

## MEETING REPORT

### 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management Zvolen, Slovakia, 27 – 28 June 2019

*All the presentations delivered during the WG Climate Change meeting are available on the Carpathian Convention website<sup>1</sup>*

The Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, with generous support of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, organized the seventh meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management, held in Zvolen, Slovakia on 27 – June 2019.

#### Opening of the WG Forest meeting, round of introductions and adoption of the Agenda

The meeting was opened by the Vice Rector of the Technical University of Zvolen, Mr. Jaroslva Šálka, the host of the meeting, followed by the opening remarks by the representative of the Slovak Ministry of the Agriculture, Mr. Boris Greguška and Head of the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, Mr. Harald Egerer.

After short round of introduction of the meeting participants, the Agenda was briefly presented and adopted without any changes.

#### Discussion on further steps in implementation of the Strategic Action Plan to the Protocol on Forest - how to progress in the implementation of all SAP's objectives?

The discussion on the importance of the Strategic Action Plan to the Carpathian Convention Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management (SAP) implementation started by a thorough presentation of the Objectives and Actions deriving from SAP, as well as on overlaps of the Protocol with other policies, initiatives and processes. The presentation was delivered by Mr. Mr. Matej Schwarz, from Liaison Unit Bratislava, Forest Europe.

- Experiences and priorities for implementation of the Strategic Action Plan to the Forest Protocol

Next the Parties were invited to share experiences of implementation of SAP in the countries:

**Czech Republic:** in order to assess the implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management by fulfilling the objectives of the Strategic Action Plan in the Czech Republic, an analysis has been prepared in 2015 with views provided by all key stakeholders. It showed that most of the objectives are being fulfilled, often because the same commitments are set by other policies, strategic documents or legislation, including on EU level. Identified gaps in implementation concern for example Art. 3 (International cooperation) and 15 (Common programs and projects), which require engagement on international level. In 2016, national conference was organized to further discuss the implementation of the SAP and some key actions were identified, including inter alia a publication on natural conditions of forests in the Czech part of the Carpathian region.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/eventdetailwg-forests/events/seventh-meeting-of-the-working-group-on-sustainable-forest-management.html>

**Hungary** – the best tool for implementation of the Carpathian Forest Protocol in Hungary is the new, National Forest Strategy 2016-2030 (Forest Strategy), which came into force as Government Decision in 13 October 2016. This document is a long-term concept and contains all the strategic elements (challenges, objectives, possible professional solutions, etc.) which should be taken into consideration as sectoral perspectives in the next 15 years. The Forest Strategy highlights and focuses on striking the right balance between the multifunctional functions of forests, but also provides a framework for addressing current issues such as climate change, land policy, energy dependency, nature conservation, and public welfare development, respectively. Further, coordination of management and forest ecosystem processes and realize of forest ecosystem services are also occupied as prominent places in the Forest Strategy.

The main task is to harmonize dynamic processes of forest management and ecosystems, and to realize the ecosystem approach as well. Hence, the Forest Strategy is focusing on ten main areas: 1. The role of forests in the rural development; 2. Development of state forest management; 3. Development of private forest management; 4. Nature protection in forests; 5. Modern forest protection; 6. Sustainable game management; 7. Rational use of forests; 8. Forestry Administration; 9. Research and education; 10. Effective communication.

Hungary would like to translate this document into English in near future.

**Romania:** written contribution to the meeting discussion referred mostly to issues on the virgin forest protection in Romania and is reflected in the section Virgin forests in the Carpathians and their protection (p. 4-5).

**Ukraine:** In order to ensure an adequate implementation of the SAP, in October 2014 State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine obliged the subordinate enterprises to draw up a plan of measures for the implementation of the SAP and to provide annual reporting on the implementation of the SAP.

Ukrainian Research Institute of Mountain Forestry provides scientific support to the processes of implementation of SFM in the Carpathian region of Ukraine by elaborating normative basis for forestry works, e.g. reforestation, forest protection, various types of felling, establishment of forest infrastructure. "Roadmap for improving the forest management in the Ukrainian Carpathians based on close to nature forestry" was developed (end of 2018).

Another example is a development of a cross-border project proposal - HUSKROUA ENI CBC Project "Roads to Healthy Forests: Resilient, Adaptive, Diverse and Sustainable Forests in Cross-border Region of Ukraine and Slovakia. Within the project framework, along with other tasks, SE "Vygodna Forestry" will create a model area, which will ensure effective forest management of on the principles of close to nature forestry; integration of forest and water management, creating conditions for the climate change mitigation and adaptation. Model forest infrastructure to be created: 10+ km of new forest roads, 3 reinforced concrete bridges, river embankment enforcement, 11 wooden cascades in the river-bed, water reservoir and polder, restoration of 4 kilometers of skidding trails.

- [Reporting format for the comprehensive National Report on Implementation of the Carpathian Convention covering all the Protocols and other relevant sectors.](#)

According to the Decision COP5/1 para 2, a comprehensive National Report on Implementation of the Carpathian Convention covering all the Protocols (including the Forest Protocol) and other relevant sectors shall be developed. As a first step towards comprehensive reporting, the Secretariat shall develop guidelines and reporting template in consultation with the Parties, to be approved by the COP6 in 2020.

During the WG Forest meeting the Secretariat opened a discussion on reporting on the implementation of the Forest Protocols, asking about the most suitable indicators used for the reporting purposes. Suggestions for the

CC report indicators include: virgin forests cover; wetlands sites; surface of protected area; Natura2000 habitat degradation/loss (EU Member States) and Emerald Network (non-EU Member States); Capercaillie as an indicators of forest biodiversity; population of large carnivores (brown bear?).

The WG Forest meeting emphasized the need for reporting on the implementation on the Forest Protocol, which would help in identifying weaknesses and challenges of its implementation and could guide eventual revision of the Strategic Action Plan for the Forest Protocol.

## Importance of forestry education

The representative of Technical University in Zvolen (TUZ), which was kindly hosting the WG Forest meeting, presented the study programmes of the University related to forest, wood, ecology and environment topics. The research conducted in TUZ focuses mainly on the sciences of forestry and agriculture, engineering and technologies, environmental sciences and ecology, arts, economics, and management, personal protection and integrated safety as well as other related and applied spheres. The Secretariat stressed that great experience of the University in various international projects, makes it a good project partner for the future Carpathian project proposals.

Ms. Lesya Loyko, Ukrainian Agency for Sustainable Development of the Carpathian Region (FORZA) made a presentation on cross-border collaboration in forestry education, with several examples of activities and project, e.g. project titled "Foresters towards lifelong learning for better forest management" with the objective to develop tangible conditions for lifelong learning of forestry practitioners of the border regions of Ukraine and Slovakia via improvement of on-job training system and establishment of practical institutional co-operation among the training institutions and forest administrations. The project was funded by the European Commission under the ENPI CBC Programme - Hungary - Slovakia - Romania - Ukraine in cooperation between NGO FORZA Agency for Sustainable Development of the Carpathian region (UA), the Carpathian Regional Training Centre (UA) and the National Forest Centre - Institute of Forest Consulting and Education Zvolen. More information about the project can be found on the [Learning Platform](#).

Another presented project *Forest for society – Forest without barriers* ([link](#)), which focused on the establishment of cross-border partnership aimed to support tourism development and its promotion together with increasing the capacity of multifunctional forest management to fulfil social functions.

Furthermore, Ms. Loyko informed about a new project "*Roads to Healthy Forests: Resilient, Adaptive, Diverse and Sustainable Forests in Cross-border Region of Ukraine and Slovakia*", which aim at increasing stability and adaptability of Carpathian forest ecosystems to climate change impacts in Slovak-Ukrainian cross border region. The project is funded by the Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENI CBC Programme 2014-2020.

## Close-to-nature forest management

Mr. Jozef Bystriansky, Forests of the Slovak Republic, presented the work of the LESY Slovenskej republiky on close-to-nature forest management and its cooperation with [Pro Silva](#), which is a European federation of professional foresters across 25 European countries who advocate and promote Pro Silva Close to Nature Forest Management Principles as an alternative to clear felling, short-term tree plantations. Currently Pro Silva includes full members from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and members under development from Poland, Romania and Serbia. Ukraine would like to also become a member of Pro Silva.

Next, Mr. Tadeáš Štěrba, Forest Management Institute Czech Republic, presented the best practices on close-to-nature forest management in the Czech Republic with the focus on the Czech Carpathians, including its

involvement in Pro Silva in promoting forest management strategies which optimize the maintenance, conservation and utilization of forest ecosystems.

The Czech Republic announced, that with support of Slovakia and especially, Forests of the Slovak Republic, a workshop on close-to-nature forest management for the Carpathian countries will be organized in order to allow exchange of experience and promote the close-to-nature forest management and its approaches in practice. The workshop could be supported by Pro Silva, which would facilitate further collaboration with the Carpathian Convention and its Parties. More information about the workshop will be shared through the Secretariat in due course.

Romania in writing informed about an ongoing project, which will be completed in 2020, through which Romania plans to update all the technical forestry instructions. The main focus will be on the 'close-to-nature' concept in the case of all managed forests in Romania, based on maintaining the natural type of the forests.

## Adaptation to climate change

Mr. Sandor Szalai, Istvan University, presented the activities of the Working Group on Climate Change, which was followed by the presentation on Forest Europe' activities on adaptation to climate change delivered by Mr. Matej Schwarz, Liaison Unit Bratislava, Forest Europe. Furthermore, Tomáš Hlásny, Czech University of Life Sciences Prague presented a study of the European Forest Institute - *Living with bark beetles: New perspectives on an alarming problem, providing the reasons for the current bark beetles outbreaks, outlooks and remarks on future management, e.g. building forest with strong ability to naturally recover from disturbances – forest resilience.*

Mr. Libor Ulrych, State Nature Conservation of the Slovak Republic made an introduction to the discussion on climate change impacts on forestry and possible actions by the WG Forest to address the issues of climate change in the Carpathians.

The Secretariat proposed developing an assessment of the impacts of climate change on the Carpathian forests and their ecosystem services, which was appreciated and supported by the WG Forest. The idea of the assessment will be then brought to the WG Climate Change and further discuss. The WG Forest will be informed about the next steps in due course.

In this respect, the Secretariat proposed to follow currently undergoing process supporting the elaboration of the Carpathian report on large carnivores monitoring. In practice it means that each Party should nominate a contact person who would assemble information on the topic of climate change impact on the Carpathians forest in their country (10-15 pages). All the country reports will be then analysed and compiled by an expert in the field, producing one comprehensive report for the Carpathian region. The report shall include also best practices and experiences on climate change adaptation.

## Virgin forests in the Carpathians and their protection

Mr. Marco Trombetti, representing European Environment Agency and the European Topic Center on Urban, Land and Soil System (EEA/ULS), presented a progress of work on the inventory of virgin forest in the Carpathians. The cooperation between the Carpathian Convention and the EEA/ULS is based on the Partnership Agreement (2014), supports the WG Forest in setting the basis to locate, monitor and priorities virgin and HNV forest areas, including developing Carpathian-wide indicators supporting sustainable management efforts, supporting in the virgin forest inventory for better conservation and developing an integrated data platform to host data.

During 2019, the work on the finalization of the virgin forest inventory has been further progressing integrating updated information from the Parties and discussing the current options for filling the existing gaps.

Based on this revision, a new version of the Virgin Forest Inventory has been produced, including the EUNIS forest type classification and updated information about forest plots, their spatial location and ownership.

Romania provided the following written update on the subject:

- Currently, Romania has identified and introduced in the Catalog an area of 6947 ha of primeval forests and 22,116 ha of quasi-primeval forests. The list of these forests is available on the site of the Ministry of Waters and Forests being updated on a regular base, usually two times in a year. Romania wants to emphasize that all the forests from the Catalog are exempted from any type of human intervention. The current edition of the Catalog dates back to May 15, 2019 and can be found at address: <http://apepaduri.gov.ro/paduri-virgine/>
- The geographic coordinates of the forests included in the Catalog have been fully verified and corrected in the case of those areas that have proved to have errors.
- Besides the list of forests included in the Catalog, the mapping of the spatial distribution of these forests was also made available with the support of WWF Romania. Romania is pleased to have a fruitful collaboration with WWF at the national level regarding the primeval forests.
- The equivalent between the European forest type and the one registered in the Catalog was established and communicated according to the Romanian classification.
- Romania has received funding for a national study to identify primeval and quasi-primeval forests but, unfortunately, during the public procurement procedure, finalized in June 2019, we didn't receive any offers.

The current version of the inventory presented at the meeting. Future options were also discussed with the Secretariat, the Parties and the WWF representatives.

In addition to the official virgin forest inventory, there are alternative sources of data that gather information about forests with a well-known conservation status. When available, this information will be added to the Inventory as "not official data" (at the moment, for Romania, Ukraine and Poland). The description of the conservation status may not fully comply with the Protocol of the Carpathian Convention, but it can be used to complement the existing information and provide a starting point for the development of an official inventory of forests with a different degree of naturalness.

Mr. Ionut Sorin Banciu, WWF CEE, provided an overview of old growth forest conservation activities of the WWF CEE, focusing especially on Romania. Presentation included several approaches for identification of old growth forest in Romania, different solutions for protection and main challenges.

Furthermore, representative of the Polana Biosphere Reserve presented the best best practices and cooperation of foresters and nature protection in Polana Biosphere Reserve.

Mr. Volodymyr Korzhov, from the Ukrainian Research Institute of Mountain Forestry provided an update on the identification of virgin forests in Ukraine and the legal background which regulate the requirements for the identification and protection of virgin forest areas.

Next Mr. Martin Mikoláš from the Czech University of Life Science presented the project REMOTE forests on mapping, research and protection of mountain temperate forests in Europe.

## Summary of the meeting and next steps

### **The following next steps were agreed by the WG Forest:**

- WG Forest stressed the importance of the reporting on implementation of the Carpathian Convention and relevant sectors. Suggestions for the CC report indicators include: virgin forests cover; wetlands sites; surface of protected area; Natura2000 habitat degradation/loss (EU Member States) and Emerald Network (non-EU Member States); Capercaillie as an indicators of forest biodiversity; population of large carnivores (brown bear?). The draft report format should be consultant with the WG Forest as soon as available;
- WG Forest decided that priorities for the next implementation period shall be: close-to-nature forest management, climate change, and mapping of the virgin and natural forest.
- The Czech Republic, together with Slovakia, will provide further information regarding organization of a workshop on close-to-nature forest management for the Carpathian countries to be organized in order to allow exchange of experience and promote the close-to-nature forest management and it approaches in practice. The Secretariat will facilitate communication and organization of the workshop;
- The WG Forest welcomed the idea of developing an assessment of the impacts of climate change on the Carpathian forests and their ecosystem services, and recommended for further consideration for the WG Climate Change;
- Further consultations with the Parties (Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Serbia) regarding the finalization of the Inventory of Virgin Forest are needed;
- The WG Forest shall further consider possible extension of the Inventory of Virgin Forest of other degrees of naturalness;

## Closing remarks and closure of the meeting

The host country, Slovakia, together with the Secretariat, thanked the meeting participants for their active participation and contribution to the meeting discussion and closed the meeting.