



Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
NATIONAL AGENCY FOR MOUNTAIN AREA



MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT,
WATERS AND FORESTS

MEETING REPORT

6th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group
Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD)
26-27 April 2023
Vatra Dornei, Romania

Wednesday, 26 April 2023, Field Trip

Participants visited the Ciocanesti commune, including an ethnography museum containing a segment of pastoralism and the museum of painted eggs. The Community mayor greeted the participants and informed them about collaborating with and supporting shepherds in the community, a participatory governance system in a community via an association of community members, challenging of balancing between traditional management and European regulations, as well as providing support for traditional housing renovations and decorations. He guided the participants through the ethnography.

Due to heavy rain and snow it was not possible for the participants to visit a traditional sheepfold in the Botus village. Instead, the organizers lead the participants to a special natural feature along the Transararau alpine road - one of the most spectacular mountain roads in Romania, which crosses Rarău mountain. On the territory of the natural protected area there is a formation of calcareous rocks known as Pietrele Doamnei ("The Lady's Rocks"), from which the name of the reserve comes. Several sources state that in the Rarău-Pietrele Doamnei-Giumalau reference area, a huge vortex activates through which vibrational infusions are made, some considering it the most suitable place for reaching high states of consciousness. Beyond the esoteric accounts of the many spiritual tourists who frequent the area, technical experts claim that the very composition of the crystalline schists (chloritic, sericitic, quartzite, porphyroid, crystalline limestone and ocular gneisses) could have an important effect on the human body. The stone is considered to be an energy point. The visit was followed by the stop at the agrotourism guesthouse "Colacu guesthouse" in the Colacu village, Fundu Moldovei commune. There, visitors could try traditional dishes made of specific local and traditional products, and enjoy music and singing by one of the Polish shepherds (one of the meeting participants), and an artistic program that included dances and specific popular songs supported by the "Plai Bucovinean Folk Ensemble", of students from the Agricultural School in Dorna Candrenilor, Suceava county.

Thursday, 27 April 2023, Meeting Notes

The meeting, with a hybrid component, was opened by a traditional melody performed by one of the Shepherds, Mr. Ľubomír Tatarka, from Slovenská Ľupča, Slovakia, on a shepherd's flute.

The meeting was opened by Ms. Tamara Mitrofanenko, the representative of the Carpathian Convention Secretariat, and Ms. Marzena Lipinska, the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture of Poland, delivered opening words on behalf of the Polish Presidency. Ms. Veronica Ţaran Baciu Georgescu, the General director of the National Agency of the Mountain Areas Romania made opening remarks and proceeded to chair the meeting. After a short introduction round, the chair led the participants through the draft agenda, which was adopted by the meeting participants.

Czech Republic and Serbia were represented online, as well as observers from Poland, Hungary, Romania and the S4C (US) - while Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine were represented in person.

The Secretariat made a presentation reporting about **the status of ratification of the Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development¹**, reminding the participants about the main content of

¹ See presentation file: [Carpathian Convention Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development – general information by Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention](#)



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the protocol. Following the report, the **Background Note on Pastoralism²** provided by the Secretariat was presented, including the relevance of this topic for the Convention, provisions directly related to Pastoralism and ideas for potential activities under Carpathian Convention and WG SARD towards the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP).

Mr. Zsolt Molnár from the Centre for Ecological Research provided an introductory presentation on Carpathian Pastoralism³, made with inputs from several experts, including the challenges faced by herders in the Carpathian countries, and some suggestions for further discussion and work under the Convention. He pointed out to a number of challenges and injustices, including: acknowledging pastoralist traditions, but not the herders themselves, colonial attitude towards the herders, common disrespect for their work, not being able to sell the products at the price they are worth, improper education, lack of inclusivity, misrepresentation of pastoralism as primitive practice, etc. Specifically, he suggested the following **Objectives for the Carpathian Convention regarding pastoralism**

- future of pastoralism as a sustainable **livelihood**
- keeping pastoralists' **knowledge** alive and adaptive for the era after the shocks of our present civilization (strategic importance)
- **heritage** management, tourism
- a sustainable way of **conservation** management
- engaging with, facilitating networking among, and supporting **young** and middle-aged herders and **women** herders
- representing the region in the UN international year (**IYRP**)

Ms. Ibolya Sáfián, the **leader of the Hungarian Woman Herder group**, presented the group and its members⁴.

National inputs on activities related to supporting and promoting Carpathian pastoralism and respective plans for IYRP were provided by official representatives of Slovakia and Ukraine, as well as observers from Poland.

The **Ukrainian** representatives, Mr. Fedir Hamor and Ms. Iryna Yonash presented the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve and activities related to pastoralism as well as challenges related to it⁵. There is a need to find balance between herd management and biodiversity preservation in the Ukrainian Carpathians. There is experience in the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve on the balance between the number of livestock which can graze in its area without causing degradation. The Ukrainian colleagues also reminded the participants about their initiative to create the Carpathian Convention and pointed to 20th anniversary of the signing of the Carpathian Convention; they suggested that some celebration needs to be planned in this respect.

Representatives of Slovakia informed the meeting that pastoralism is a very relevant topic at the time in Slovakia, as Slovakian institutions are working on pastoralism on the national level; for example, there is a state educational institution focused on pastoralism - and the Convention Focal Point suggested that it would be a good idea to bring the national and regional work and recommendations on pastoralism together, and welcomed this focus of the Working Group. She suggested the integration of pastoralism into the Biodiversity Strategy. An online participant, Martina Slámová (Technical University Zvolen/TUZVO SK) informed the participants about the ERASMUS+ projekt TRANSFARM⁶, which focuses on seasonal pastoral activities, with the main aim to create online training material for transhumance practitioners⁷.

In the case of **Poland**, one presentation was made by the Secretariat on behalf of Grid Warsaw, who could not participate in the meeting due to conflicting educational activities. The presentation provided

² See presentation file: [Pastoralism in the Carpathians and the Carpathian Convention - Introduction by Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention](#)

³ See presentation file: [Herding/pastoralism in the Carpathians by Zsolt Molnár, Ibolya Sáfián, Kinga Öllerer, Marcin Wójcik, Cosmin-Marius Ivascu, Anamaria Iuga](#)

⁴ See presentation file: [Hungarian women herders group by Sáfián Lászlóné, Sáfián Ibolya, Sáfián Erika](#)

⁵ See presentation file: [About some ecological aspects of the pastoral polonyna farming in the Ukrainian Carpathians by prof. Dr. Fedir Hamor, Iryna Yonash](#)

⁶ <https://transfarm-erasmus.eu/>

⁷ In case of interest to follow the project news, signing up for a newsletter is possible here: <http://eepurl.com/ikil9r> - link is provided by the European landowners Organisation - one partner of the project.



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basic information about the project "**Carpathians Unite**⁸," which is focused on pastoralism, and its impact on the pasture. The second presentation by a Polish silvopastoralist, Marcin Wójcik⁹, who presented his idea about **Quality System Zero-carbon Carpathian beef**. He presented a systems diagramme with several activities related to establishment of such beef production, including a knowledge database, educational activities (e.g. open university online, trainings for farmers, tool box), as well as building a community of farmers, and the integration of local initiatives and youth. He suggested that „we cannot base the protection of nature, biodiversity, and cultural heritage solely on projects or subsidies. The protection of these values should be based on a stable local market, in accordance with agroecology, and short supply chains." He also highlighted the superior resilience of local markets. He also shared that „nature protection is a key part of the profitability of farms. **The only thing missing is awareness - hence the great need for education**", including differentiation between traditional and industrial animal farming. Traditional farming systems, based on pastures, additionally combined with "new" practices (e.g., holistic rotational grazing or agroforestry) can significantly contribute to reducing climate change and, on the other hand, improve and stabilize (thanks to production diversification) farm income.

Mr. Radu Ray, vice-president of Euromontana, presented activities related to pastoralism including: 1) **Oreka Mendian** (LIFE), focused on strategies to manage mountain pasture areas located in 15 Natura 2000 sites, balancing conservation interests and those of forest users and 2) **ShepForBio**¹⁰ (LIFE), focused on restoration of grasslands through the development of existing livestock activities and the birth of new ones, also through the creation of a school for shepherds, and including support to creating a **European network of pastoral schools**, as well as 3) **Sustainable Agriculture Models In the Romanian Mountain Area**, focused on Improved sustainability of livestock based agriculture in the Romanian Carpathian Mountains by integrating traditional activities in the modern economic system, including creation of a New Curricula for shepherds¹¹. The First International Conference on the role of Pastoral Schools will take place in May 10-11, 2023 in France. Radu mentioned the Mountain Product scheme implemented by Romania, where about 1500 participating producers have joined and discussed its potential benefits and aims, vs. challenges of all-Eu marketing schemes¹².

Mr. Andrzej Bobiec, University Of Rzeszów, informed the participants about the **network of "innovative farmers" in the UK**, who run farming field "labs" once being normal farmers.

Ms. Agnieszka Pieniążek, "Pro Carpathia", invited participants to read the **report on Carpathian local and regional products** (Poland, Ukraine, Slovakia and Czech Republic)¹³. Many of them are related to pastoralism.

The **Coffee Break** constituted an **exhibition** of local products and materials organized by herders from Poland and Romania as well as the actors from our Ukrainian Carpathians who represented local producers and businesses. Participants exchanged information about the products and practices.

The next section of the meeting was devoted to the **presentation of Romanian experiences**. First, inputs were provided by the **National Agency of Mountain Areas Romania** on the experience of Romania with pastoralism, including submitting an application along with several other European countries to the UNESCO list of cultural heritage, highlighting transhumance in Romania¹⁴. Next, a comprehensive and detailed overview of issues related to Pastoralism in the South-Eastern Carpathians & Romania were presented by Prof. Teodor Marusca from The Research-Development Institute for Grasslands Brasov, Romania¹⁵. Prof. Marusca presented long-term research results, highlighting the specific challenging conditions related to the altitude in the mountainous regions, as well as the exacerbating poverty which will result in the mountain regions with climate change. He suggested that incentives, subsidies and other support systems should be designed based on the altitude of the farms.

⁸ See presentation file: [Carpathians Unite – traditional sheep grazing as a means of conservation of valuable semi-natural habitats and species in the Carpathians](#)

⁹ oikoskrzywa@gmail.com

¹⁰ <https://dream-italia-euprj.eu/en/life-shepforbio/>

¹¹ <http://carpatssheep.ro/home-en.html>

¹² See presentation file: [Euromontana - Activities related to pastoralism by Radu – Adrian Rey](#)

¹³ https://newdirection.online/publication/carpathian_products

¹⁴ See presentation file: [The Continuity of The Archaic Pastoral Elements - Carpathian Transhumance in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity](#)

¹⁵ See presentation file: [Pastoralism in the South Eastern Carpathians by Teodor MARUȘCA](#)



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Following the comprehensive national inputs, participants were invited to suggest priority activities on Carpathian Pastoralism towards IYRP, and the related gaps in knowledge and challenges, main actors

and the suggested role for the Carpathian Convention and the Secretariat. After 15 -minute discussion in small groups, the participants were asked to present the ideas on the boards briefly.

Results of the discussion:

Challenges and gaps:

- Related to subsidies:
 - Subsidies often address landowners, and do not reach / benefit herders and shepherds working on land that is not owned by them.
 - Without governmental support, the life of a herder is very challenging. Despite existing support systems, they are not always easy to access, and not all herders are aware of them.
 - Mr. Andrzej Bobiec, University of Rzeszów, expressed his opinion that EU subsidies (headage payments) can be damaging to the traditional silovpastoral system, when the herders are paid by livestock owners who care about subsidies and not about the quality of pastures. He expressed concern that the system results in a negative recruitment of herders. He suggested that the herders should be employees of local communities and receive stable salary - they should be responsible for entire pastures, their quality - not just taking care of herds. He met herders who did not care about pastures at all, being very well adapted to the subsidy system, but also such who were very aware (the whole family), very "embedded" into the tradition and land but facing the alternative of emigration because of the lack of stability.
 - The Ukrainian participants also brought up challenges posed by governmental support scheme for population living in Mountain areas. People living in mountain areas receive 25% more - which is very good for governmental employees, however, puts businesses at a disadvantage, because the increase prices of their product in order to be able to pay their employees 25% more and this makes Mountain products more expensive and less competitive.
- There is a challenge for the younger generation to continue with pastoralist livelihood, and often parents prefer to send their children to University with the aim for them to have an easier and better life. If better conditions are not created for them, these traditions will disappear. If we would like to preserve and to maintain pastoralist traditions in the Carpathians we need to find a way to engage more younger herders or younger generation into herding and transhumance.
- The lack of systematic connection and contacts or events for exchange and cooperation for herders, there is a lack of information about events and festivals and exhibits
- It takes a lot of time and effort to organize communication and exchange, and the lack of people who could devote time to organising events on exchange and promoting pastoralism period
- There is also a lack of information and study materials available for shepherds, including the older and the younger generation.
- While some pastoralists hold traditional knowledge, there are some practitioners that do not care or consider the environment in their practices and there is a need to make sure that all of them are aware about environmental friendly practices. Not all shepherds account for the balance between profit and biodiversity preservation
- Gaps in knowledge working with youth, women, exchange programs between Convention countries,
- The languages (lack of a common language among carpathian shepherds) were mentioned several times as an important barrier.

Additional issues recommended for discussion included:

1. Husbandry/farming-driven conservation vs. projects-based conservation?
2. The problem of the anti-meat eating narrative, presented as pro-conservation, which is far from truth.

Priority activities:

- Communication and exchange especially between the practitioners - shepherds and pastoralists - is a very important aspect and needs to be supported. Different opportunities for exchange



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between practitioners from different Carpathian countries should be organized, including local authorities associations and farmers.

- More events like the SARD WG focused on pastoralism should be organised until 2026, involving stakeholders.
 - One such event could be organised in Hungary.
- Income support for herders through the CAP should be promoted, in collaboration with EuroMontana, EU commission, and the Carpathian Convention.
- Educational activities targeting pastoralists, herders, the younger generation and women pastoralists.
 - Ecological education for people involved in pastoralism for different educational levels.
- Activities on awareness raising about the importance of pastoralism – including for the way it is taught/presented in formal educational institutions, facilitating that the herders are valued in their communities, including by the authorities.
 - Summer camps on the farm.
- An online platform for materials related to pastoralism – for different target groups, but primarily for herders, as well as printed materials of course.
- One of the questions was how can we promote shepherding as one of the vocations for younger people while at the same time also providing them with the conditions to improve the quality of life at Shepherd or herder.
- One way to address that might be lobbying for and creating incentives that address directly pastoralists and not just land owners.
- Taking up again in the creation of a Carpathian trademark .
- Supporting the countries with development of legal mechanisms / basis for regulating pastoralism-related activities.
 - Cultural sovereignty of farming communities should be protected against globalistic approach.
- Agricultural regulations need to be improved and perverse regulations need to be improved or removed.
- We need to find a balance between recognising and appreciating linguistic diversity in the Carpathian Region but at the same time finding the opportunities for exchange among herders should not be expected to speak English - we need to find a Carpathian solution for addressing this language diversity while facilitating exchange.
- For the IYRP we should strengthen herder-herder international networking especially among women shepherds.
- We should think how to support young herders as well as women herders participation in decision-making and collaborations among them on the regional bilateral and international levels.
- Find ways to encourage the population staying in mountain areas with traditional activities including restaurant.
 - Even if we have a very good public financing of folk art, music, dance - it will not survive in cities. It should be fed by true culture fostered by farming tradition.
- Advocate for a European support mechanism for Mountain producers, differentiated on altitude radiance which constitute natural our handicaps for producers who are working on the higher altitude (including subsidies, Tax cuts, funds)
- Support capitalising on Mountain area production via tourism.
- Create opportunities for young people in mountain areas, who are the future of pastoralism.

Carpathian Convention role:

- Coordinating between the parties
- Providing recommendations which can help improve legislation, methodology focused on support and sustainability of pastoralism, cultural heritage and traditional knowledge
- Developing a database / information platform, where each country can post activities, materials, information about national specifics,
- Support with identifying financial resources and facilitating writing of applications
- Lobby at the European Commission levels for direct subsidies to Carpathian herders

Other actors:

- The tourism platform and country offices



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- The Slovak partners are looking forward to the establishment of the tourism office in collaboration with Poland and they see that this office should be engaged in pastoralism activities,
- Relevant ministries in addition to Ministries of environment, including the Min. of Agriculture, but also finance and education
- Municipalities and local stakeholders

The meeting followed up with a presentation of **Science for the Carpathians (S4C) recommendations**¹⁶, submitted to COP6, relevant for agriculture and rural development. Many recommendations were relevant to the discussion on pastoralism and concerned traditional ecological knowledge, links between traditional agriculture and biodiversity, exchange between herders and other actors, etc.

The Romanian colleagues provided an Update on topics for cooperation under the WG SARD, including their experience facilitating Short food supply chains – Farm to fork in Romania, with some reflection on the quality schemes and certification of „Mountain Products”.

- They informed the meeting about support provided to the rural residents, for creating Local Gastronomic Points that serve food at home to tourists. The Romanian government made a regulation that eases the process of certification for families living in rural areas who want to serve food, it seems to be working well. The **National Agency of Mountain Area Romania** provided training to the local households that would like to provide food to tourists and is supporting a number of families in this respect.¹⁷
- The „Mountain Products” scheme was discussed and how it is implemented in Romania to guarantee that the products labeled as mountain products are strictly coming from the mountain regions. These products need to be better promoted because there was a lack of awareness that this is certainly a quality label.¹⁸

The Secretariat presented a **funding opportunity provided by the German Foundation DBU**, which provides support for projects related to energy communities in the Carpathian countries. The Foundation is also focusing on projects related to sustainability, capacity building, social innovation, and Carpathian Pastoralism should be a highly relevant topic for it. Should participants be interested, the Secretariat can facilitate contact with the foundation.¹⁹

As the ESD Focal points were not available to join the meeting, the Secretariat provided a brief reflection on the meeting discussion from the point of view of education for sustainable development (ESD). The SARD protocol Article 16, dealing with education and training, is extremely relevant to pastoralism and it is also very relevant for the work of Carpathian ESD Expert network. Its second paragraph seems to be directly calling for what we’re trying to achieve through the ESD expert network. Parties should consider the possibility of focusing on pastoralism within the ESD Expert Network activities to supporting implementation of the SARD protocol towards the IYRP²⁰.

Support to Ukraine in the framework of the Carpathian Convention was presented by the Secretariat, including the resolution adopted at the Carpathian Ministerial Meeting, Rebuild Ukraine program co-created by Ms. Mariana Melnykovich (S4C) in Switzerland, as well as the Romanian Virtual Field trip initiative. The Secretariat informed participants about our plans for the special session on Ukraine during Forum Carpaticum 2023 and encouraged them to facilitate links with potentially interested parties²¹.

The final part of the meeting focused on the discussion of the main learning outcomes, take away points from the meeting as well as exchange between the parties about the links between pastoralism and the conflict with large carnivores.

¹⁶ See presentation file: [Recommendations to the Carpathian Convention from the S4C by Tamara Mitrofanenko](#)

¹⁷ See presentation file: [Local Gastronomic Points in Romania by the National Agency of Mountain Areas](#)

¹⁸ See presentation file: [Quality schemes and certification of „Mountain Products” by Veronica Taran Baciu Georgescu, Dănuț Ungureanu](#)

¹⁹ See presentation file: [Planning a Citizen Energy Project? DBU Funding Options by Dr. Volker Wachendoerfer](#)

²⁰ See presentation file: [ESD Reflection and Support to Ukraine by the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention](#)

²¹ Ibid.



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Main Conclusions:

- The participants indicated importance and strong interest in development of pastoralism law in the Carpathians at the regional level. The Romanian parties are already working on initiating such a law in Romania. There could be a clear role for the Convention to support such a development at the regional level.
- The SARD WG agreed that Pastoralism is a very important and relevant topic and agreed to continue working on this topic as one of its priorities.
- The National Agency of Mountain Areas Romania expressed willingness to continue providing a leading role for the work of the WG SARD.

Next steps:

- Forum Carpathicum 2023 will provide an opportunity for exchange about research findings and gaps of knowledge in the field of Pastoralism. Carpathian Pastoralism is one of the conference focus topics.
- Slovakia representatives suggested to integrate pastoralism into the Biodiversity strategy.
- Next WG on Biodiversity meeting could address the conflict between wildlife and pastoralists
- The next meeting of the WG on Cultural Heritage and Traditional Knowledge should have a session on Pastoralism
- Plans by Euromontana:
 - Short term:
 - 10-11 May: [International Conference – The role of pastoral schools in the management of natural habitats](#)
 - March 2024: [Horizon Europe's call for proposal on Agro pastoral/outdoor livestock systems](#).
 - March 2024: [Horizon Europe's call for proposal on Thematic networks to compile and share knowledge ready for practice](#)
 - Medium / Long term:
 - Facilitating the creation of a European network of pastoral schools to enhance capacity (through the ShepForBio project)
 - Participation to International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists for 2026 (still to be determined)
- Mr. Zolt Molnar will continue collaboration with the network of herders at the international level and the Secretariat will follow up with him on integrating a Carpathian regional element to these activities.