

MEETING REPORT

10th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group
on Sustainable Tourism

9:30 – 13:30, 15 April 2021
ONLINE MEETING

1) Opening of the WG Tourism meeting

The meeting was opened by the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, Mr. Harald Egerer, Head of the UNEP Vienna Programme Office – Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, welcoming the participants and giving technical instructions for smooth running of the online meeting. The Secretariat warmly welcomed Mr. Dominik Borek, Director of the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Economic Development, Labour and Technology of Poland, who was designated as the Chair of the WG Tourism, and the Polish Presidency of the Carpathian Convention represented by Ms. Bożena Haczek.

2) Opening remark by Polish Presidency

Ms. Bożena Haczek, Ministry of Climate and Environment of Poland, delivered an opening speech on behalf of the Polish Presidency of the Carpathian Convention underlining the importance of sustainable tourism development for holistic implementation of the Carpathian Convention. Ms. Haczek stressed the 10th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (WG Tourism) was the first official meeting of the Carpathian Convention organized during the Polish Presidency term and ensured of the Presidency support for the activities of the Working Group.

3) Welcoming speech by the WG Tourism Chair

Mr. Dominik Borek, Chair of the WG Tourism, Director of the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Economic Development, Labour and Technology of Poland, delivered a welcoming speech stressing the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sectors and the need for collaborative efforts in tackling it. Mr. Borek informed the participants about the decision of the Carpathian Convention COP6 (25 November 2020) designating Poland as the Chair of the WG Tourism for the current implementation period 2021-2023, as well as about giving the coordination role of the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform (CSTP) by CSTP Centre Poland – Association of Carpathian Euroregion – Poland for the current implementation period 2021-2023.

The Chair of the WG Tourism thanked the previous coordinator of the CSTP, CSTP Centre Romania, for supporting the Platform so far and invited it for further cooperation. Furthermore, he welcomed Mr. Dawid Lasek who will be the CSTP Coordinators for next 3 years, but also who will act as the Vice-Chair of the WG Tourism supporting the Ministry in fulfilling its duties as the Chair of the Working Group. Mr. Borek underlined that the work of the CSTP shall support successful implementation of the Carpathian Convention in the tourism sector and therefore the Work Plan for the CSTP 2021-2023 tabled during the meeting will be important tool for cooperation and joint actions in field of tourism. Finally, Mr. Borek invited Mr. Lasek to co-chair the meeting.

4) Round of introductions

Mr. Dawid Lasek, as Co-Chair of the WG Tourism meeting invited all the participants to introduce themselves and elaborate on their role in the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism, starting from the official delegates of the Parties in the alphabetic order of the Parties, then moving to the observers.

5) Adoption of the Agenda

The Meeting Agenda was adopted without any changes.

6) WG Tourism State of the Art presentation

The Secretariat made a [short presentation](#) giving an overview of the WG Tourism structure, its strategic documents and general activities up to date.

7) **Consideration of the updated Terms of Reference for the WG Tourism**

The Secretariat presented briefly **updated Terms of Reference for the WG Tourism**. After the presentation, the participants made several comments to the documents to be taken into account in the final draft. The Secretariat will circulate the updated version of the Terms of Reference together with the meeting report. After approval by WG Tourism via online consultation, the Terms of Reference will be circulated to the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee for its consideration.

8) **Updates from the Parties on the implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism**

Mr. Lasek asked the Parties to provide information on activities supporting implementation of the Tourism Protocol in respective country since the last meeting of the WG Tourism in 2017. The Parties provided the following updates:

Czech Republic:

1. Development of a publication "Sustainable Tourism in the Carpathians in the Czech Republic, which identifies and evaluates suitable conditions for further development of sustainable tourism while considering the cultural and natural potential of the region.
2. Organizing regular roundtables for the Carpathian Convention stakeholders to share information and enhance cooperation among governmental, non-governmental, academic and private sector at national, regional and local levels. Key topic discussed during the roundtables include sustainable tourism.
3. Applying for a certification of the Council of Europe for the European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius. More information: <http://www.cyril-methodius.eu/en/>
4. More information in the [presentation](#) delivered by the Czech Republic.

Hungary:

Sustainability has become a horizontal and priority goal in all projects financed by the Hungarian government, including in the tourism sector. Thus, the Carpathian Convention and its Protocol on Sustainable Tourism giving a framework to undertake relevant activities with due consideration of sustainability and cooperation of many actors shall streamline and support further work toward sustainability in Hungary.

Poland:

5. An authorized representative of the Ministry responsible for tourism in Poland signed a memorandum on the creation of the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform, October 9, 2017. Thus, Poland agreed to run CSTP-Centrum Poland by Association of the Carpathian Euroregion – Poland.
6. The Ministry supported the development of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians by i.e., allocating approx. 2 million 160 thousand in 2018-2020 for the creation and renewal of tourist routes, internet applications, creation of territorial tourist brands, and improvement of safety in the mountains
7. In 2020, the Ministry of Economic Development Labour and Technology (responsible for tourism) sought the status of the chairman of the Working Group for Sustainable Tourism of the Carpathian Convention. The status was granted to Poland by the decision of the 6th Conference of the Parties of COP 6 for the current implementation period 2021-2023.
8. At the same time, in accordance with the decision of COP6 /15 of the 6th Conference of the Parties to the CSTP - Center Poland took over the coordination of the CSTP for the years 2021-2023 from the CSTP – Center Romania.
9. On February 27, 2021, during the conference of the "Europe of the Carpathians", the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland (ACEP) signed a Memorandum on Cooperation between the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform – Center Poland and the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention. This is the first memorandum signed with CSTP Centers.
10. On March 30, 2021, the Ministry organized an on-line meeting of the National Sustainable Tourism Task Group, where the draft Work Plan of the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform for 2021-2023 was discussed. STTG, gathering about 30 representatives of ministries, institutions and organizations of the tourism, hotel and catering sectors, is an effective platform for implementing the Carpathian Convention, as it allows representatives of the relevant sectors to join discussing issues related to the implementation of the Convention.
11. Moreover, the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland:

- implemented in 2017-2018 the project "Hiking without a backpack - use and promotion of the resources of the cultural and natural heritage of the cross-border area" which was aimed at increasing the attractiveness of the Polish-Slovak borderland by using the resources of cultural and natural heritage, mainly in the context of the development of hiking tourism.
- implemented the EtnoCarpathia project in the years 2019-2021. The main idea of the project is to develop and promote the cultural heritage of the Polish-Slovak cross-border areas by developing a tourist product EtnoCarpathia based on the resources of Carpathian culture.

Romania:

Romania provided a detailed information on implementation of the Tourism Protocol and related Strategy for sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians, that among others:

1. Creation of a national Working Group for the implementation of the above-mentioned Strategy.
2. Development of a feasibility studies regarding the development of tourism related infrastructure.
3. Creation of the "Sustainable tourism Guide of rural tourism communities.
4. Agreement for Cooperation in the field of promoting rural tourism and Romanian traditional dishes was signed, with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.
5. Creation of regional tourist brands (e.g., Telemea de Sibiu – IGP, Picnic in Cindrel etc.) and initiating projects for developing other local brands.
6. Consulting relevant tourism stakeholders in order to create a strategy for developing and promoting tourist products.
7. Creating tourism-cultural routes certified by the Ministry of Economy, Business Environment and Tourism (e.g. Medieval Heritage Routes, Romanian Museums Route, Via Mariae Route etc.); - 77 certified tourism-cultural routes.

More information in the [presentation](#) delivered by Romania.

Slovakia:

Slovak Environmental Agency is currently working on a task that deals with nature tourism and sustainable tourism in Slovakia. The purpose of this task is to carry out a study which will provide information on characteristics of natural tourism, conditions of development of natural tourism in Slovakia, creation of natural products, best practices of natural tourism in Slovakia and abroad, as well as on topics related to localities and activities for natural tourism in the protected areas.

Furthermore, the Tourism Section of the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic seeks to motivate tourism entities responsible for the development of tourism in the relevant regions of Slovakia to focus on sustainable forms of tourism and to develop tourism in a sustainable way. In this context, the Tourism Section recommends that subsidy applicants (local and regional tourism organisations) support green forms and sustainable tourism in all areas of tourism in 2021 with their activities, especially with emphasis on ecotourism, cycling, geotourism and activities related to cleaning and maintenance of forests, mountains, lakes, mountain hiking trails and other natural places.

The Ministry has supported so far various innovative regional projects. Apart from others for example – tourist navigation systems, digital tourist information panels, tourist cards, cycle-application, geolocation application – game, e-bike product, various mobile applications, etc.

Some of the sustainable tourism projects supported by the Ministry within the Tourism Support Act in the Carpathian region:

In general:

Renewal of tourist signs, renewal of bike signs, bike paths, digital forms of marketing. Renewal of infrastructure and marking of mountain trails in the Tatra National Park and the West Tatras. Creation of a study, the task of which will be to change the approach and parking in the occupied parts of tourist attractions in the High Tatras. Barrier-free solutions in TOP destinations, finally yet importantly, it is also support of education.

NORTHERN SPIŠ REGION – THE PIENINY MOUNTAINS

Renovation of the Goral House in the typically Goral village of Nová Ľubovňa

It is a restoration of a house, which is partly bricked and partly wooden, which captures the history of construction of houses typical of the site. Gradually, the plan is to use this building as part of a permanent offer in the field of tourism, as this village has many cycling routes in the region.

NORTHEAST OF SLOVAKIA: "Light from the East"

Marking of the pilgrimage route in the project St. Mary's Pilgrimage

For the fifth year in a row, the regional organization of tourism Northeast Slovakia has been one of the 12 partners in the international project St. Marian Pilgrimage - ("Light from the East"), which is the flagship project of the Interreg V - A program. The aim of this project is to create a network of tourism products based on the Marian tradition in the Polish and Slovak borders with an emphasis on the religious and spiritual form of tourism, respectively.

Regional tourism organization BARDEJOV / Bardejovské kúpele

Restoration and realization: of the historical building Berzevicz's Lookout Tower and the Spa of Bardejov.

Berzevicz's Lookout Tower built in 1905 at a height of 20 to 25 meters will become a magnet for visitors to our region. The restored tower will contribute to increased attendance of domestic and foreign tourists and provide a view of the entire region.

HIGH TATRAS

Marmot landscape Skalnaté Pleso

Construction of an educational area for families with children – Marmot landscape by the Rocky-Mountain Lake in High Tatras. It is a set of play, educational and relaxing elements made of natural materials with the theme of the Mountain marmot, which will contribute to increasing environmental awareness and education of children.

LIPTOV REGION

Green mountain Chopok and ecoactivity

The Demänovská valley has been hit by wind disasters and investment construction. The Zelený Chopok activity builds a relationship with the environment, mountains and at the same time it is one of the region's priorities. The main purpose of the activity is to bring together the organization of destination management, the municipality, the business sector, landowners and volunteers in afforestation of sites that have suffered from wind disasters.

100 Caves in Demänovská valley

The aim of the activity is to recall the beginnings of tourism in the Liptov region. In cooperation with the municipality of Demänovská Valley and the Slovak Caves Administration, we will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the discovery of the Demänovská Cave of Freedom on August 2 or 3, which will be an activity for the professional public and the media.

Regional brand Liptovskô

The aim of the activity is to create a regional brand Liptovskô, which will associate regional products under one name as a representative. In the first phase, the regional product brand will cover food products (especially dairy products) and will later be extended to other food products and handicraft products.

WHITE AND SMALL CARPATHIANS: Bratislava, the capital of the Slovak Republic

BRATISLAVA TOURIST BOARD

Talking Touch 3D Map

The blind will travel through the streets of Bratislava with their fingers, next to the named buildings there will be a button - a switch, which after pressing it will tell him by voice which building it is.

Talking 3D cubes

Production of 3 talking cubes. 4 monuments will be displayed on one cube. The button on the cube stand allows the blind person to start an audio description of the object from a list of max. 10 minutes.

TRNAVA TOURISM REGION

The dominant feature of Trnava, the almost 60-meter-high city tower on Trinity Square, will become more accessible and understandable for visually and hearing impaired visitors. The Trnava Regional Tourism Organization plans to supplement the existing information kiosks in the city tower with videos that translate information from the panels into Slovak sign language and other elements intended for deaf visitors.

Regional organization of the SMALL CARPATHIANS:

Get to know wine, through a year-round cycle focused on working with vineyards and following traditional practices in the production of local wines + wine tasting, cycling tours, Malokarpatská vinná cesta and others.

Ukraine

Ukraine provided information on a free online **US-Ukraine Environmental Education and Interpretation Seminar** initiated by the Podilski Tovtry National Nature Park (Kamianets-Podilskyi, Ukraine), the Council of Botanical Gardens and Arboretums of Ukraine and the Partnerships for Nature (Washington State, USA) and supported of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine and the State Ecological Academy of Postgraduate Education and Management. Seminar was scheduled on **April 19-23, 2021**. More than 100 eco-educators from 48 protected areas of Ukraine (including Carpathian Biosphere Reserve, Hutsulshchyna National Nature Park,

Zacharovanyi Krai National Nature Park and Yavoriv National Natural Park etc.) shall attend 32-hour training seminar and receive national certificates (1,05 ECTS credits).

All above mentioned organizations are partnering to bring protected area staff five days of ecological education, interpretation and innovation. To achieve a main aim, namely to develop collaborative relationships between educators during the seminar and for the future, the following objectives are set:

- improve and expand environmental education programs at Ukrainian national parks and botanical gardens;
- improve understanding of issues of biodiversity and how to protect and teach about it;
- collaboration and ongoing partnerships between Ukrainian and US environmental educators, and between their organizations.

The online seminar will focus on:

- engagement of diverse public audiences in environmental education;
- shaping the visitor experience for educational value;
- guidelines and principles for eco-trail construction and maintenance;
- signage and other technical aids to the visitor experience;
- accessibility and inclusion in protected areas;
- nature interpretation techniques;
- "Forest schools" for elementary age children;
- field lessons in ornithology and other themed lessons for children and adults;
- creation of an educational herbarium.

9) **Presentation of the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform Work Plan for 2021-2023**

Mr. Dawid Lasek, delivered a presentation on the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform Work Plan for 2021-2023 giving the participants the background information about the Association of Carpathian Euroregion – Poland acting as the CSTP Centre Poland and overview of the plan strategic objectives of the CSTP for the next implementation period. More information in the [presentation](#) delivered by Mr. Dawid Lasek.

10) **Discussion on the CSTP Work Plan 2021 – 2023**

After the presentation, Mr. Lasek opened the floor for discussion on the draft CSTP Work Plan 2021-2023. Several comments were made by the WG Tourism participants which will be taken into account while finalizing the Work Plan. The participants were invited to provide further comments in writing.

11) **Sharing information on ongoing projects and good practices on sustainable tourism in the Carpathian**

Mr. Lasek invited the participants to share information about ongoing/past project or initiatives that are relevant for the sustainable tourism in the Carpathians. The following presentations were made:

- **Centralparks** project, delivered by Mr. Isidoro De Bortoli and Mr. Philipp Corradini, the project Lead Partner – Eurac Research

More information in the [presentation](#) delivered by EURAC Research. Furthermore, shortly the Secretariat will circulate a separate email with background information and a draft Strategy on Local Sustainable Tourism Development to the WG Tourism.

- Project **EtnoCarpathia** delivered by Ms. Anna Buk, Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland, More information in the [presentation](#) delivered by Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland

- Updates on current and future sustainable tourism projects and initiatives in Carpathians provided by joint presentation of **European Wilderness Society and CEEweb for Biodiversity**.

More information in the [presentation](#) delivered by European Wilderness Society and CEEweb for Biodiversity.

Mr. Egerer requested to provide a feedback, stressed that the WG Tourism in cooperation with the Secretariat shall facilitate development of a Carpathian-wide project on sustainable tourism and protected areas as this topic was mentioned in several national interventions during the meeting clearly showing its importance for the Carpathians and the interest of the Parties to work in this field.

Furthermore, he informed that on 5 June 2020 the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration will be launched, which could be an interesting platform to cooperate also in the context of sustainable tourism. The Secretariat will be in touch with the partners undergoing relevant project in order to discuss possible future cooperation on.

12) Other matters

Ms. Elena Matei from the University of Bucharest and representative of the Science for the Carpathians informed about the upcoming Forum Carpaticum 2021 that will be held on 21 – 25 June 2021 in an online or hybrid format. The sustainable tourism topics will be addressed during the Session *Global changes and local responses: resilience, adaptations, innovations for the sustainable development of Carpathians tourist destinations*.

For more information about the Forum Carpaticum 2021 follow the conference [website](#).

13) Closing remarks and closure of the meeting

Providing brief closing remarks, the Secretariat underlined good progress made by the Parties and the Working Group on Tourism, ensuring that all relevant documents will be revised and further consulted with relevant Convention's bodies. While acknowledging the Memorandum of Cooperation signed with the CSTP Centre Poland, need to finalize the signature procedure with the CSTP Centre Romania and need to elaborate further on the agreement with CSTP Centre Ukraine, the Secretariat confirmed that the CSTP remains open for other partners to join. The Secretariat thanked all the participants, Focal Points, partners and CSTP Centres for cooperation.

WG Tourism Chair, Mr. Dominik Borek, thanked Mr. Dawid Lasek for presenting the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform Work Plan for 2021-2023 underlining that task of creating and expanding the cooperation network is particularly important and implementation of this task will be a good prognosis for the future implementation of the Carpathian Convention in the field of sustainable tourism.

WG Tourism Chair thanked all participants for providing relevant contribution to the meeting discussion, especially on the work plan of the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform, which shall be considered as fruitful, allowing to refine the Work Plan and its objectives. WG Tourism Chair invited further comments to the Work Plan in writing by 30 April 2021.

WG Tourism Chair ensured about the support by Poland for the CSTP - Center Poland and its work towards implantation of the Work Plan for 2021-2023.

The WG Tourism Chair declared the meeting closed.