



# Meeting Report of the Fourth Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism

Poiana Brasov  
Romania  
21 – 22 October 2013

Partners:



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MEETING REPORT OF THE FOURTH MEETING  
OF THE CARPATHIAN CONVENTION WORKING GROUP  
ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

21 – 22 October 2013  
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**EDITORS:**

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## I. Attendance

The Fourth Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism was attended by governmental delegates of four out of seven Carpathian Countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania), NGOs, administrations of protected areas, as well as international tourism experts and observers. The Slovak tourism expert has been mandated by the Slovak National Focal Point (NFP) to report the outcomes of the meeting.

27 participants from the following countries attended the workshop: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Austria and Germany. The full list of participants can be found in Annex I.

## II. Opening of the Meeting

The meeting officially opened at 15:30 on Monday, October 21, 2013.

Opening remarks were made by Mr. Harald Egerer, the Head of UNEP Vienna - Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (UNEP Vienna - ISCC).

Mr. Egerer thanked to the participants for attending the meeting and ensured that despite three governments were not represented at the meeting, they confirmed to be on board for the process of adopting the Carpathian Tourism Strategy. He pointed out the need of 'Carpathianism' as a new tourism in Europe.

Mr. Egerer informed that Brasov is one of the proposed location for the permanent Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention. He asked the participants to introduce themselves and proposed Romania to chair the meeting. Ms. Mihaela Luca from the General Secretariat of Romanian Government was elected as the chair.

Ms. Luca welcomed the participants on behalf of the Romanian government, expressed the wish for Brasov to become chosen as the permanent Secretariat and hoped for the smooth adoption and implementation of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy.

Mr. Egerer then introduced Mr. Michael Meyer (Ecological Tourism in Europe) and the process of creation of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism to the Carpathian Convention (the Protocol). He informed the meeting participant that the Protocol was ratified by Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary and then entered into force for these countries on 29 April 2013. Next he asked the official delegations about the update on ratification and implementation process regarding the Protocol.

**Czech Republic** informed they are currently waiting for the Carpathian Tourism Strategy in order to move the process forwards. **Hungary** is seeking the information on how to implement the Protocol. The government of **Poland** is trying to push the topic forward and prepared meetings in Poland and the Ukraine at the end of October, as well as workshops

during tourism fares, as well as a meeting of the Ministries of Carpathian Countries during 5<sup>th</sup> Innovation Forum in Rzeszow (28.5.2014) with tourism as the main topic. **Romania** is currently undertaking inter-ministerial consultations regarding the future adoption of the Protocol. However, due to political changes this may be delayed. **Serbia**, apart from the Protocol on Tourism, has also another protocol (Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management) to be ratified. Serbia expressed its awareness of the need for ratification of the Protocol and hoped to have it adopted by the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP4).

Mr. Meyer introduced the Agenda of the meeting, which – as adopted – can be found in the Annex II. He explained the purpose of the meeting, which was the discussion on the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Carpathians, its vision, objectives, as well as outcomes and financial technicalities for implementation to help preparing the next draft of the Strategy. It was announced that Mr. David Lasek (Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland) and Mr. Piotr Lutek (Synergia, Poland) will be giving presentations on the activities within their organizations.

### **III. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Carpathians**

The introduction into the topic of The Strategy for the future sustainable tourism development of the Carpathians was carried out by Mr. Meyer, the project coordinator, through the presentation, which can be found at:

[http://prezi.com/ds3bur\\_epwvs/pathway-to-the-carpathian-tourism-strategy](http://prezi.com/ds3bur_epwvs/pathway-to-the-carpathian-tourism-strategy)

The opening part aimed at introducing the partners and donors, Carpathian area, process of the project, as well as historical aspects and the reason for having the Strategy. It was explained that the goal is to adopt the Strategy at the Fourth Conference of Parties (COP4) in Mikulov, Czech Republic on 24 -26 September 2014. After this section, Mr. Meyer informed the participants that the presentation and discussion on Vision of the Strategy will be resumed after presentations of Mr. Lasek and Mr. Lutek.

Mr. Lasek delivered a short presentation on the Carpathian Euroregion. He introduced the activities and goals of the association, as well as presented the vision – the Carpathian Horizon 2020 – for socio-economic development of the region. Among their aims is to support the business sector, reinforce partnerships within the Euroregion, support of the EU and global connections, as well as cooperation within Carpathian Convention and creation of a Carpathian brand for the tourism sector. They are continuously undertaking cross-border projects (Polish-Slovak and Polish-Ukrainian – promotions, assessments, calls for proposals etc.). The Province of Podkarpackie approved recently a budget of 50M EUR to the Euroregion in order to implement sustainable tourism in the forthcoming 5 years.

Mr. Lutek presented a brand strategy for tourism offers in the Carpathians (*CARPATHIA – The Big Challenge*). Among underlined points on what would make the brand a success were authenticity – as the brand would be common for the whole region; creation of the

brand based on experience and not on communication only, taking into consideration customer perception.

After both presentations, the discussion on brands in regards to the Strategy was open. Mr. Meyer expressed the opinion that the Strategy will not be successful without a common brand. There is a need to establish a new brand or find a partnership with an already existing one. For the Strategy to be successful, Carpathian destinations also need to monitor tourism developments and define national control mechanisms, indicators, criteria and branding.

## VISION

After resuming the presentation, the Vision of the Strategy had been brought forward. The Vision of the Strategy consists of three statements:

*1. Carpathians is a top competitive destination in Europe, based on its unique natural and common cultural heritage preserved and maintained on large integral areas.*

The officials from **Hungary** and **the Czech Republic** proposed to add the word 'sustainable' in front of 'destination'. Mr. Egerer expressed the need to reflect the wording from the Tourism Protocol in the Strategy. Mr. Meyer raised a concern that the Protocol's legal language would not be appealing to the business sector. Mr. Gabor Kiss (Ministry of Rural Development, Hungary) made a remark on the 'common cultural heritage' as this might sound as the Strategy is not putting enough focus on the local heritage.

*2. The people in the Carpathians are successful and proud of maintaining their local authentic traditions, cultures and landscapes, which contribute to unique tourist experiences.*

It was proposed to rephrase: '...successful and proud of maintaining their local...' in order to link maintaining to successful.

*3. Good cooperation, local management and partnerships contribute to the high quality of tourism services, which ensures continuous benefits for local people and economies.*

The third Vision raised a discussion on the difference between local people and local communities, tourism services, as well as nature conservation and ecosystem services. The term 'ecosystem' would, as per Ms. Zuzana Tollrianova (Ministry of the Environment, NFP, the Czech Republic) cover a bigger scope of activities. Mr. Cezary Molski (Ministry of Sport and Tourism of Poland, Polish Tourism Organization) proposed using 'responsible tourism services'. However, Mr. Andrei Blumer (Association of Ecotourism in Romania) argued that it might be perceived as only responsible ones will have high quality. Mr. Egerer expressed opinion that the 'responsible' tourism services might be sufficient, however this needs to be checked with the Protocol therefore this topic was not yet closed.

After fruitful discussion, it was agreed that the wording of the Vision will be adjusted as follows and presented as a triangle (V1 on top – V2+V3 equally below):

- 1. The Carpathians is a top sustainable destination in Europe, based on its unique natural and cultural heritage preserved and maintained on large integral areas.*
- 2. The people in the Carpathians are successful in maintaining and proud of their local authentic traditions, cultures and landscapes, which contribute to unique tourist experiences.*
- 3. Good cooperation, local management and partnerships contribute to the high quality of responsible tourism and ecosystem services, which ensure continuous benefits for local communities and economies*

## **OBJECTIVES**

As well as the Visions, the Strategy has 3 different objectives, which were discussed.

- 1. Establishing of supportive conditions for sustainable tourism products and services, including development of a marketing scheme for the promotion of the Carpathians as a unique destination.*

During the discussion on the Visions, the phrase ‘responsible tourism’ should be more appropriate. Ms. Luca expressed her wish of having more accountable objectives. Mr. Molski considered this as a good goal, that there is the need to build a system and conditions that are accountable, however at the moment we do not know yet how many conditions we are capable to build up. Mr. Meyer pointed out that this objective covers more areas and it is later covered by outcomes with measurable indicators.

- 2. Developing an innovative tourism management at all levels, fully integrating the needs of local populations and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage.*

The question was raised what ‘innovative tourism management’ means. Mr. Meyer explained that this is a type of management that involves local population into decision-making processes and uses new tools for it (e.g. public use planning approach into destination or protected areas management, establishing of destination management organizations (DMO)). The wish that local people will understand procedures and reasons for development was expressed. Also it is vital to cluster all countries into management destinations and make sure they do not perceive themselves only as purely marketing organization. The action plan for this will be a part of the Strategy.

In addition, innovation also means adaptive management – due to changes there must be a room for flexibility (e.g. DMOs as learning systems).

It was pointed out that ‘people’ is a broader term than ‘population’ according to the CBD Tourism Guidelines.

- 3. Establishing a continuous process of awareness raising, capacity building, education and training on sustainable tourism development and management throughout vertical and horizontal levels.*

An explanation was needed for the 'vertical and horizontal levels'. Common opinion was to replace the wording as it was too complicated and would require adding the explanation into the strategy.

It was agreed the 3 objectives will be adjusted as follows:

- 1. Establishing of supportive conditions for responsible tourism products and services, including development of a marketing scheme for the promotion of the Carpathians as a unique sustainable destination.*
- 2. Developing an innovative tourism management at all levels, integrating the needs of local people and economies, and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage.*
- 3. Establishing a continuous process of awareness raising, capacity building, education and training on sustainable tourism development and management at all levels.*

## **OUTCOMES**

13 performance indicators that are presented in the Strategy to help measuring the successful implementation of sustainable tourism practices in the Carpathians were discussed during the meeting.

- 1. A common brand is created for the destinations in the Carpathians.*

Common brand needs to be accepted by the all Carpathian Counties. The proposal of Polish partners for CARPATHIA will have to be discussed further and the brand needs to be consulted among stakeholders first.

- 2. All destinations in the Carpathians have an effective management and DMO following a set of sustainability criteria (tourist hubs).*
- 3. An information system is established throughout the Carpathians providing data for monitoring and for visitors at the same time.*

This is understood as a marketing tool for tourists on one hand but also what is called the Clearing House Mechanism CHM (CHM) - information exchange, improving scientific and technical co-operation, network development and availability of national, regional and local data. Exchange of best practices should be part of this mechanism.

- 4. A number of products (STP – sustainable tourism products) are promoted at the regional as well as global tourism-related markets.*

Those products must be well designed, which would allow raising competitiveness at tourism fares, presented together by all 7 countries.

*5. Carpathian service providers are successfully communicating to tourists the value of this mountain region based on a code of conduct.*

First indicator would be the Code of Conduct; communication should later happen on destination level. Surveys would then check the level of satisfaction in the destination, how services are being communicated and how accessible are they for tourist. The outcome would be to see how the service providers promote the Carpathians. The indicator should be rephrased to 'A number of Carpathian...'.

*6. Governments adjust their voluntary and legal frameworks for the support of sustainable tourism based on common assessments.*

Reviews and new assessments are being undertaken for the tourism strategies of each Carpathian Country based on a common methodology, currently developed by CEEweb. Later on, the methodology should be adjusted by the coordination center and integrated into the reporting system.

*7. Products and services following common quality standards and are integrated into a labeling system.*

Participants suggested adding also sustainable quality standards into the wording. Common Carpathian system of standards would be an added value to existing quality criteria. There is a need to find a common link between all countries and not to make the requirements too high from the start. There should be obligatory and voluntary criteria.

*8. A properly managed network of hiking trails is established by cooperation between Carpathian countries distinguishing between Carpathians wide and local destinations.*

This would be a network based on existing trails but there is a necessity to expand. Inspiration could be found in the Alps. Any types of sustainable trails (hiking, biking, skiing etc.) should be developed, probably later by the Tourism Task Force (TTF), however it will be reflected on needs for each country.

*9. A Coordination center for product development, promotion, marketing and monitoring is established and operating.*

It was discussed that a coordination center for the implementation of the Strategy would be established by the Convention. NFPs (National Focal Points) would establish the TTF, which would communicate and coordinate national tourism developments to the Carpathian level (Coordination Centre). The question of a coordination center in Rzeszow was raised as the Euroregion Carpathia will propose to host such a center. A suggestion was made to test the center there and if not successful after a defined period, a new center could be selected by the TTF. Mr. Molski confirmed Rzeszow would be flexible and as there are currently no other proposals, it would be counterproductive to start a separate initiative to open a new center.



The TTF could be integrated into the Working Group of Sustainable Tourism (WGST) with a defined relationship to UNEP Vienna - ISCC. It is necessary to include the process of establishing the body into the Strategy.

The necessity of coordination centers within each country was expressed.

Mr. Blumer suggested a straight recommendation for national coordination centers to be included and to appoint a person for the implementation of the Strategy, otherwise there might be not enough endorsement from local institutions.

*10. Network of ecotourism destinations is established.*

The network could be carried out upon agreement with governments; they select the destinations based on a set of criteria by which they deal with the management. These areas are larger than protected area and applications are reviewed by businesses and local administrations. The example of Romania on the development of ecotourism destinations was presented.

*11. A number of laboratories and incubators as learning institutions on sustainable tourism practices for providers and communities is established.*

The term 'laboratory' is used as a tool for the scientific monitoring of tourism destinations. It would be advisable to get in contact with UNWTO to establish a laboratory for the Carpathians.

*12. Governmental sectors support the proper sustainable use of authentic landscapes and wilderness areas with associated tourism infrastructure, which forms the foundation of any tourism operations.*

Protocols and strategies in other relevant sectors should be also checked to see how far the improvement went. Mr. Egerer considers this not an indicator but a target.

*13. Small and micro businesses are supported by organizational systems and incentive policies.*

In this case, DMOs should be serving as the organizational systems.

## **FINANCIALS**

In regards to finances, there is a need to have at least a basic funding for the implementation of the Strategy.

As soon as the coordination center is established, each country would delegate one expert to the center. Each expert would have different scope of tasks. This would be a financial contribution from the governments of seven Carpathian countries. In that way it would show a high commitment of governments. Ms. Tollrianova expressed concern as for instance in the Czech Republic they do not have a civil service and therefore constraints in the adoption

process of the Strategy might appear. Therefore, this should be only a recommendation and governmental officials should check with their Ministries if this option would be acceptable. The Carpathian Coordination Center (CCC) could later establish the quality criteria and branding system and collect membership and evaluation fees.

A suggestion was made to try to finance the implementation from projects however this would be a high risk as such project budget cannot be guaranteed. As the Parties to the Convention have ratified the Protocol and asked for the Strategy, they also should be committed to finance it.

A marketing budget could be sponsored by the countries according to the number of tourism businesses and the territory of the Carpathians covered by the member country with the aim for officials to understand countries need to cooperate in order to promote their destinations.

The example from Poland has been presented on tourism development and marketing for cycling trails. In each participating region there is an expert paid currently by the project. Once the project ends, they will be paid by the regions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**


The participants of the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism concluded on the following recommendations:

1. The above notes on vision, objectives and outcomes should be taken into full consideration when preparing the next draft of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy.
2. The new draft will be divided into two separate documents – Chapters 1 – 4 will be put as appendices and Summary of Chapter 1 and then Chapters 5 – 7 will form the core of the next strategy draft.
3. The strategy needs to be appealing to the business sector. However it must take into consideration the paragraphs of the Tourism Protocol in order to enable COP4 to adopt the Strategy.
4. After having received additional comments from the governments by end of October, ETE is going to draft the new version of the Strategy. This new draft should be distributed by the end of November 2013 to the members of the CC-WGST to comment on it before the expert meeting, which is planned for 10-11 December 2013.
5. The expert meeting will finalize the draft Carpathian Tourism Strategy to be submitted to the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee through UNEP Vienna - ISCC.

The meeting was closed with remarks by Ms. Luca and Mr. Egerer at 04:30pm on 22 October 2013.

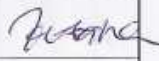
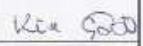


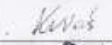

# Annex I

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS




**Carpathian Convention Working Group  
on Sustainable Tourism  
Fifth Meeting  
21 - 22 October 2013, Brasov, Romania**


**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

Nr.	Name	Organization	Country	E-Mail	Signature
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Partners:



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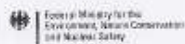


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## **Annex II**

**Carpathian Convention Working Group  
on Sustainable Tourism  
Fifth Meeting  
21 - 22 October 2013, Brasov, Romania**

### **AGENDA**

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Welcome and opening remarks by UNEP Vienna – ISCC and host Country Romania
3. Election of the Chair
4. Adoption of the Agenda
5. Update on the Tourism Protocol by UNEP Vienna – ISCC
6. Steps to finalize the Carpathian Tourism Strategy by ETE
7. Tourism in the context of the Carpathian Convention by ETE
8. Discussion on the content of the „Strategy for the future sustainable tourism development of the Carpathians“
9. Next steps
10. Closure of the meeting