

**STRATEGY FOR  
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE CARPATHIANS**





**DRAFT**

**STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE CARPATHIANS**

**2<sup>ND</sup> CONSULTATION DRAFT**

**FOR THE**

**CARPATHIAN CONVENTION**

**WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

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## 1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The „Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians“ was developed thanks to the involvement of many stakeholders starting in the year 2007 until 2013.

Initiated by the Parties of Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, its Working Group on Sustainable Tourism convened four times (Lopenik/Czech Republic, April 2007; Sucha Beskidska/Poland, April 2008; Rytro/Poland, September 2010; Brasov/Romania, October 2013) to discuss the structure and content of the strategy.

In the year 2013 more than 400 individuals and organizations provided feedback on the strategy during a number of country consultation meetings. Thanks to the Centrum Veronica Hostetin/Czech Republic, the Ecological Institute for Sustainable Development Miskolc/Hungary together with the Ekocentrum SOSNA/Slovak Republic, the Naturalists Club/Poland, the Association of Ecotourism/Romania, OZ Pronatur and Jantarova Cesta/Slovak Republic, the Association FAUNA/Ukraine and Vavel Pozlovi Turizma/Serbia, the stakeholders in the seven countries have provided valuable inputs to the strategy.

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## 2 INTRODUCTION and RATIONALE

The purpose of the Strategy is to determine common actions in order to value and sustainably use the outstanding natural and cultural assets for sustainable tourism development of the Carpathians. This mountain range covers a large part of Central and Eastern Europe and it will become an attractive tourism destination that contributes to the quality of life of the local population and to the protection of the cultural and natural heritage.

Seven countries share the Carpathians, each of them having a different approach to tourism development. They follow different strategies and use different methods, which can limit the expected positive contributions from tourism and may allow negative impacts of tourism to local communities and the mountainous landscape they are living in.

This strategy will harmonize and coordinate country-specific approaches by providing a common understanding and umbrella platform for planning and management. The strategy is not a stand-alone activity; it is part of the comprehensive effort of 7 Carpathians countries’ governments to coordinate the responsible use, protection and promotion of the Carpathians as a tourism destination.

One of the joint efforts of governments is the **“The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians”** (Carpathian Convention), which was adopted and signed by the seven Parties (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Ukraine) in May 2003 in Kyiv, Ukraine, and entered into force in January 2006.

In line with the objectives of the Carpathian Convention, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of the Parties adopted in May 2011 the **Protocol on Sustainable Tourism** to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians. In this Protocol, which is since May 2013 in force, the Parties decided in Article 27 (Implementation), Paragraph 3:

***The Conference of the Parties shall develop and adopt the Strategy on Sustainable Tourism Development in the Carpathians, which will accompany the implementation of this protocol.***

The Strategy for the Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians is therefore directly interlinked with the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism in order to contribute to its implementation. The most relevant chapters in the Protocol build the fundament of the Strategy and are translated into a common action plan, e.g. Article 6: Participation of stakeholders, Article 7: International cooperation, Article 8: Promotion of the Carpathian region, Article 9: Development of regional sustainable tourism products, Article 10: Ensuring common high quality standards, Article 11: Enhancing the contribution of tourism to local economies, etc.

**The Framework Convention  
on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians**



### 3 TOURISM IN THE CARPATHIANS

The Carpathians are currently home to an estimated 18 Million people. The region is shared by seven Central and Eastern European countries, five of which have joined the European Union (EU). Ties linking the Carpathian countries are noticeable in languages, music, similar tales, the characteristic small towns situated at the foothills of the range, their architectural styles, etc.

According to all major international organizations (e.g. UNWTO, WTTC and OECD), tourism is one of the most important and influential economic sectors of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is anticipated that tourism, in terms of its economic importance is similar to the car manufacturing or oil industry. By quantitative measures, e.g. number of visits, total expenditure, employment, tourism really is a significant industry, however, by its complex impacts on the socio-cultural, natural and economic environment, it can be rather two-faceted.

The Carpathians are located in the most visited region of the world. Europe accommodates 54.8% of all international travelers. During the last 10 years the Carpathian countries could improve their role in international tourism from receiving 87.9 million to 111.6 million in 2012. Central and Eastern European countries attract 20% of all international travelers to Europe. It is estimated the actual Carpathian region (i.e. considering only those regions and counties that are geographically located in the mountain range) receives app. 45 million overnight stays (including domestic and international travelers) in a year.

The tourism offer is rather robust in the Carpathians. The mountain range offers approximately 1.5 million beds for domestic and international tourists. Mountain and nature tourism (including skiing) is important in almost all countries. The Carpathians play a crucial role in the positioning of Romania, while there are very structured and sound information labeled with Carpathian Mountains in Slovakia. In Serbia, and the Ukraine, the Carpathians are among the must see destinations.

The Carpathian region provides some of the Europe's cleanest streams and drinking water supplies and contains Europe's greatest reserve of pristine forest. The area represents a unique composition of ecosystems with an exceptionally high biological diversity. Relatively small population densities, a considerable number of large forests have allowed a rich and diverse flora and fauna to exist in the Carpathians. As a result of far reaching transformations of the natural environment in Central Europe, the Carpathians have remained one of the most important refuge for many plant and animal species, playing a significant role in the preservation of biological diversity in Europe.

Travel to mountain ecosystems is increasing at a rapid pace globally. Growing numbers of tourists are attracted to the clean air, unique landscapes and wildlife, scenic beauty, rich culture and heritage, history, and recreational opportunities that mountain destinations offer. The Carpathians have wide range of tourism and leisure amenities of offer, e.g.

- Rural tourism is a basic product of the mountain regions. The authentic culture, and the agriculture of the village life as a main product in most parts of the Carpathians and the slow movement (especially slow food) has also been gaining popularity
- The cultural heritage of the area is very rich, with several UNESCO acclaimed World Heritage Sites, numerous listed buildings and cultural traditions and events



- Geotourism is a relatively new form of tourism, which has become one of the leading alternatives uses of natural sites
- Skiing in several slopes of the Carpathian Mountain is really developed
- Adventure tourism is a suitable product to attract young, high spending travelers.
- Ecotourism is particularly interesting in and around protected areas, where visitor centers, educational paths are developed
- Health tourism is an important issue in every country, such as climate and thermal water based hydro/balneotherapies

Several Carpathian countries have already built on their rich natural assets in tourism communication: Poland uses 'The Natural Choice' slogan; in the logo of Romania the Carpathians are resembled and in Hungary, 2007 was the 'Year of Green Tourism', and from Poland (through Austria) to Romania they refer to themselves as 'The country in the Centre/Heart of Europe'.

## 4 CHALLENGES AHEAD

We (the Parties to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians) understand that this mountain area is facing the following challenges, which we strive to overcome with this strategy:

### 1. Coordination & Communication

- a. The future of the Carpathians as an attractive sustainable tourism destination, which is able to compete on the international tourism market, is largely depending on the cooperation of all the sectors (governmental, business, non-governmental) to plan, develop and manage this region in such a way that the existing natural and cultural resources are maintained and domestic and international visitors can enjoy a great experience.
- b. A tourism that benefits local communities and national economies requires sound communication between all the involved stakeholders. The growing popularity of mountain areas, however, poses a potential threat to the health of their natural and cultural resources. The tourism sector's competitiveness is closely linked to the sustainability of its base, i.e. the natural and cultural assets. There is a challenge in coordinating tourism infrastructure developments, managing tours and tourist activities to avoid impacts on fragile ecosystems, as well as on the communities that inhabit mountain regions. The sustainability of nature and culture covers a number of aspects: the responsible use of natural resources, taking account of the environmental impact of activities (production of waste, pressure on water, land and biodiversity, etc.), the use of 'clean' energy, protection of the heritage and preservation of the natural and cultural integrity of destinations, the quality and sustainability of jobs created, local economic fallout or customer care.

### 2. Product Development

- a. The Carpathian countries share several tourism products and leisure activities that are very similar all across the 7 countries (e.g. nature walks, skiing, bird watching). This leaves the governments (and industry) with the challenge of working together for mutual benefits and advantages. Also, development plans and incentives should foster the development of services and products that are based and/or are using local ingredients and materials (e.g. signature products to the region).
- b. Climate change may not leave the region without any impacts that can result in irreversible alterations of both in natural and cultural systems and in the tourism products that are built on them. The challenge is how to indicate irreversible changes and how to prepare alternative plans and management solutions to avoid dependency situations when one destination may become dependent on one form of tourism only.
- c. Tourism often provides attractive business opportunities that are based on large number of visitors either seasonally or permanently. Governments,



either national or local are challenged with how to put sufficient and applicable planning and monitoring structures in regarding infra and superstructure developments all across the region.

### **3. Common Standards**

- a. Tourism as a cross industry and cross country activity requires not only the harmonization of services but that of qualities, too. The definition of certain service quality standards and the assurance of such standards is a very challenging task, especially in a multi-country situation.
- b. Standards can be used as means of creating cohesion between market players and management organizations. The acceptance of similar standards that are applicable all across the region and all across the tourism industry and improve industry knowledge and attitude towards quality, however, isn't an easy task. Industry standards such as for rural accommodation, nature trails and guides, skiing or mountaineering, etc. leave government with a challenge that needs close coordination.
- c. Sustainable development oriented approaches necessitate the presence and use of (harmonized) criteria and indicators. Without the involvement of governments monitoring and assessment cannot be performed all across the regions and against similar standards and thresholds.

### **4. Common Branding**

- a. Modern and creative branding (and marketing as a whole) leaves marketers with significant challenges since such branding requires permanent market surveying, flexible and progressive market responses. Without joining forces this common branding can only be performed partially and in a fragmented fashion.
- b. A common Carpathian brand would need jointly accepted brand architecture (personality, identity, etc.), so that target markets have a better understanding of the great assets and resources of the Carpathians. Branding is not only advertising, therefore common branding cannot take place successfully without coordination and communication between the stakeholders, without harmonized product development and industry standards.

## SWOT Analysis

The below listed SWOT is a result of the consultations with the stakeholders in the seven countries of the Carpathians. The Carpathian mountain system is unique at both the European and the global scale. It forms one of the very last regions in the center of Europe particularly rich in great beauty of natural resources, which is due to its wide diversity of landscapes and vegetation types as well as the traditional cultural landscape and forms of land use as well as a rich and diverse folklore.

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strong natural and cultural assets, which are not yet well-known and seen ‘exotic’.</li> <li>▪ Widespread pristine environment, i.e. nature is still untouched which can be attractive to guest from (over)populated and polluted urban areas.</li> <li>▪ The relative underdevelopment is an advantage since the Carpathians seems and feels natural and not artificial.</li> <li>▪ Traditional and rich culture and heritage (e.g. languages, folk and culinary art, events).</li> <li>▪ The ‘new destination’ status makes prospective visitors curious and interested.</li> <li>▪ Natural beauty of the landscape.</li> <li>▪ The natural and cultural assets are multi-seasonal.</li> <li>▪ In most areas local and regional (tourism) organization networks being developed and are in operation.</li> <li>▪ Lack of image is an opportunity, since a brand new image can be created and communicated.</li> <li>▪ Good location in terms of international tourism.</li> <li>▪ Growing accessibility (considering regional airports).</li> <li>▪ Attractive price/quality ratios of services.</li> <li>▪ Availability of nature and adventure tourism services, e.g. skiing, nature trails.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Various EU funds are available in EU member countries and non-EU countries in the form of (not only) cross-border co-operations. These funds, according to the priorities of the national development plans, supported tourism, infrastructure and social developments, although in various cases and countries the use of these funds was not fully explored.</li> <li>▪ The efforts and initiatives of NGOs are very much focusing on conservation, preservation and development of natural areas and local heritage.</li> <li>▪ Since trips in general are getting shorter, it can be expected that people visit other places rather than the far distance coastal areas, such as new destinations in mountains or inland lakes. In this budget air travel definitely can and does play significant role.</li> <li>▪ All of the Carpathian countries, to different degrees, are considered as economies in transition, which directly effects domestic and international tourism (e.g. in terms of frequency of trips and spending power).</li> <li>▪ In Europe the demand for responsible tourism grows, which is a key market generating factor for the Carpathians.</li> <li>▪ The travel and tourism industry show more interest in sustainable practices, especially, if these can be translated to higher financial returns and/or decreased costs.</li> <li>▪ There is only little use of complementary attractions and services that can provide support for new tourism product developments complementing natural and cultural assets.</li> </ul>

Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Being a Single Destination would mean               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Visitors (prospective and existing) consider it as one area</li> <li>○ Existence in virtual space only, i.e. perception of people</li> <li>○ Involved parties do work together</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The Carpathians, yet, can be seen as a geographical region and not a destination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High seasonality of tourism demand</li> <li>▪ Tourism marketing and targeting is not always focused and not in every country or destination which leads unspecified brands</li> <li>▪ There are seven countries involved, which also means seven languages, legislation, organizational structures, etc.</li> <li>▪ Non-governmental sector is not of the same strength in every Carpathian country. There are some NGOs (like Greenways or CEEweb) but with limited funds and resources, therefore with limited outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Lack of maintenance of already existing services and facilities.</li> <li>▪ Weakly developed social capital mistrust and unwillingness to co-operate. The coordination between countries is sub-optimal, due to political, historical and economic reasons.</li> <li>▪ Since two (Serbia and the Ukraine) of the seven countries are not yet members of the EU, cross-border entry and various other administrative issues make co-ordination difficult.</li> <li>▪ It is anticipated that the link and communication between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’, i.e. bodies responsible for management can certainly be improved.</li> <li>▪ Ad-hoc planning and management is typical to many areas. Although, every EU member country had to prepare its National and Regional Development Plans, where sustainable tourism is a main issue, though the action plans are not visible, which could make the “idea” work.</li> <li>▪ Monitoring and assessment of developments are rarely implemented.</li> <li>▪ Destination awareness is very low, destination management practices are just in the beginning phase at Carpathian level (with good practices at local levels in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Existing tourism product supply (skiing, snowboarding, mountain climbing, trekking, bird-watching, hunting, fishing, rafting, parachuting, spas, city visits, festivals, events, gastronomy, (folk) traditions) is a great baseline for sustainable tourism, though the impacts should be monitored, the quality should be controlled, and sound development is needed. Without integrated planning developers will want more locations to be involved and to have more visitors, which leads to more intensive use of resources.</li> <li>▪ The once favorable price/quality ratio made the region attractive, but price-led image and competition is always very dangerous and not sustainable. Cheap prices may seem to be tempting for Western visitors, but it leads to price competition, where sustainability is not a priority.</li> <li>▪ There is pressure from developers/municipalities for quick (visible) results, which may lead to unsustainable, but maintainable developments or greenwashing.</li> <li>▪ Nature conservation and management are in continuous competition with other user activities such forestry or hunting.</li> <li>▪ Development funds (e.g. provided by the EU) are used for quick-win economic developments not taking nature and culture into consideration</li> <li>▪ The apathy of rural communities remains to be widespread</li> </ul>

<p>numerous destinations)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Everyday social problems dominate politics and budget negotiations, i.e. fighting poverty and unemployment. Sustainability may not be a priority. Organizations and institutions still have problems defining their roles and responsibilities if tourism is in question. Quick (financial) returns and benefits are always favored, while long term impacts are not considered.</li> <li>▪ Other economic activities (e.g. forestry, extracting industry) do influence natural and cultural environments. Also, adventure sport activities, such as quads, 4WDs, bikes in mountain areas, without management and monitoring do have rather detrimental impacts.</li> <li>▪ Infrastructure system is underdeveloped, which makes tourism access very difficult. However, infrastructure development should take place to increase the quality of life for locals, and then, for tourists.</li> <li>▪ Lack of necessary skills, knowledge and experience in sustainable practices among entrepreneurs, local communities and governmental sector.</li> <li>▪ Quality of services is varied and is not reliable.</li> <li>▪ Lack of trustworthy and comparable data on tourism and related fields at Carpathian level.</li> </ul> <p>The role of politics and that of some pressure groups (e.g. land owners, agriculture or hunters) put a pressure on conservation and integrated development and management.</p>	
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# 5 VISION and OBJECTIVES

While being aware of the challenges ahead, the Carpathian stakeholders strive to make tourism more sustainable. The vision underlines the three dimensions cooperation, conservation and competitiveness, which are the fundament to value tourism, agreed by the Parties of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians:



In order to reach a top sustainable tourism destination the governments agree that the following three objectives will form the targets to accomplish the vision by 2024:

## Objective 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***

The uniqueness of the Carpathians when it comes to visitor’ experiences are the cultural and natural assets. Still remaining authentic features make this mountain range so different to other destinations in Europe. However, this unique authenticity needs to be reflected in products and services, which can compete on the international market. The 1<sup>st</sup> objective will ensure that sustainability guidelines and standards are developed and implemented and that products and services are effectively put on the market.

## **Objective 2**

***Developing an innovative tourism management, fully integrating the needs of local people and economies and other supporting sectors, respecting the preservation of natural and cultural heritage***

Balancing the needs of local people with the goals of conservation through a thorough management at local, national and Carpathian level is one of the main pillars in sustainable tourism development. The 2<sup>nd</sup> objective will establish a system of management tools respecting the conditions of the seven Carpathian countries while up scaling communication throughout the Carpathian Mountains. The innovative management will set new standards in destinations and protected areas on sustainable tourism and will contribute to enhancing the performance of other economic sectors.

## **Objective 3**

***Establishing a continuous process of awareness raising, capacity building, education and training on sustainable tourism development and management at all levels***

Creating an enabling environment for the implementation of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians is crucial for success. Enhancing the knowledge of tourism stakeholders with regards to developing and managing tourism in a responsible way will create the fundament to reach our vision of having a top sustainable tourism destination by the year 2014. Institutions involved in training and education will work together to create new innovative methods ensuring mainstreaming of sustainable practices throughout the Carpathians.

The objectives form the path for the implementation of the two actions plans in the following chapter 6. The governments agree on the two action plans, the first to be implemented by each Government of the Carpathian Convention and the second by the (to be established, depending on available funding) Carpathian Coordination Centre.

## 6 ACTION PLAN

### Action plan for the Parties to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians

<b>Objective 1: ESTABLISHING OF SUPPORTIVE CONDITIONS FOR THE RESPONSIBLE TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES, INCLUDING DEVELOPMENT OF A MARKETING SCHEME FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE CARPATHIANS AS A UNIQUE SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION</b>		
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Time frame</b>	<b>Reference to the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism</b>
Initiating <b>destination and/or country specific tourism product development</b> (e.g. rural tourism, slow tourism, heritage tourism, ecotourism in protected areas, spa tourism, dark sky parks, etc.)	Year 1	Article 1 para 3 (b) Article 9 para 1
Supporting the <b>establishment of regional (destination) labels</b> for preserving the character of landscape authenticity, protection of tangible and intangible heritage in order to enhance the image of country' destinations Carpathian wide	Year 2	Article 10 para 3 Article 11 para 2 Article 13 para 2
<b>Simplifying cross-border tourism</b> , favorable visa regime (where applicable) and linking of trails- implementation to joint cross-border tourism products	Year 4	Article 20 para 1
Establishing <b>incentive measures</b> (tax reduction, subsidies) for local tourism businesses developing and implementing sustainable tourism products	Year 4	
Developing <b>principles and guidelines on sustainable sport infrastructure</b> and activities, e.g. skiing, golf, para-gliding, horse-riding, climbing, mountain-biking, canyoning, etc.	Year 1	Article 16 para 6 Article 21 para 1 Article 22 para 1 Article 23 para 1
Developing <b>programs for promoting and funding the preservation of local cultural and natural heritage</b> through tourism	Year 3	Article 1 para 3 (f), (j) Article 13 para 2 Article 17 paras 1-3
Establishing a system on the involvement of <b>local communities in regional product development</b>	Year 2	
Establishing a system of <b>support for local farmers on sustainable agriculture</b> to contribute to sustainable tourism products and services	Year 1	Article 1 para 3 (g) Article 14 paras 1-2
<b>Supporting agro-tourism</b> , maintaining specific local cultural land-use heritage, e.g. beekeeping, food production,	Year 2	Article 17 para 1
Identifying and supporting the establishment of <b>Carpathian wide authentic clusters on sustainable tourism products</b> , e.g. Via Carpathica hiking trail system	Year 2	Article 9 paras 1-3
<b>Performance indicators</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A properly managed network of hiking, biking, skiing and horse riding trails is established, distinguishing between Carpathians wide and local destinations</li> <li>• Products and services follow common quality standards and are integrated into a labeling system (The Carpathian Experience)</li> </ul>		



- A common brand is created for touristic products and destinations in the Carpathians
- A network of ecotourism destinations is established
- A number of products (STP – sustainable tourism products) are promoted at the regional as well as global tourism-related markets

**Objective 2: DEVELOPING AN INNOVATIVE TOURISM MANAGEMENT, FULLY INTEGRATING THE NEEDS OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND ECONOMIES AND OTHER SUPPORTING SECTORS, RESPECTING THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Activities	Time frame	Reference to the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism
Establishing the <b>Tourism Task Force</b> as part of the Sustainable Tourism Working Group of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians	Year 1	Article 7 paras 1-2
Establishing and supporting the <b>Carpathian Coordination Centre (CCC)</b>	Year 1	Article 7 paras 1-2 Article 25
Revising <b>National Tourism Development Strategies</b> by incorporating the principles of sustainable tourism and the Carpathian dimension	As appropriate	Article 4 para 1 Article 24 para 1 Article 26 para 1
<b>Zoning the key touristic areas</b> with a focus on carrying capacity issues and implementing impact assessment measures	Year 2	
Establishing <b>destination management organizations (DMO) in key touristic areas</b> to implement sustainable tourism management schemes with local stakeholders	Year 3	(Article 6 para 1) (Article 11 para 3 (b) (c))
Harmonizing <b>public transportation schedules</b> etc., as well as defining guiding measures for coordinating tourism flows in the region	Year 4	Article 16 para 1
Developing common measures <b>adapted to public transportation</b> that comply with tourists needs within the destinations and for trans-boundary tourism traffic	Year 3	Article 12 para 2 Article 16 para 1
Elaborating recommendations for policy-makers regarding the <b>sustainable improvement of the road and rail network</b> in the Carpathians with the function that favors development of tourism on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving priority to sustainable ways of transport (bus, train, etc.)</li> <li>• North-south communication system development through Carpathians</li> <li>• Improvement of transport accessibility and network of transnational public transport</li> <li>• Development of transport facilities for tourists with special requirements including the information about the accessibility to TI Carpathian system</li> </ul>	Year 2	Article 16 paras 3-5
Enhancing <b>trans-boundary cooperation</b> by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organizing of „both-side“ events (fairs, exhibitions, workshops, etc.)</li> <li>• design trail network from „both-side“ perspective</li> <li>• introducing non-Schengen border crossings solutions for tourist movement</li> </ul>	Year 3	Article 16 para 2

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new tourism border crossings, new bridges and footbridge over border rivers</li> <li>• tourist business initiatives.</li> </ul>		
Designing a system to <b>support extensive (ecological, certified) forestry</b> which contribute to sustainable tourism development	Year 3	Article 15 para 1
Develop a system on incentives to support the <b>improvement and use of local supply chains</b>	Year 4	Article 11 para 3 (e)
Development of programs for <b>promotion of local cultural heritage tourism</b> in the Carpathian countries taking into account the specificity and diversity of all lands and sub-Carpathian areas	Year 2	Article 17 paras 1-2
Contributing to a <b>common set of indicators</b> on the effects of implemented policies and strategies to develop sustainable tourism in the Carpathians	Year 2	Article 24 para 2 Article 26 para 2
Establishing a working group for <b>assessing the tourism impacts on biological diversity</b> (including Protected Areas) implementing Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	Year 2	Article 1 para 3 (m) Article 21 Para 2
<b>Performance indicators</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A coordination centre for product development, promotion, marketing and monitoring is established and operating</li> <li>• All destinations in the Carpathians have an effective management and DMO following a set of sustainability criteria (tourist hubs)</li> <li>• A network of ecotourism destinations is established</li> <li>• Small and micro businesses are supported by organizational systems and incentive policies</li> <li>• Governments adjust their voluntary and legal frameworks for the support of sustainable tourism based on common assessments</li> <li>• A governmental support scheme on the sustainable use of authentic landscapes and wilderness areas with associated tourism infrastructure, which forms the foundation of any tourism operations</li> </ul>		

<b>Objective 3: ESTABLISHING A CONTINUOUS PROCESS OF AWARENESS RAISING, CAPACITY BUILDING, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT AT ALL LEVELS</b>		
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Time frame</b>	<b>Reference to the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism</b>
Establishing a system on continuous <b>education for local stakeholders</b> on sustainable tourism development - education programs at schools, raising awareness of the public in regards to natural and cultural heritage	Year 2	Article 18 para 2 Article 19 para 5
Contributing to a common <b>Carpathian education, interpretation and awareness raising program</b>	Year 1	Article 18 para 2
<b>Enhancing international cooperation</b> of entities responsible for environmental management in individual member states	Year 2	Article 7 para 1

Implementing campaigns, especially in the country's Carpathian part of the country, to <b>raise the awareness of local population on sustainable tourism</b> and the Carpathian initiative	Year 2	Article 1 para 3 (k) Article 18 para 2 (a)
<b>Performance indicators</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of laboratories and incubators as learning institutions on sustainable tourism practices for providers and communities are established.</li> </ul>		

## Action plan for the Carpathian Coordination Centre

<b>Objective 1: ESTABLISHING OF SUPPORTIVE CONDITIONS FOR THE RESPONSIBLE TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES, INCLUDING DEVELOPMENT OF A MARKETING SCHEME FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE CARPATHIANS AS A UNIQUE SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION</b>		
<b>Action: Branding and Communication of Unique Products and Experiences</b>		
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Time frame</b>	<b>Reference to the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism</b>
Creating the <b>Carpathian Corporate Identity</b> (based on the brand values) to the Carpathians and make the usage of the logo, slogan compulsory for all those service suppliers, who joined and got labeled to the Carpathians product-line.	Year 1	Article 9 para 2
Creating a <b>certification and labeling system</b> for the Carpathian Brand	Year 2	Article 9 para 4 Article 10 para 3 Article 11 para 2
Developing a <b>Carpathian-wide quality standard system</b> for i.e. “Local food”, “Local accommodation”, “Local experience – how to guide the tourists”, “Code of Conduct for Tourists in the Carpathians”	Year 2	Article 1 para 3 (c) Article 10 para 2
Developing common <b>principles and guidelines on sustainable sport infrastructure</b> and activities, e.g. skiing, golf, para-gliding, horse-riding, climbing, mountain-biking, canyoning, etc.		Article 10 para 6 Article 16 para 6 Article 21 para 1 Article 22 para 1 Article 23 para 1
Establishing the <b>common platform on tourism products and services</b> database as well as good practices with continuously updated information	Year 3	Article 9 para 5
Building a joint <b>online platform for promoting labeled products</b> linking with the websites of NTOs	Year 3	Article 11 para 2
Designing a <b>common system of information</b> panels and marking of trails throughout the Carpathians	Year 3	Article 16 para 6 Article 19 para 4
Identifying <b>trans-boundary products</b> on the Carpathian level and mapping relevant initiatives	Year 3	Article 20 para 3
Establishing a <b>tour operators cooperation platform</b>	Year 4	Article 1 para 3 (a-b) Article 8 para 2
<b>Performance indicators</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An information system is established throughout the Carpathians providing online solutions, and data for monitoring and for visitors at the same time.</li> <li>• A properly managed network of hiking, biking, skiing and horse riding trails is established, distinguishing between Carpathians wide and local destinations.</li> <li>• Products and services follow common quality standards and are integrated into a labeling system (The Carpathian Experience)</li> <li>• A common brand is created for touristic products and destinations in the Carpathians.</li> <li>• A number of products (STP – sustainable tourism products) are promoted at the regional as well as global tourism-related markets.</li> </ul>		

**Objective 2: DEVELOPING AN INNOVATIVE TOURISM MANAGEMENT, FULLY INTEGRATING THE NEEDS OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND ECONOMIES AND OTHER SUPPORTING SECTORS, RESPECTING THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**Action: Definitions and Development of ‘Unique Carpathian Experience’**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Time frame</b>	<b>Reference to the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism</b>
Operating of and fundraising for the <b>Carpathian Coordination Centre (CCC)</b>	Year 1	Article 7 paras 1-2
<b>Analyzing the touristic resources</b> of the member-countries based on researches, to identify the key-areas, products to be involved and make further detailed researches	Year 2	Article 9 para 3 Article 10 para 4
Supporting the establishment of <b>national coordination and management centers</b> with international experiences	Year 3	Article 6 para 2
Developing common guidelines on <b>contributions to conservation of natural and cultural resources</b> through tourism,	Year 3	Article 1 para 3 (f) Article 13 para 1 Article 17 para 2-3
Developing a <b>methodology on how to monitor the negative impact</b> of the existing and planned tourism development on biodiversity and landscape, including the social, economic and cultural impacts	Year 3	Article 21 ff Article 23 ff
Develop common guidelines for <b>contribution to sustainable agriculture and forestry</b> through tourism	Year 4	Article 14 para 2 Article 15 para 2
Developing common guidelines for a <b>monitoring system scheme on the traffic</b> to destinations and the flow of visitors within destinations	Year 4	Article 1 para 3 (e) Article 12 ff
Developing methods on <b>protecting „brand-making“ elements of the Carpathians cultural heritage</b> by implementing of common projects on preservation of local cultural heritage	Year 4	Article 1 para 3 (j) Article 17 para 2 Article 24 para 2 (f)
Defining and implementing a <b>common set of indicators</b> agreed on the effects of implemented policies and strategies to develop sustainable tourism in the Carpathians	Year 4	Article 1 para 3 (p) Article 24 ff Article 26 para 1
Creation of an organizational unit ( <b>Monitoring Center of Carpathian Region</b> ), responsible for monitoring and evaluation activities in the area	Year 4	Article 1 para 3 (p) Article 24 para 2

**Performance indicators**

- A coordination centre for product development, promotion, marketing and monitoring is established and operating.
- Small and micro businesses are supported by organizational systems and incentive policies.
- Governments adjust their voluntary and legal frameworks for the support of sustainable tourism based on common assessments.
- 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. This is not an indicator and has to be revised.
- A number of laboratories and incubators as learning institutions on sustainable tourism

practices for providers and communities are established.

**Objective 3: ESTABLISHING A CONTINUOUS PROCESS OF AWARENESS RAISING, CAPACITY BUILDING, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT AT ALL LEVELS**

**Action: Sustainable product-development**

Activities	Time frame	Reference to the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism
Developing common <b>guidelines for capacity building</b> programs on sustainable tourism	Year 2	Article 19 para 1
Creation of a <b>platform for education and training</b> available to all stakeholders	Year 3	Article 19 para 5
Creation of a <b>program of workshops and conferences</b> , study visits in order to exchange experience on sustainable tourism development	Year 3	Article 4 para 1
<b>Transfer of know-how</b> on the contribution of tourism to biodiversity from other experienced destinations	Year 4	Article 13 para 2
Creation of <b>platform for cooperation of farmers</b> linked with tourism entrepreneurship	Year 4	Article 14 para 3

**Performance indicators**

- A number of laboratories and incubators as learning institutions on sustainable tourism practices for providers and communities are established.
- A number of Carpathian service providers are successfully communicating to tourists the value of this mountain region based on a code of conduct.
- Small and micro businesses are supported by organizational systems and incentive policies.
- An information system is established throughout the Carpathians providing online solutions, and data for monitoring and for visitors at the same time.

## 7 IMPLEMENTATION

The seven Parties of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Carpathians understand that need for institutional, financial and monitoring arrangement for the effective and efficient implementation of the “Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians”, and have therefore decided on

### 7.1 Institutional Arrangements

- ⇒ The governmental institutions (e.g. Ministry for Tourism, Ministry for Economy or Ministry for Regional Development) appoint a **Focal Point** who will communicate tourism specific topics to the Carpathian level and within its own country for further implementation. This in order to avoid overlaps with other initiatives and creating synergies wherever possible.
- ⇒ The governmental institutions (e.g. Ministry for Tourism, Ministry for Economy, and Ministry for Regional Development) responsible for tourism and those responsible for the environment establish the **Carpathian Tourism Task Force**. This task force will form an integral part of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (CC-WGST). Other institutions from the seven countries working in the field of tourism development, education or business may be invited to join this task force. Aim of the task force is to monitor the effective implementation of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy and the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism and to formulate recommendations to the Parties of the Convention on the further improvement and periodic review of the protocol and the strategy.
- ⇒ The governmental institutions, with the assistance of other major stakeholders in the Carpathians, establish the **Carpathian Coordination Centre**, based and depending on available funding. This center has the aim to coordinate the implementation of the strategy with the following core activities, which are related to the Action Plan:
  - Product Development
  - Branding and Certification
  - Marketing and Promotion
  - Capacity Building of Businesses and Destinations
  - Quality Assessment
  - Fundraising

### 7.2 Financial Arrangements

- ⇒ Each **government appoints one tourism expert**, depending on available governmental resources, for the period of 2 years to the Carpathian Coordination Centre. The expert may work in the CCC premises or from home country for that period. Specific Terms of Reference will be developed on product development, marketing, monitoring, and fund raising to contribute to the aims of the center.



- ⇒ The governments agree that the Carpathian Coordination Centre develops a **self-financing initiative**, which is to a great extent sustainable business driven (membership and certification payments) for the implementation of the strategy.
- ⇒ The governments agree to contribute on a voluntary basis a part of their **tourism marketing budget** calculated by the size of geographical delimitation of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy within its territory. Terms of Condition will be developed for the effective use of these funds in the Carpathian Coordination Centre.
- ⇒ The governments agree to make available **project based funding** from national, EU or other international sources in order to implement the strategy on their territory and/or in trans-boundary or multi-national cooperation with other parties and in joint cooperation with the Carpathian Coordination Centre.
- ⇒ The governments agree that the Carpathian Coordination Centre, if fully equipped with the above arrangements, will start **fund raising initiatives** in order to put the strategy implementation on a solid platform.

### 7.3 Time Frame and Reporting

- ⇒ The governments agree that implementation of the strategy is envisaged for a 10 years time frame until 2024, which is further described in chapter 7.4 *Measuring the performance of strategy implementation*. This gives suitable time to prepare for the entire review and update process of the strategy.
- ⇒ The governments agree that the *Action Plans* in chapter 6 cover currently a time frame of 1-5 years. Within this period the effective implementation of the actions will be evaluated and if necessary adapted to changing conditions.
- ⇒ The governments agree to develop bi-annual Carpathian Country Tourism Performance Reports (CCTPR), which inform stakeholders within a country about the progress of strategy implementation. The CCTPR will be submitted to the Tourism Task Force and be reported to the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism.
- ⇒ The governments agree to the following reporting sequences:

Report	Responsible Body	Reporting Period	Reporting to
Strategy Implementation Report	Carpathian Coordination Centre	Annual	Tourism Task Force
CCTPR	Tourism Focal Point	Bi-annual	a. Government b. Tourism Task Force
Summary CCTPR	Tourism Task Force	Bi-annual	CC-WGST
Status Report on Protocol and Strategy Implementation	CC-WGST	Bi-annual	CCIC

## 7.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

### Measuring the performance of strategy implementation

The governments agree to measure the performance of the strategy goals, objectives and actions with a set of “milestone” indicators, which are subject to reporting and to review the strategy as mentioned in the previous chapter.

This strategy has outlined a number of targets (Goals and objectives), which should be accomplished in a given period of time. These targets are presenting the milestones for achieving the strategy in parts or as a whole.

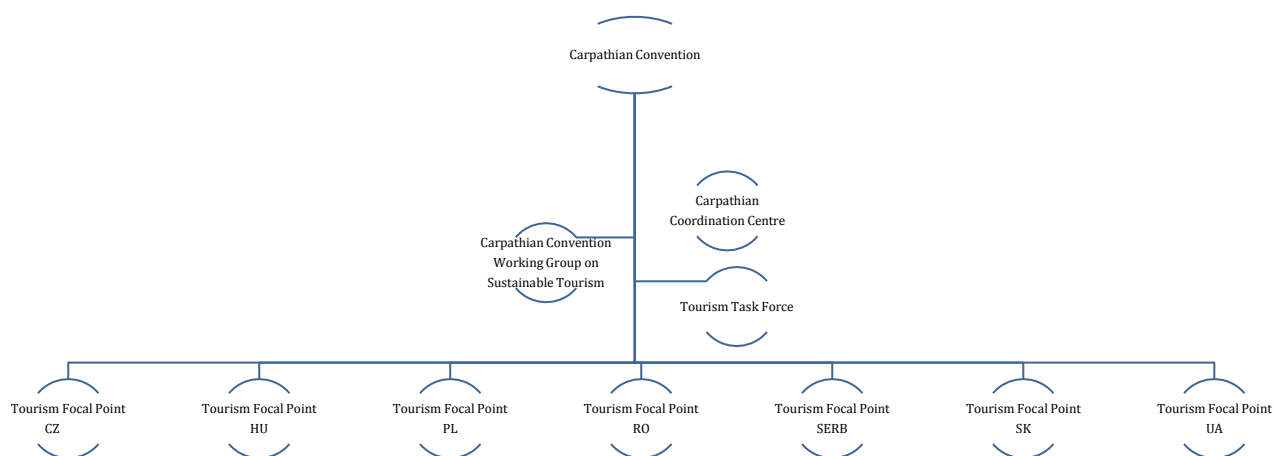
The Carpathian Coordination Centre and the Tourism Task Force will use the following set of performance indicators in order to present the success of implementing sustainable tourism practices in this mountain region (order and timing is subject to change):

Performance Indicators	Target Year
1. A coordination center for product development, promotion, marketing and monitoring is established and operating.	2015
2. Small and micro businesses are supported by organizational systems and incentive policies.	2016
3. Governments adjust their voluntary and legal frameworks for the support of sustainable tourism based on common assessments. *	2017
4. A properly managed network of hiking, biking, skiing and horse riding trails is established, distinguishing between Carpathians wide and local destinations.	2017
5. Products and services follow common quality standards and are integrated into a labeling system (The Carpathian Experience)	2017
6. A network of ecotourism destinations is established.	2017
7. A common brand is created for touristic products and destinations in the Carpathians.	2017
8. All destinations in the Carpathians have an effective management and DMO following a set of sustainability criteria (tourist hubs).	2017
9. A number of products (STP – sustainable tourism products) are promoted at the regional as well as global tourism-related markets.	2018
10. A governmental support scheme on the sustainable use of authentic landscapes and wilderness areas with associated tourism infrastructure, which forms the foundation of any tourism operations	2020
11. An information system is established throughout the Carpathians providing online solutions, and data for monitoring and for visitors at the same time.	2020

12. A number of Carpathian service providers are successfully communicating to tourists the value of this mountain region based on a code of conduct.	2022
13. A number of laboratories and incubators as learning institutions on sustainable tourism practices for providers and communities are established.	2023

For indicator 3 it is recommended to adopt and use the “Methodology for the Assessment of National Tourism Strategy” (CEEweb; 2013), which has been proven to be an efficient tool for the evaluation and review of voluntary and legal national tourism documents. The methodology can be found on [http://www.ceeweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/CEEweb\\_STWG\\_NTDS-Assessment-Methodology-final1.pdf](http://www.ceeweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/CEEweb_STWG_NTDS-Assessment-Methodology-final1.pdf).

Chart on the structure for reporting and feedback mechanism:



# 8 BACKGROUND DOCUMENT FOR THE STRATEGY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF THE CARPATHIANS

This Background Document, however provided in a separate document, is considered as the integral part of the Strategy for the Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians. It contains detailed information on tourism in the Carpathians and links to tools and methodologies on sustainable tourism useful for the implementation of this strategy.

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**The main organizations participating in the project 2013-2014 are:**

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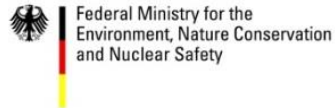
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