



**CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
TO THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON THE
PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF
THE CARPATHIANS**

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Item 5 of the provisional annotated agenda

- 1) Cooperation with the European Union, its institutions and programmes**
- 2) Swiss contribution to EU enlargement**
- 3) Accession of the European Community to the Carpathian Convention**

Report of the Secretariat

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to Conference of the Parties decision **COP1/13** on the *Cooperation with the European Union* and provides information on progress in the implementation of the decision.

Background

In its decision COP1/13, the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP1) recalled “the experience of the INTERREG III B Alpine Space Programme as a valuable framework for project development and implementation in support of the Alpine Convention”, and welcomed the INTERREG III B CADSES Carpathian Project as an essential instrument for shaping the transnational framework of and implementing the Carpathian Convention towards the sustainable development of the Carpathian Space. Furthermore, COP 1 requested both the Parties and other stakeholders to fully support the implementation of and follow-up to the INTERREG III B CADSES Carpathian Project in the common transnational framework of the Carpathian Convention, and expressed interest in the development of an operational programme by the European Union, supporting the sustainable development of the Carpathian Space, building on the transnational framework of the Carpathian Convention. COP1 requested the interim Secretariat in close consultation with the Parties and the appropriate European Union institutions, to develop and further negotiate the follow-up projects and the operational programme. Last but not least, decision COP1/13 invited “the European Community to accede to the Carpathian Convention”.¹

Implementation

1) Cooperation with the European Union, its institutions and programmes

With the INTERREG IIIB CADSES „Carpathian Project“, EU structural funds were used for the implementation of the Carpathian Convention. The Carpathian Convention process greatly benefited both at the scientific and institutional levels, as the Carpathian Project contributed to the organization of the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (11-13 December 2006, Kiev, Ukraine) and to the setting up and to the operations of the six thematic Working Groups in the field of biodiversity and natural heritage, cultural heritage, sustainable rural development, agriculture and forestry, sustainable transport, infrastructure, industry and energy, sustainable tourism and spatial development. These thematic Working Groups considered various inputs and deliverables provided by partners of the Carpathian project, and reported to the Implementation Committee of the Carpathian Convention.

UNEP Vienna has been acting as both Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention and Lead Partner of the Carpathian Project, ensuring “a continuous exchange and inter-linkage between the work and activities under the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee and the work and activities contained in the EU INTERREG IIIB CADSES “Carpathian Project”. However, the INTERREG IIIB CADSES project will come to an end on 31 August 2008. Therefore, priority needs to be given to the follow-up, to its recommendations and to ensuring adequate financial resources for the continuation of the programmatic work in support of the Carpathian Convention’s implementation. For this purpose, a follow-up platform was established to develop projects, supporting the priorities of the Carpathian Convention and the promotion of the Carpathian Space, for inclusion into the work-programme.

¹ Note also the relevant paragraphs of the Carpathian Declaration dated 13 December 2006:

- “We note that the experiences of cooperation of the “Alpine Space” reveal the need for long-lasting commitment and structural support by the European Union, to fully benefit of the considerable potential of the mountains for regional development;
- We express our conviction that cooperation with and support from the European Community and its Member States will be crucial to the development of the “Carpathian Space”, as an area of economic, social and environmental progress and sustainability in the heart of Europe, building on the region’s advantages and potentials, and addressing the challenges of mountain regions in an innovative and coordinated manner;
- We invite the European Community to accede to the Carpathian Convention and also invite the European Community and its Member States to join the transnational platform of the Carpathian countries, and to continue to support the protection and sustainable development of the “Carpathian Space” through relevant instruments and programmes.”

The Carpathian Project received funds from the EU-Community Initiative Programme for transnational cooperation: INTERREG CADSES in the Programming Period 2000-2006. In the new and current programming period 2007 - 2013, EU funds can be made available for a number of thematic fields and activities of interest for the Carpathian Space, such as innovation, accessibility, urban environment or competitiveness. The Secretariat has provided contributions to the public consultations of the Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) of the two programmes. Whereas the SEAs are calling for the full consideration of the Carpathian Convention in programme implementation, the new programmes themselves make little reference to the importance of the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians and the Carpathian Convention. Therefore, further efforts will be necessary to make the new programmes cornerstones of the cooperation for the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians, by ensuring that the Carpathian Convention will be fully complied with in the new EU programmes' implementation.

In addition, for the new 2007-13 programming period, the former CADSES area was divided into two areas and programmes: The CENTRAL EUROPE² Programme and the South East Europe³ Programme, "cutting the Carpathians into two pieces".

CENTRAL EUROPE Programme



SEE Programme



Whereas the Alpine region also in the 2007-13 period has an Alpine Space Programme at its disposal, the Carpathians - the largest mountain region of Europe are now divided into two European programme areas. This situation might complicate the possibility of carrying out projects for the integrity of the Carpathians in the new European programmes until the establishment of a proposed future Carpathian Space programme.

Fortunately, the Carpathian Convention offers a transnational framework of cooperation available for the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians in their entirety, which can provide the crucial link between different programme areas, supporting the implementation of EU programme at the pan-Carpathian scale. Therefore, further efforts to strengthen and operationalize this only existing transnational Carpathian framework will be highly beneficial.

² Austria, Czech Republic, Germany (Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Thüringen), Hungary, Italy (Piemonte, Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste, Liguria, Lombardia, Provincia Autonoma Bolzano/Bozen, Provincia Autonoma Trento, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Emilia-Romagna), Poland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Ukraine (Volyn, Lviv, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi. Ukraine can participate with national funds or ENPI)

³ Albania, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy (Lombardia, Prov. Autonoma Bolzano/Bozen, Prov. Autonoma Trento, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Emilia Romagna, Umbria, Marche, Abruzzo, Molise, Puglia Basilicata), the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine (Chernivetska Oblast, Ivano-Frankivska Oblast, Zakarpatska Oblast, Odessa Oblast). Non-EU-member states can participate with own funding as well as ENPI and IPA funding.

It should be emphasized that international organizations and conventions are as such not or only under certain conditions eligible to participate in most of the new programmes. Allocation of funds and financial mechanisms function in a national logic. Main beneficiaries of the funds are, besides national institutions, first and foremost regions and local authorities. Therefore, Parties have to be the main players to ensure the success of future “mainstreaming” of the Carpathian Convention into European Regional Development Funds as a mid and long-term crucial strategic objective, in terms of their political support in the respective steering committees of the programmes deciding upon funding allocations, their roles as partners / implementing institutions of the projects (i.p. Ministries of the Environment) benefitting from EU or similar funding, and the crucial involvement of regional authorities in the Carpathians.

Past activities of the Secretariat on funding possibilities and programmes include the follow-up platform and project development meetings (e.g. Via Carpatica, Science for the Carpathians, sustainable mobility), Carpathian Project meetings, written contributions at the public consultations for the Strategic Environmental Assessment of EU-Objective 3 Programmes: CENTRAL EUROPE and SOUTH EAST EUROPE, liaising with Managing Authorities and national coordinators of the Programmes, participation at Programme-Kick-off Events and other programme-related events (general). As part of its proposed secretariat work-programme, the secretariat will continue to support the development and implementation of projects targeting structural, regional development and similar funding programmes, in support of the overall objectives of the Carpathian Convention and its rolling work-programme.

Beside the transnational and inter-regional (e.g. INTERREG IVC) programmes, other EU-funds are available in the programming period 2007-2013, that could be used for further implementation of the Carpathian Convention, including, inter alia, the LIFE + - Programme, LEADER, Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development and the COST-Initiative. Also the so-called EEA-Grants (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) might be relevant for the Carpathians.

2) Swiss contribution to EU enlargement

With the “enlargement contribution”, Switzerland participates in the reduction of economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union. Beneficiaries are the ten states which joined the EU on May 1, 2004, priorities including security, stability and support for reforms, environment and infrastructure, promotion of the private sector, and human and social development. Around one billion of Swiss Francs is provided for this enlargement contribution.

Bilateral framework agreements were signed between Switzerland and the beneficiary countries in which the thematic focus of the respective country (within the given thematic priorities) are further elaborated. In principle, allocations of these Swiss funds will be purely national. However, thanks to the great efforts of the involved Carpathian countries’ and Swiss Governments, as well as the Swiss IUCN Committee, cross-border initiatives and a specific reference to the Carpathian Convention was included into three out of four of the bilateral agreements (with Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) of Carpathian relevance. On 18 February 2008, the interim Secretariat hosted the Swiss Contribution Meeting organized by the WWF-DCPO, further considering the opportunity to access funds through the Swiss contribution for the implementation of the Carpathian Convention. Subsequently, WWF-DCPO developed a draft template that could be used by the potential beneficiary national institutions for a coordinated submission of projects for the Swiss contribution.

3) Accession of the European Community to the Carpathian Convention

Following the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Ukrainian Presidency of the Carpathian Convention sent a letter inviting the European Community to accede to the Carpathian Convention. Furthermore, the Czech Republic informed the EU Environmental Council about the outcomes of the First Carpathian COP on 20 February 2007. The next Carpathian State holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union will be the Czech Republic (first half year of 2009),

which might represent a great opportunity to bring the issue of accession of the European Community to the Carpathian Convention into the deliberations of the European Council.

Possible action taken by the Conference of the Parties

1. recognizing the importance of the INTERREG IIIB CADSES Carpathian Project as the first project of European structural funds to support the implementation of the Carpathian convention in a transnational framework;
2. aware that a number of programmes supporting regional sustainable development will become available for the countries of central and south eastern Europe (i.e. territorial cooperation funds, SDC Cohesion Funds, Norwegian Fund, LIFE+);
3. recognizing the Carpathian Convention as the only existing transnational framework of cooperation for the protection and sustainable development of the region;
4. recalling the invitation to the European Community to accede to the Carpathian Convention;
5. calls upon the relevant national, regional and local authorities to make full use of the available programmes for the implementation of the Carpathian Convention;
6. invites the representatives of the Parties in the decision-making bodies of the above mentioned programmes to ensure the due consideration of the Carpathian convention priorities in project selection and approval;
7. requests the (interim) Secretariat to support the development and implementation of projects in order to ensure the necessary coordination within the framework of the Carpathian Convention;
8. stresses the need for the establishment of a full-fledged Carpathian Space programme, and requests the (interim) Secretariat to continue to promote and support this process;
9. calls upon the Members of the decision-making bodies of the relevant programmes of the European Territorial Cooperation to start up cooperation with the relevant EU bodies in the preparation of the "Carpathian Space" programme of European Territorial Cooperation for the 2014-2020 budget period;
10. expresses its gratefulness to Switzerland for including the Carpathian Convention in the areas eligible for support through the Swiss contribution to EU enlargement, and urges all parties to expedite the development and approval of coordinated projects in support of the Carpathian Convention;
11. requests the Presidency of the Carpathian Convention to inform the Council of Ministers of the European Union of the outcomes of the COP2, calling for the early accession of the European Community to the Carpathian Convention;

[Invites the Czech Republic to include the issue of the accession of the European Community to the Carpathian Convention in its agenda for the 2009 EU Presidency]