



Ministry of Climate  
and Environment



eurac  
research



Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development  
NATIONAL AGENCY FOR MOUNTAIN AREA



MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT,  
WATERS AND FORESTS

## MEETING REPORT

5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group  
on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD)

**13:30 – 17:30, 17 March 2022**

**ONLINE MEETING**

### 1) **Opening of the WG SARD meeting**

The 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (WG SARD) was opened by the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, Mr. Harald Egerer, Head of the UNEP Vienna Programme Office – Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention. Mr. Egerer welcomed the participants to the 5<sup>th</sup> WG SARD meeting and made a short statement on the situation in Ukraine. The Secretariat later on warmly welcomed Ms. Veronica Taran Baciu, General Director from the Romanian National Agency of Mountain Areas, who was designated as the Chair of the WG SARD, and the Polish Presidency of the Carpathian Convention represented by Ms. Magdalena Nowicka, Deputy Director in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Ms. Klaudia Kuras, UNEP Vienna Programme Office – Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (UNEP-SCC), gave technical instructions for the smooth running of the online meeting.

### 2) **Opening remark by Polish Presidency**

Ms. Magdalena Nowicka, Deputy Director in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in her opening remarks conveyed her solicitude concerning the plight in Ukraine and extended her sympathy and solidarity to the people of Ukraine. She spoke briefly about the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic on the Polish Presidency plans, including holding an online COP6 of the Carpathian Convention 2020, and expressed the Presidency's desire to meet everyone in-person for the next WG-SARD meeting.

### 3) **Welcoming speech by the WG SARD Chair**

In her welcoming speech Ms. Veronica Taran Baciu, Chair of the WG SARD, General Director of the Romanian National Agency of Mountain Areas (the Agency) expressed her gratitude to the Carpathian Convention Secretariat for organizing the 5<sup>th</sup> WG SARD meeting. She also extended the Agency's support to the WG SARD in every possible way for a positive and long term impact on the Carpathian region. In her presentation she introduced the activities of the Agency which include the development of strategies, public policies and regulations for the development and protection of mountain areas. She referred to the Agency as the responsible authority for the management of the European Quality Scheme Mountain Products. Ms. Baciu later on elaborated on the various professional training programmes conducted by the Agency and presented the Mountain Law no 197 from 18 July 2018 that regulates the modalities of protection and sustainable and inclusive development of mountain areas in Romania.

### 4) **Round of introductions**

Ms. Veronica Taran Baciu, as the Chair of the WG SARD meeting, invited all participants to introduce themselves and elaborate on their role in WG SARD, first the official delegates of the Parties in the alphabetic order, then moving on to the observers.

Note: There were no official representatives of Ukraine and Serbia to this meeting.

### 5) **Adoption of the Agenda**

The Meeting Agenda was adopted without any changes.

### 6) **Report on status of ratification of the Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development**

The Secretariat made a short presentation giving an overview of the status of ratification of the Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development. Mr. Egerer provided the updates and pointed out that the SARD Protocol is in force for six countries out of seven to date. He commented that Serbia has been very active in the

unfolding of the protocol and the Secretariat shall work together and support its efforts to bring it into effect. He also highlighted the fact that the SARD Protocol entered into force for Ukraine on 28 April 2021.

## 7) Towards implementation of the SARD Protocol:

### Short presentation of the SARD Protocol

Ms. Kuras, UNEP-SCC, presented the general background and mandate of WG SARD for developing the Carpathian Convention Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD Protocol), together with the proceeds leading to the adoption of the SARD Protocol, its implementation structure within the Carpathian Convention, followed by the Protocol composition and provisions.

[Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website](#)

### Presentation of topics for cooperation under the WG SARD by the Chair – Romania

The Chair invited Mr. Eduard Lazarescu and Mr. Sabin Farcas, from the National Mountain Area Agency, to present the topics for cooperation under the WG SARD that were proposed by Romania, namely:

1. Best practices models: Short food supply chains – Farm to fork;
2. Quality schemes and certification of „Mountain Products”;
3. Pastoralism, transhumance and mountain sheepfolds ;
4. Beekeeping in the mountain area, transhumance, producing mountain honey;
5. Associations for farmers and food producers in the mountain area - benefits and best practice models ;
6. Mountain pedagogical farms and their role in the education of the young generations ;
7. Mechanization of agricultural labor in the mountain area: opportunities and limitations;
8. Management and improvement of the mountain pastures.

[Related presentation is available on the Carpathian Convention website](#)

### Presentation of national updates and priorities for the SARD Protocol implementation

Ms. Baciu asked the Parties to provide information on activities supporting the implementation of the SARD Protocol in respective country since the last meeting of the WG SARD in 2018, as well the national priorities for the SARD Protocol activities. The Parties provided the following updates:

#### Czech Republic:

Mr. Vlastimil Zedek from the Czech Ministry of Agriculture expressed his solidarity with the people of Ukraine at the start of his presentation. He presented among other things the Czech Government's action plan for the development of organic farming 2021 - 2027. Organic agriculture is gaining a considerable interest in Czech Republic and he drew the attention to the need for organic research. He furthermore informed about the new Strategic Plan for the Common Agriculture Policy that was prepared in 2021 and is now in consultation with the European Commission. The new SP CAP includes goals driven by the Farm to Fork Strategy, new intervention on Agroforestry (the combination of arable land and trees, or pastoral areas and trees - a great potential and long tradition in the White Carpathians Region), traditional operation on organic farming and introduction of precision farming to achieve new levels of efficiency.

[Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website](#)

#### **Hungary:**

Mr. Roland Eszenyi, Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary, affirmed of the commitment of Hungary to the implementation of the SARD Protocol. He had no other comments in this respect.

#### **Poland:**

Ms. Magdalena Nowicka presented facts and characteristics related to the agricultural sector in the Polish Carpathians, the priorities identified for the SARD Protocol, as well as the instruments of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) relevant for the Carpathians such as the Rural Development Programme area payments in the Carpathians (payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints, Agri-environment-climate measures, Organic farming measures, Afforestation measure, Creation of mid-field forestation). Ms Novicka referring to the European Certification System (Protected Destination of Origin and Protected Geographical Indication), informed about 44 name of Polish agricultural products and foodstuffs in the register, where 8 of them are names of the products produced in the Polish Carpathians.

[Related presentation is available at the Carpathian Convention website](#)

#### **Slovakia:**

Mr. Milan Hagovský, Director, Carpathian Innovation and Development presented among other things Slovakia's Common Agriculture Policy strategic plan to foster a smart resilient and diversified agricultural sector in Slovakia and the participation of small farmers in them. He acquainted WG SARD with the first official organization dedicated to agroforestry in Slovakia - the Slovak Agroforestry Association and its goals to bring together all those interested in the support and expansion of agroforestry systems. He spoke about activities to foster knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas covering study programs, training schools, advise and cooperation projects. He spoke of reviving the traditional approach to sheep cheese production in Slovakia - Bryndza, the pride of Slovakian Cheese.

#### **8) Presentation by the EURAC Research - Updating the SARD-M Report for the Carpathian Convention Member States in the context of the Common Agriculture Policy and its implementation**

Mr. Christian Hoffmann briefly presented the synthetic SARD – M Report, its concept, process, structure and the purpose it served to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development and assist in developing the SARD Protocol. He spoke about the agriculture and rural areas that are central to the European Green Deal and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the allocation of CAP funds to the two pillars i.e., The European agricultural fund and European agricultural fund for rural development, thus providing information and ideas to the SARD WG. It was stressed that the Carpathian Convention Article 7 - *to maintain the management of land, that is traditionally and in a sustainable manner cultivated, and brings benefits to present and future generations*, corresponds with the CAP 2021-2027.

More information in the [presentation](#) delivered by Mr. Christian Hoffman.

#### **9) Presentation by the EURAC Research - Project Proposals supporting implementation of the SARD Protocol**

Ms. Uta Frisch briefly presented the topics for the WG SARD activities proposed by the WG SARD Chair – Romania, which could serve as inputs for project ideas. Initially 3 projects ideas were identified by the Eurac Research: 1) on transhumance – cultural heritage, local products and mechanisation, 2) 100% local /organic – regional speciality presented within 100% local or organic inputs including ingredients and production, 3) on local products - diary, mushrooms, vegetable, cereal (craft beer), honey. While the topic for a concrete project

proposal is yet to be decided, it is proposed that EU Interreg Central Europe Programme should be used as the most suitable financial scheme.

She expressed the Eurac Research willingness to support the WG SARD with the project development that would fit the best the priorities of the WG SARD.

More information in the [presentation](#) delivered by Ms. Uta Frisch.

#### 10) **Presentation by Euromontana – Opportunities and Challenges for the Carpathians**

Mr. Guillaume Corradino, Director, Euromontana, provided a concise overview about Euromontana's mission to promote living mountains, integrated and sustainable development and quality of life in mountain areas. In order to achieve this, he asserted that Euromontana embraces regional and national mountain organizations through greater Europe, including regional development agencies, local authorities, agriculture organizations, environmental agencies, forestry organizations and research institutes. He presented a study taken up by Euromontana to monitor the EU implementation of the Optional Quality Term (OQT) "mountain product" and its report analyzed three situations where countries that have implemented the EU regulation without specific national adaptation; countries that have adapted or are in the process of adapting the OQT regulation at national level and countries that have not yet implemented the OQT on their territory. He expressed Euromontana's willingness for future collaboration with WG-SARD on the mountain product label.

More information in the [presentation](#) delivered by Mr. Guillaume Corradino.

#### 11) **Presentation by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) – Policies and regional initiatives on sustainable agriculture and food systems and opportunities for experience sharing of good practices in the Carpathian region**

Ms. Rosalaura Romeo from the Mountain Partnership Secretariat delivered a brief presentation on the vision, mission and initiatives of Mountain Partnership (MP). She detailed how MP since its beginnings in 2002 has brought countries, groups and organizations together to work towards a common goal of achieving sustainable mountain development around the world. She also announced the United Nations General Assembly's adoption by consensus a resolution proclaiming 2022 the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development at the proposal of the Kyrgyz Government. She pointed out the significance of International Mountain Day and made known its 2022 Theme: "Women move mountains". This is an opportunity to raise awareness about the need to empower mountain women and the important role women play around the world she remarked. Hence she appealed to deploy concrete actions in an effort to increase awareness of the importance of sustainable mountain development and the conservation and sustainable use of mountain ecosystems.

More information in the [presentation](#) delivered by Ms. Rosalaura Romeo.

Ms. Kitti Horvath from FAO gave a short overview about the structure of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and its Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. She focused on the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 that seeks to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive resilient and sustainable agri-food systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life, leaving no one behind. She later covered the Organization's 20 Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) set out in the Strategic Framework that are driven forward by four "accelerators": technology, innovation, data, and complements (consisting of governance, human capital, and institutions).

She emphasized FAO's work with Member Governments to prioritize actions under three Regional Initiatives: for small holders and family farms; for flourishing agrifood trade and market integration and for sustainable, climate-resilient natural resource management. And finally she addressed FAO technical assistance for combating dieback of pine forests caused by bark beetles in Ukraine using Integrated Pest Management strategies and to promote restoration of degraded landscapes in the steppe and forest-steppe zones of Ukraine.

More information in the [presentation](#) delivered by Ms. Kitti Horvath.

## 12) **Updating the Terms of Reference for the WG SARD**

Ms. Klaudia Kuras outlined the new structure and provisions of the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for WG SARD, including Background and mandate, Strategic objectives, Global and European policies and processes, Composition and organization of work, Responsibilities, Activities, Co-ordination and cooperation with other WGs and stakeholders. She stated that the Terms of Reference will be effective upon approval of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee and shall continue at least until the end of 2023/COP7. Ms. Kuras informed that no comments to the draft ToRs for WG SARD were received in the given deadline. The ToRs will be circulated with the meeting follow up documentation, asking for final comments, if any, within the deadline agreed with the Chair.

## 13) **Any other business**

No topics were raised in the formal framework of the Agenda as AOB.

## 14) **Conclusions, next steps and closure of the meeting**

With regard to choosing the topics for cooperation in the WG SARD, the Chair proposed that three topics which have come out from the discussion as being the most interesting or useful to be developed, including by making a potential project to be circulated to Member States via email. The parties were requested to send feedback or observations and to propose other topics if not in agreement with the Chair selection.

The Secretariat informed that the presentations delivered during the meeting would be shortly available on the [Carpathian Convention website](#). The meeting report and other meeting documents as a follow up will be circulated in due course.

The Secretariat expressed its appreciation and deepest gratitude to the Chair, Ms. Veronica Taran Baciu for her leadership and guidance and also for the excellent support provided by the Romanian National Agency of Mountain Areas. Mr. Egerer mentioned that the topics for the WG SARD activities –proposed by the WG SARD Chair –Romania piqued the meeting participants' interest, but posed challenges for their selection and evaluation. He also acknowledged the proposed way to navigate through them. He commented on the presentations by Mr. Hoffmann and Ms. Frisch from EURAC research and also from Mr. Corradino from Euromontana having broader significance to the WG SARD activities and working together can have a great impact to its success. He affirmed to carry out a fruitful collaboration with Mount Partnership (MP) and with the FAO office in Budapest and thanked for their valuable contribution to the meeting.

The WG SARD Chair thanked all the meeting participants and appreciated their time and effort. Ms. Baciu acknowledged their valuable input to the meeting discussion.

The WG SARD Chair declared the meeting closed.