

"EUROPE OF THE CARPATHIANS"

KRASICZYN DECLARATION

23 FEBRUARY 2013

We, the participants of the "Europe of the Carpathians" conference in Krasieczyn, share the belief that the Carpathians are an important part of the European regional heritage. With its unique features, the Carpathians are today one of the two major mountain regions of Europe. After the recent enlargement of the European Union, they also form its eastern border, which significantly raises the importance of the area in ensuring sustainable development and cohesion of the EU.

Nowadays, the inhabitants of the Carpathian macroregion must face a number of difficulties. Without specific developmental measures, the situation of the Carpathian population will continue to deteriorate due to the absence of transport infrastructure and visible social gaps, including a high rate of structural unemployment. Action for the modernisation and development of the Carpathian macroregion is essential not only from the point of view of selected Member States, but the entire European Union, particularly in the context of its future enlargement to the east, which is why we want to support Ukraine's European aspirations.

We believe it is necessary to coordinate actions for the Carpathians in many areas. The essence of these actions should be to consolidate international, regional and cross-border cooperation in the economic, social and cultural dimensions, so that the macroregion can present a coherent development vision in the European Union. Only a joint effort of societies, parliaments, governments and local authorities of the Carpathian countries will offer opportunities for effective promotion of Carpathian interests on the European forum.

National parliaments could play an important role here by creating the Carpathian Network of Parliamentary Cooperation. Such a network should enable regular contacts between parliamentarians from the Carpathian countries in all their areas of interest. An important step towards the creation of such a network will be the establishment of Carpathian parliamentary groups in individual national parliaments and in the European Parliament and, in the future, considering the establishment of a Carpathian parliamentary assembly.

We would like to emphasise the importance of the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion as an institution coordinating and stimulating activity for the development of this region. We support the call for the creation of a trans-national operational programme of European Territorial Cooperation for the Carpathian Euroregion for 2014-2020 under the name "Carpathian Horizon 2020". Such a solution would contribute to improving the coordination and enhancing the effectiveness of

the existing EU financial instruments supporting multilateral territorial cooperation. This programme should cover all territories which decide to join it.

At the same time, we call upon the European Union to more actively support the objectives laid down in the Carpathian Convention, signed in Kiev on 23 May 2003, and to expedite activities aimed at formal accession of the EU to that convention as a party. In particular, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation with respect to water and forest management. We also recognise the importance of completing the tasks specified in the Protocol on sustainable tourism to the Carpathian Convention.

We welcome numerous examples of cross-border cooperation of partners from the Carpathian countries. We consider that starting work on publishing the Carpathian Encyclopaedia is an extremely valuable initiative. To this end, we are establishing a working group of representatives of several universities interested in Carpathian-related issues.

We are attentively tracking the progress of the renovation of the former Astronomical Observatory on the peak of Pop Ivan in the Chornohora range and the construction of an academic cooperation centre in Mykulychyn. Both initiatives are operated jointly by the University of Warsaw and the Prykarpattia National University in Ivano-Frankivsk.

We note the common shepherd traditions, which have belonged to the basic activities of the Carpathian highlanders for many centuries. In this respect, an initiative worth spreading is this year's international Carpathian Sheep Transhumance 2013 as a traditional sheep migration starting from Romania, and passing through Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Further expansion of border infrastructure will greatly facilitate the development of cooperation between the Carpathian countries belonging to the European Union and Ukraine. This is why we are strongly in favour of increasing the number of border crossings on Ukraine's eastern border.

Moreover, responding to unanimous demands and opinions of circles and institutions connected with the sector of public and private media operating in the Carpathian region, we declare our support for the initiative of creating an international platform for the cooperation of Carpathian media in order to promote, develop and implement effective information exchange systems.

We would also like to emphasise that the main objective of all actions should be creating a European macroregional development strategy for the Carpathians, with the involvement of all interested countries and regions, as well as European institutions. Drafting the strategy would be crucial for territorial cohesion and consolidating cooperation not only between the Carpathian countries and regions, but also between the European Union and its eastern partners. The main focus of the Macroregional Carpathian Strategy ("Carpathia 2020" - CEEC -

Co-operation, Economy, Environment, Culture) should be cooperation, including economic growth, environmental protection and culture. The inclusion of the "Via Carpathia" road in the trans-European transport networks TEN-T should be part of this strategy. The road, which runs through the eastern areas of the EU, should become a core around which sustainable development of the entire Carpathian macroregion would be wrapped.

Krasiczyn, 23 February 2013