

Elevating the Mandate of the CC Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change

- *Presidency discussion paper*

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 and the use of natural resources. While climate changes and disturbances 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 risks needs to be better understood to ensure effective collaboration towards achieving global goals on climate change (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement) and disaster risk reduction (Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, UNDRR) as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Climate impacts in one country will 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 climatic changes, protecting important sites for mountain biodiversity is vital for ensuring long term and sustainable use of mountain natural resources and their services.

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 climate risks and impacts is needed.

Elaborating a strategic approach to cope with climate change in the Carpathians can build, inter alia, on:

- the predecessor projects CARPIVIA, CARPATCLIM and CARPATCC;
- the “*Outlook on climate change adaptation in the Carpathian mountains*”¹ (published 2017 by the Carpathian Convention together with GRID-Arendal and Eurac Research in the context of the Mountain Adaptation Outlook Series);
- ongoing work to improve high resolution projections of climate change effects on the local level in the Carpathian region.

¹http://www.carpathianconvention.org/tl_files/carpathiancon/Downloads/02%20Activities/Climate%20Change/MP_Carpathians_lores.pdf

Regarding the European policy framework, political guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024 have been presented which put forward “A European Green Deal” as one of six headline ambitions for Europe in the coming years and well beyond. The “Green Deal” strives for Europe to becoming the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 with several ambitious pathways. These include, inter alia:

- supporting the people and regions most affected through a new Just Transition Fund,
- proposing a European Climate Pact – bringing together regions, local communities, civil society, industry and schools to design and commit to a set of pledges for behavioural change as a key part of the just transition for all,
- putting forward a comprehensive plan to increase the European Union’s emission reduction target for 2030 towards 55% in a responsible way,
- preserving Europe’s natural environment through setting new standards for production, consumption and trade.

In the process of implementing the Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC, the year 2020 will mark a key milestone as Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change are requested to put forward enhanced nationally determined contributions (NDCs) with the expectation that the NDC enhancement process delivers greater mitigation to keep the Paris Agreement goals within reach. The NDC enhancement also provides an important opportunity to increase the profile of adaptation and strengthen the understanding of needs and actions in response to climatic changes. Further, the enhanced NDCs shall also provide input for the Global Stocktake (as established under Article 14 of the Paris Agreement) on collaborative action for climate action beyond borders.

Background

In May 2011 the European Commission – DG Environment, requested the Carpathian Convention Secretariat during Third Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP3) to consult with the Parties and Observers a possible proposal for the **establishment of a Working Group (WG) on Adaptation to Climate Change** under the Carpathian Convention supported by the project CARPIVIA (Carpathian integrated assessment of vulnerability to climate change and ecosystem-based adaptation measures, www.carpivia.eu) that is funded by the European Commission under the above mentioned preparatory action.

In October 2011 Parties and Observers were asked for nominations for the Working Group and interviews have been subsequently conducted with the nominees to assess their expectations and opinions. At the first meeting of the WG on Adaptation to Climate Change, which took place in February 2012 in Brussels, Terms of References (ToR) have been agreed which defined the field of activities as follows:

- The WG will collect information on vulnerability to climate change impacts in the Carpathian Region, will analyse the available information and identify gaps requiring further research;

- The WG will elaborate a proposal on how the results of CARPIVIA project can benefit national and regional authorities of the Carpathian Region;
- The WG shall in particular provide guidance and actions with regard to the contribution to the EU Information System on Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation;
- The WG will provide guidance and recommendations for the development of policy proposals in line with the Commission White Paper on Adapting to Climate Change and the objectives of the Carpathian Convention;
- The WG can provide guidance and recommendations for the development of follow-up projects in the area of vulnerability to climate change and ecosystem-based adaptation measures;
- The WG shall explore ways of cooperation with other relevant institutions such as the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and ICPDR (International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River).

The WG on Adaptation to Climate Change met six times in total since its establishment, however the Mandate and ToR have not been reviewed, updated or further elaborated to reflect developments in the policy and science arenas.

Apart from the adoption of *the 2013 EU strategy on adaptation to climate change*² (with an evaluation of its implementation by 2018), the *2015 Paris Agreement* under the UNFCCC, the *2015 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*³ and the *2015 Sustainable Development Goals*⁴, 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. Parties are currently undergoing the ratification process of this amendment.

Article 12bis on Climate Change addresses both climate change mitigation and 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.

Considering the above-mentioned policy developments over the last years and the increasing urgency for adaptation solutions to cope with the most pressing issues of climate change, it is suggested to reinforce the WG on Adaptation to Climate Change with a stronger mandate especially for defining implementation needs and pathways for Article 12bis of the Carpathian Convention.

² https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/adaptation/what_en

³ <https://www.preventionweb.net/sendai-framework/sendai-framework-for-drr>

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

At the recent 6th Meeting of the Working Group (9 October 2019 in Budapest, Hungary) a proposal has been put forward by the Secretariat on establishing a Carpathian Observation and Early Warning Platform for Climate Change. The main discussion outcomes can be summarised as follows:

- The title “Carpathian Observation and Early Warning Platform” was questioned to be misleading regarding the proposed objectives, which rather focus on networking and exchange than setting up a physical network of observatories in the Carpathians⁵;
- The networking component could be covered by the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Climate Change (potentially in the direction similar to the set-up of the Alpine Climate Board);
- A clear agenda for collaboration and activities would be needed to develop by the Working Group linked to setting priorities for the implementation of Article12bis;
- Proper mechanisms for exchange and collaboration with other relevant Working Groups of the Convention as well as with the Science for the Carpathians Initiative (S4C) should be established;
- Financing a broader platform/network remains a challenge; however, funding mechanisms shall be further explored has been discussed.

Concluding the discussion, the Secretariat asked the Chair of the Working Group, Mr. Sandor Szalai, to prepare a short note for the Tenth Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (11-13 December, 2019) on a structured step-by-step approach for strengthening networking and collaboration on climate change in the Carpathians, including proposals for the structure, timeline, role and concrete tasks of the Working Group, in particular with regard to the implementation of Article12bis.

Strategic objectives

Revising and strengthening the Mandate of the WG on Adaptation to Climate Change should be geared towards the implementation of the dedicated Article on climate change in order to achieve **the following objectives**:

- Exploring common priority actions to strengthen regional cooperation on climate change in the Carpathians, and beyond;
- In response to the EU and international commitments (Paris Agreement) and obligations, raising attention to climate change in mountain areas at Carpathian level
- Identifying possible areas of synergy between national and sub-national approaches delivering successful outcomes coping with climatic changes;
- Support the integration of climate actions into relevant sectors of the Carpathian Convention, such as, biodiversity, forestry, tourism, agriculture;

⁵ In the currently available draft the title has been changed to the *Carpathian Network Platform*
http://www.carpathianconvention.org/tl_files/carpathiancon/Downloads/03%20Meetings%20and%20Events/Implementation%20Committee/CCIC_Budapest2019/Documents%20related/Doc.%2020_DISCUSSION_PAPER_Carpathian%20Network%20Platform_CC_DRAFT.pdf

- Exploring further the policy, science and practice aspects that can help promote science-policy - practice interface and innovative approaches;
- Joining forces on funding opportunities and drawing the attention of donors towards the benefits of greater regional cooperation;
- Promoting climate research on both qualitative and quantitative levels and foster the application of its results;
- Establishing the instrumental and organisational tools of fostering experience sharing and scientific exchange regarding climate change in the Carpathians.
- promote adaptation measures and actions

The WG on Adaptation to Climate Change shall form the main body for developing a concrete Action Plan towards accomplishing the above objectives in the next implementation period starting in September 2020.

Proposed considerations for reinforcing the Mandate of the WG on Adaptation to Climate Change

For elaborating and establishing a stronger Mandate, the WG shall first revise its Terms of Reference with a particular focus on the role for the implementation of Article 12bis of the Carpathian Convention.

The following points shall be considered:

- Establish close **cooperation and exchange with the other thematic Working Groups of the Carpathian Convention** (e.g. Meeting of the Chairs of the WGs once per year) bearing in mind that climate change considerations need to be mainstreamed in all the Carpathian Convention's topics and activities
- elaborate of concrete proposals for actions in accordance with European and international objectives.
- In cooperation with relevant WGs discuss and agree on a **timeframe for proposing and implementing activities**
- **Consider collaboration with other regions, especially mountain regions**, for knowledge exchange and learning
- Develop approach(es) for **defining and promoting concrete climate actions**
- Elaborate a **structured workplan** along with the strategic objectives that **guides the agenda and work of the WG and possibly supporting bodies** (e.g. other thematic WGs; further relevant national institutions in each country working on climate change and disaster risk reduction; the Science for the Carpathians Initiative (S4C))

- Collaborate on **EU and international commitments** and obligations and develop ideas to **raise the attention to climate change in mountain areas at the global level**
- Identify **funding opportunities** for implementation of climate action in the Carpathians, support project development and cooperate on **resource mobilization** with relevant stakeholders and donors

The ToR shall be evaluated and revised by the WG and together with a concrete workplan put forward for approval at the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Poland in 2020.

Next steps

The following steps are proposed to be taken - upon approval of the CCIC - from December 2019 to the COP6 - Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2020:

January - March 2020: 7th Meeting of the WG on Adaptation to Climate Change

The agenda of the next meeting shall foresee to:

- Discuss and agree on the **strategic objectives and overall priorities;**
- **Clarify a reinforced Mandate of the WG** and discuss a **first draft for updated ToR;**
- Based on clarifying the Mandate and objectives, discuss the **composition of the WG;**
- Consider **appropriate mechanisms for exchanging and collaborating with other thematic Working Groups** of the Carpathian Convention;
- Reflect upon **approaches for collaboration with further stakeholders and other mountain and neighbouring areas;**
- Establish a **small operational group** (max. 5 participants) that volunteers to undertake further preparatory work towards concrete proposal for approval at the COP6 in Poland.

March - May 2020: Preparations undertaken by the small operational group (sub-group)

The operational group should be available to meet three times in the period from January to May 2020. The meetings could be organised by video-conferencing or Skype. The operational group shall be supported by the Secretariat and guided by the Chair of the WG. The Chair with support of the operational group will inform the participants of the WG about the progress of the preparatory work after each of the three meetings and consult them for feedback.

The preparatory work of the operational group shall:

- **finalise the draft ToR** considering the discussion outcomes of the 7th WG Meeting;



- draft a **table of content for an Action Plan** on implementing Article 12bis and set a timeframe for activities;
- draft a proposal for **mechanisms to mainstream climate change in all relevant areas of activities** under the Carpathian Convention;
- **identify key actors for exchange and collaboration** regarding:
 - fulfilling EU and international commitments
 - set the transnational dimension for collaborative action on climate change in mountainous areas to a higher agenda
 - monitoring and research needs, including opportunities for funding

For discussion and approval at COP6 in Poland, the following documents shall be finalised by May 2020:

- the new Terms of Reference for the WG on Adaptation to Climate Change (with a new name addressing both mitigation and adaptation: **WG on Climate Change**);
- a **table of content for an Action Plan 2050** on implementing Article 12bis;
- a proposal for a **concrete workplan with milestones and deliverables** for the next implementation period 2020-2023.