European Union whose aim is to provide accurate and independent environmental information. The EEA aims to support sustainable development by contributing to the significant and quantifiable improvement of the quality of the environment in Europe by providing up-to-date, accurate and relevant information to decision-makers and the public.

The European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet) is a partnership network between the EEA and its member and partner countries. Through Eionet, the EEA gathers environmental information from each country, focusing on the prompt provision of high-quality, nationally validated data.

In January 2021, Brasov County Council together with two other partners from Italy (Livorno Province - partnership leader) and Hungary (Vas County - partner), project partners also within the Thematic Trail Trigger (ThreeT) Project, submitted for funding under the European Climate Initiative (EUKI), a project that promotes cycling (as a mode of transport to work or leisure) and other public transport methods that will progress together in a synergistic way, to develop more integrated mobility variants, addressing strategies such as: Green Deal, Next Generation EU, European / national / regional sustainable mobility strategies.

The HINGE - Higher bike-transit Intermodality from Good Experiences project aims to contribute to EU policies on decarbonisation (reduction of CO2 emissions), maintaining the health of citizens, reducing air pollution from public / private transport.

The initiative of submitting the HINGE project by the Braşov County Council was supported from the beginning, with letters of intent, by territorial administrative units in the county and other public and private organizations with activity in the field of transport - Metropolitan Agency for Sustainable Development Braşov, Development Association for Sustainable Public Transport Braşov, Braşov Municipality, Braşov Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Braşov County Sustainable Development Agency, RDA Center, Ionuţ Banciu - Deputy - Chamber of Deputies Romanian Parliament, Transilvania University of Braşov.

The project aims at an increased use of trains, buses or other infrastructures and public transport facilities by cyclists, in a strategy of smooth movement between origin and destination / return, with several effects associated with the environment and society: fewer km traveled of cars, reducing CO2 emissions, reducing energy consumption, saving lives due to increased physical activity. Similar impacts can be anticipated for other bicycle transit interconnections (eg bicycle-bus) promoted by HINGE.

The complementarity between the bicycle and other sustainable means of transport is expected to make each form of transport more attractive to people on the move and to offer a competitive alternative to private vehicles. Reducing air pollution and noise / easing road traffic with vehicles / increasing the efficiency of the transport network will be among the major changes arising from the concrete and innovative steps encouraged by this project when we capitalize on the successful experiences that are reproduced. Among the major changes expected, a contribution to the gradual increase of the rate of railway or bus users arriving at a station / bicycle station is anticipated. In addition, a shift from isolated investment practices to a more holistic approach to integrated mobility models at the regional level is expected, supporting outdoor tourism and economic activities in rural areas by improving solutions to make last mile destinations more accessible, especially in peripheral areas.

The result of the project encourages a closer link between cycling and transit in a flexible transport chain in the 3 regions (Livorno province, Vas County, Braşov County) and especially in their main residences offering:

- Strategic recommendations in three target countries on improved interconnection modalities for bicycle transport, by November 2023
- Strategic recommendations for policy makers and stakeholders receiving solutions on improved interconnection modalities for mobility, by November 2023
- Innovative solutions developed to facilitate the connection between cyclists and other public transport service providers.