**Ninth Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (CC-WG Tourism)**

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Documentation of the Methodology on the

„Elaboration and Implementation of the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Carpathians“

A practical case study for application to other relevant multi-national regions

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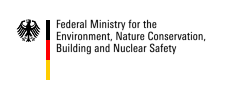
Project “Support for the Implementation of the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Carpathians”

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#### List of Abbreviations

BfN German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation

BMUB German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conserva- tion, Building and Nuclear Safety

CADSES Central European, Adriatic, Danubian, South-Eastern, European Space

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity

CCIC Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee

CNPA Carpathian Network of Protected Areas

COP Conference of the Parties

CSD Commission on Sustainable Development

CSTC Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Centre

CSTP Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform

DCPO Danube-Carpathian Programme Office

DMO Destination Management Organisation

EC European Commission

ENVSEC Environment and Security Initiative

ETE Ecological Tourism in Europe

EU European Union

ICPDR International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River

ISCC Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention

NFP National Focal Point

NGO Non-governmental Organisation

NTO National Tourism Organisation

NTTF National Tourism Task Force

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

REC Regional Environment Centre for Central and Eastern Europe

RTO Regional Tourism Organisation

SCC Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention

SCP Sustainable Consumption and Production

STWG Sustainable Tourism Working Group

SWOT Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

TOR Terms of Reference

UBA German Federal Environment Agency

UNEP United Nations Environment Programme

UNWTO United Nations World Tourism Organisation

WG TOURISM Carpathian Convention – Working Group on Sustainable Tourism

WSSD World Summit on Sustainable Development

WTTC World Travel and Tourism Council

WWF World Wide Fund for Nature

WWF-DCPO World Wide Fund for Nature - Danube-Carpathian Programme  
 Office

YFP Year Framework Program

# Introduction

This publication presents the description of an approach on how to elaborate a strategic framework document, which aims at the development and management of sustainable tourism in a large mountain area. The core part of this approach is to design and implement a participatory process which involves stakeholders concerned to a satisfactory degree leading to results that are acceptable to all and are achieved on a consensual basis. The elaboration of the strategic framework document formed the first part of the process (phase 1), while the implementation of this strategic document, after being approved by the governments involved, formed the second part (phase 2).

A challenge is posed by the fact that the above-mentioned mountain area refers to the Carpathians, stretching across seven countries, all of which went through rapid socio-economic and environmental changes over the past two decades. However, except for these socio-economic and environmental changes, there are no major differences compared to other regions challenged with creating common strategic frameworks. The essence of a sound participatory approach remains the same everywhere: „Communication is the key“. A participatory approach is one in which everyone who has a stake in the intervention has a voice, either in person or by representation.

According to UNWTO, WTTC and OECD, tourism is one of the most important and influential economic sectors of the 21st century. It is estimated that tourism, in terms of its economic importance is similar to the car or oil industry. By quantitative measures, e.g. number of visits, total expenditure, employment, tourism is a significant industry, however, by its complex impacts on the socio-cultural, natural and economic environment, it can be rather two-faceted.

On one hand, tourism promises tremendous economic benefits: it is one of the world’s most significant sources of the global economy and providing major employment. Managed well, tourism can constitute a significant opportunity for many countries and communities in terms of socio-cultural, economic, environmental, and political development. On the other hand, tourism is a very complex industry involving numerous stakeholders (sometimes with conflicting interests) and requiring a significant amount of resources. Moreover, unsustainable and mass tourism can have destructive impacts for communities and the environment. Thus, tourism can have opposite effects depending on the way activities are managed.

The Carpathians are currently home to an estimated 18 Million people. The region is shared by seven Central and Eastern European countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Ukraine), five of which have already joined the European Union (EU). This eventually increases the opportunities for sustainable development based on the rich natural, environmental and cultural resources of the region. Ties linking the Carpathian countries are noticeable in languages, music, similar tales, the characteristic small towns situated at the foothills of the mountain range, their architectural styles, etc.

# Executive Summary

(Wird eingefügt sobald der Rest des Textes mit dem BfN abgestimmt ist)

# Strategy Framework

## Carpathian Convention

For overview please find a chart on the Carpathian Convention in Annex 8.10.1.

In 2003, the seven countries of the Carpathian Mountains (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine) signed the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians. The Convention entered into force in January 2006.

The overall goal of the Carpathian Convention is to pursue comprehensive policy and cooperation in order to guarantee environmental protection and sustainable development in the Carpathian region. Among the objectives of the Convention are the improvement of the quality of life, the strengthening of local economies and communities, and the conservation of natural values and cultural heritage.

The Convention is a framework for cooperation and multi-sectoral policy coordination. It is a platform for developing and implementing joint strategies for sustainable development. The Convention also acts as a forum for dialogue between all stakeholders involved, also in the field of tourism.

While the Framework Convention contains general principles and provisions, specific substantive obligations are regulated with Protocols to the Convention. Article 9 of the Convention is dedicated to sustainable tourism. The Protocol on Sustainable Tourism was adopted by the Third Conference of the Parties (May 2011, Bratislava/Slovak Republic).

Relevant bodies of the Convention

* Conference of the Parties (COP)

The COP is the main decision-making body of the Convention. In the COP all Parties to the Convention are represented, the meetings are held every three years. The COP among other topics is responsible for the adoption of Protocols, it decides on the Programme of Work as well as the budget of the Convention, and reviews and supports the implementation of the Convention as well as of its Protocols. The COP adopts and recommends measures to achieve the objectives laid down in the articles of the Convention. Therefore, the Tourism Strategy – as a measure for the implementation of Article 9 – has been approved by the COP in the year 2014.

* The Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (CCIC)

CCIC consists of representatives of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention and meets twice between two COP meetings. It is responsible for the preparation of political decisions of the COP. This includes recommendations for adoption of strategies relevant for the achievement of the objectives of the Convention. Also, the CCIC monitors the compliance of the contracting Parties with the provisions of the Convention and its Protocols.

* Secretariat of the Convention (SCC)

Among other actions, the secretariat supports the work of the different bodies of the Convention, coordinates the implementation of the Programme of Work of the Convention and assists in project development and implementation. United Nations Environment Programme, with its branch office in Vienna, is hosting the Secretariat of the Convention (UNEP – SCC). The SCC was operating up to the year 2014 as Interim Secretariat (ISCC).

* National Focal Points (NFP)

Each Party to the Convention has nominated at least one person as a National Focal Point in charge of the Carpathian Convention. The Focal Points are hosted at the national Ministries of the Parties, e.g. Ministries of Environment, rural development or natural resources.

* Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (WG TOURISM)

The Carpathian Convention has eight thematic Working Groups, one of them being the Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (WG Tourism). The Working Groups function under the supervision of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee. They are composed of the National Focal Points for the Carpathian Convention and/or persons nominated by them, and is open to observers. The Terms of Reference of the WG Tourism, which is regularly updated, includes the preparation and negotiation of the Tourism Protocol and the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Carpathians, and steering the implementation of both documents after their adoption by the Parties.

## Tourism Protocol

In May 2011, the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism was adopted by COP3, which provides a legally binding framework for the development of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians. Since April 2014 this protocol is in force, which means that those Parties, which have signed the protocol are obliged to implement it into their national legislation.

### Content of the Protocol

The protocol aims to facilitate the cooperation of the Carpathian Countries in the development of sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism in the Carpathians shall be developed for the benefit of the current and future generations; the positive impacts of tourism shall be enhanced while the negative ones shall be minimized.

The protocol aims to harmonize sustainable tourism policies and activities among the countries; it also promotes trans-boundary cooperation measures in the border areas of the countries.

The protocol emphasises the preservation of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge of local people in the Carpathians via sustainable tourism, and includes measures to enhance the contribution of tourism to other sectors, such as sustainable forestry, agriculture, conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity, local economies.

[Full text of the protocol](http://www.carpathianconvention.org/tl_files/carpathiancon/Downloads/01%20The%20Convention/1.1.2.3%20ProtocolonSustainableTourismsigned27may2011.pdf) is provided as Annex 8.1.

### How the Tourism Protocol was developed

The initial work of the Carpathian Convention (up to and including COP2) was co-financed by the EU CADSES Carpathian Project. CEEweb for Biodiversity, a network of NGOs in Central and East Europe, from Hungary and the German organisation Ecological Tourism in Europe (Ökologischer Tourismus in Europa (Ö.T.E.) e.V.) were responsible for tourism related tasks in the Carpathian Project and therefore were coordinating the work towards the development of the Tourism Protocol in cooperation with the Interim Secretariat of the Convention.

In order to support the discussion among Parties on the necessity to develop a Tourism Protocol and a Tourism Strategy under the Carpathian Convention, CEEweb and ETE prepared a Background Document on Sustainable Tourism Opportunities in the Carpathians. The document contains 18 case studies from the Carpathian countries on positive and negative impacts of tourism in economic, ecological, and socio-cultural fields. It was presented at a side event of COP1. For the development of the background document the “*ad hoc* CEEweb Carpathian Tourism Working Group” was established consisting of NGOs from the Carpathian countries who are dealing with tourism related issues. The group remained active during the development of the protocol and commented on drafts. Furthermore, representatives of this group participated at the official meetings for the development of the Tourism Protocol and at the COP meetings as observers.

The Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (WG TOURISM) under the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee was established according to the decision of COP1. At its establishment, the WG TOURISM received a mandate of the COP to develop the Tourism Protocol and its Strategy. The WG TOURISM was open to all relevant stakeholders, including official country representatives, international and non-governmental organisations and the private sector. CEEweb, ETE as well as the Secretariat of the Convention and National Focal Points put efforts to ensure wide involvement of the stakeholders into the development of the protocol.

The working group met three times before the adoption of the Protocol. The first two meetings were held in the framework of the EU CADSES co-financed Carpathian Project and were organized by CEEweb and ETE. The third meeting of WG TOURISM was hosted by Poland and UNWTO and financially supported by a project of the Norwegian Fund, which has been realized by UNEP/ Grid-Warsaw in partnership with Ekopsychology Society and ANPED.

According to the provisions of the Convention, the Protocol had to be submitted to the Parties at least 6 months prior to the meeting of COP at which it had to be considered. Therefore, while the WG TOURISM negotiated an advanced draft of the Tourism Protocol at its second meeting, to COP2 it delivered Recommendations on Sustainable Tourism only. A draft Tourism Protocol was finalized at the third meeting of the WG TOURISM and delivered to COP3 for adoption.

During the WG TOURISM meetings, a Tourism Strategy draft was discussed, parallel to the draft if the Tourism Protocol. However, the Protocol was at that time the highest priority, so that the text of the Strategy was not submitted to the COP3. In the current project the earlier draft of the Strategy was used as a background document and the core text of the Strategy was drafted from scratch.

## Related Documents and Initiatives

### Alpine Convention

While the Carpathian Convention is the second mountain-related regional agreement in the world, the Alpine Convention is the first. The Alpine Convention entered into force in 1995. The overall goal of the Convention is the preservation and protection of the Alps. Eight countries are Parties to the Convention: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia and Switzerland. The European Union is also a Party to the Convention.

The Tourism Protocol is one out of eight thematic protocols annexed to the Convention. It is the tool for developing strategies on how to deal with the negative impacts of tourism and at the same time giving advice on how to use tourism to strengthen local economies in the Alps.

In 2013, a report on the state of the Alps with a focus on the sustainable development of tourism was released. The report evaluates the impacts of the Tourism Protocol and explores the remaining challenges for Alpine tourism and the room for a wider implementation of the Protocol. Its authors conclude that the Tourism Protocol is implemented through the existing national regulations and a number of good practices. They assume that “over the years, the [Alpine Convention](http://www.alpconv.org/pages/default.aspx) has encouraged, or even directly promoted the drafting of some of the national regulations and good practices”.

### The Convention on Biological Diversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is an international treaty adopted in 1992 on the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The CBD came into force on 29th of December 1993. Over 190 countries have become a Party to the Convention. The [Convention](https://www.cbd.int/) is legally binding; countries that join it are obliged to implement its provisions.

The CBD has three objectives: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and a fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. The Convention aims at the development of strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity that ensure long-term prosperity of future generations.

**3.3.2.1 CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development**

The International [Guidelines for Biodiversity and Tourism Developmen](https://www.cbd.int/tourism/guidelines.shtml)t of the Convention on Biological Diversity were adopted at the 7th Conference of the Parties in 2004.

These guidelines are voluntary and offer instruments for local, regional and national governments as well as for local stakeholders for the management of tourism activities in an ecological, economic and socially sustainable way. They serve as a detailed practical instrument for the planning and management of sustainable tourism projects. Management processes and tasks of the responsible institutions from decision making up to monitoring are defined in the guidelines. The guidelines emphasise the importance of participation of all stakeholders in integrated tourism and biodiversity management for the sake of achieving a balance between socio-economic benefits of tourism and biodiversity conservation.

In 2008, a [User’s Manual](https://www.cbd.int/doc/programmes/tourism/tourism-manual-en.pdf) on the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development was finalized and released.

### Mountain Partnership

The Mountain Partnership is an outcome of the [World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, 2002)](http://www.un.org/events/wssd/#_blank), acting as an umbrella alliance for promoting specific regional and thematic activities. The partnership aims to bring countries, groups and organisations together to work towards a common goal: to improve the lives of mountain people and protect mountain environments around the world.

The Mountain Partnership aims to function as a broker for joint activities, facilitating contacts between countries and institutions and creating conditions for technical cooperation and resource mobilization at the national, regional and global levels.

### Rio+20

In June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the [United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development](http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/) took place. It is called "Rio+20" as it was organized twenty years after the Rio Earth Summit. At the Rio+20 Conference, world leaders, along with thousands of participants from other groups, such as NGOs and the private sector, came together to develop pathways towards a more sustainable 21st century.

The Conference adopted the Outcome Document entitled the "The Future We Want" and a 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10 YFP on SCP).

The Outcome Document contains two paragraphs on sustainable tourism. The document calls for:

* Enhanced support for sustainable tourism activities and relevant capacity-building in developing countries in order to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, and
* The promotion of investment in sustainable tourism and underline the importance of establishing, where necessary, appropriate guidelines and regulations in accordance with national priorities and legislation for promoting and supporting sustainable tourism.

One of the five initial programmes included in the 10 YFP on SCP is sustainable tourism (including ecotourism). The programme will be developed with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders and aims to respond to national and regional needs. The programme will use a mix of policy instruments and will set clear objectives, activities and indicators of success. In 2013, the consultation process with tourism stakeholders was implemented and the Programme was launched during the last quarter 2014.

In the year 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals were approved. 17 special goals were established for the future sustainable development of the world and which each nation has to implement into their policies. Among them are also some contents with relation to sustainable tourism.

# Project Description

## History

Ecological Tourism in Europe (ETE) was closely involved in the development of the International Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development under the Convention on Biological Diversity since 1999. These guidelines were adopted in 2004. ETE aims to support the implementation of these guidelines in other international agreements. Therefore, after the establishment of the Carpathian Convention in 2003, ETE collaborated with the Interim Secretariat and the Parties of the Convention to promote the CBD guidelines.

Article 9 of the Convention states that Parties are obliged to take measures towards sustainable tourism including cross-border cooperation. For this purpose, a Working Group was established at the 1st Conference of Parties (COP) in 2006 consisting of government representatives, international organisations and NGOs: „Carpathian Convention – Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (WG TOURISM)“.

The first meeting of the WG TOURISM took place in 2007 and was organized by CEEweb for Biodiversity and ETE. A draft structure of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy was prepared along with first vision and goals to be implemented. The agenda of the second WG TOURISM meeting in April 2008 covered discussions on the content of the strategy. All seven Parties and observes, e.g. NGOs participated in these meetings and submitted suggestions to ETE who collected them and created the first draft of the strategy.

In addition to this draft strategy, the working group also developed a draft of the Tourism Protocol. The work on the Sustainable Tourism Strategy was momentarily stopped, due to lack of financing and political commitment. The Tourism Protocol was high on the agenda and pushed forward at that time, as the most important document to be achieved by the Carpathian Convention.

The adoption of the Tourism Protocol at COP3 in May 2011 underlined that the future Tourism Strategy should reflect its content and should be considered as an instrument for its implementation. This required a complete review and revision of the draft content of the strategy. The importance of the development of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy was once again confirmed at the meeting of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee – CCIC in December 2012.

Therefore, in 2013 ETE started with the implementation of a project dedicated to the development of the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Carpathians, in cooperation with a number of other partners and with the financial support from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety.

## Outline of the project

### Development of the Tourism Strategy (Project Phase 1)

For an overview about phase 1 of the project, please find a chart in Annex 8.10.2.

The core partners in the project were the Ecological Tourism in Europe (ETE) as the main implementing organisation, the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (UNEP – ISCC, later UNEP-SCC), CEEweb for Biodiversity (CEEweb) as the coordinating organisation for NGOs, and the World Wide Fund for Nature – Danube-Carpathian Programme Office (WWF-DCPO) as the coordinating organisation for the tourism business sector.

The project (first phase) for the development of the “Strategy for Sustainable Tourism development in the Carpathians” has started in March 2013 and ended in April 2015.

This project was supported by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau, und Reaktorsicherheit, BMUB) with means of the Advisory Assistance Programme for Environmental Protection in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It was supervised by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (Bundesamt für Naturschutz, BfN) and the German Federal Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt, UBA).

The goal of the project was the „Participatory elaboration of a Tourism Strategy for the Carpathians”, to be submitted as a draft for adoption at the 4th Conference of the Parties of the Carpathian Convention, supporting the implementation of the Tourism Protocol. The objective is to achieve this through active involvement of stakeholders, e.g. the governmental sector, the tourism sector and nature and environmental protection sector in the development of the strategy, supporting cross-border development processes and strategies in other regions through promotion and dissemination of the results.

ETE together with 2 experts developed a first draft of the Tourism Strategy. For the country consultation processes, ETE engaged 7 experts, based on the list provided during the 1st meeting of the partners. The experts were provided with Terms of Reference (TORs) to ensure drafting experts have always up-to-date comments and also to assist in providing the 14 good practice examples on sustainable tourism in the Carpathians.

Finally, at the 4th COP in September 2014 in Mikulov (Czech Republic) the Parties adopted the Tourism Strategy and appreciated the coordination and advisory support provided to the development of the Strategy. This model of cooperation has brought considerable results in the implementation of the Carpathian Convention and its Protocol on Sustainable Tourism. Without this support this important milestone leading to a common approach in sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians would have taken considerably longer to be reached.

The content of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy consists of a vision, three objectives, two action plans (one country action plan and one joint action plan). Furthermore, the strategy provides a set of indicators to measure its implementation in the long-term, a chapter on institutional arrangements and recommendations on financial support. The text of the strategy id proved in Annex 8.2.

### Implementation of the Tourism Strategy

For an overview about phase 2 of the project, please find a chart in Annex 8.10.3.

In order to continue with the development of sustainable tourism in this mountain region and not to lose the dynamic momentum, it is of great importance to monitor the implementation process and to strengthen and support ongoing consultations in each of the Carpathian countries. It is necessary to tackle the Strategy with concrete steps and actions and lead the Carpathians to the sustainable tourism development through stable and irreversible process.

In this multilateral context, project based funding facilitating the coordination of Parties’ efforts and bringing external expertise would certainly strengthen their efforts and contribute to concrete results on the ground.

For that reason and based on the wish of the Parties, ETE applied for a new project under the BMUB Advisory Assistance Programme. The Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (UNEP-SCC) and the NGO-network CEEweb for Biodiversity as the coordinating organisation for NGOs are again partner organisations.

High priority was given first to strengthen structural capacities and to further develop the conceptual framework set by the Strategy to secure the further process of sustainable tourism development in the Carpathian countries. Based on the Rules of Procedures of the Carpathian Convention with the Conference of the Parties (COP) being held every three years it was the aim to finish all planned activities in this project before end of 2017, when the next COP is foreseen in Hungary.

Goal of this second project phase was strengthening structures and coordinating processes for the successful implementation of the Strategy in the seven Carpathian countries through regional cooperation and a participatory process by involving the stakeholders from natural and environmental protection, as well as from tourism sector.

The project phase 2 was implemented between August 17, 2015 and December 15, 2017.

Measures to achieve the project’s objectives and expected results:

* Further detailing and proposing concrete tasks for the implementation of the country specific and the common A**ction Plan**. Identification of measures (**Indicators**) for monitoring of the strategy’s implementation,
* Assisting the actors involved in setting up a **Carpathian Coordination Platform** (Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform – CSTP) for the implementation of the Strategy, including development of its job description and Terms of Reference. The first work of the Carpathian Coordination Platform will be carried out by the end of the project in 2017,
* Assisting the Parties and stakeholders in setting up **National Tourism Task Forces** (NTTF) for the implementation of the Strategy within their countries. These NTTFs should consist of members from the national and regional (Carpathian related) government and members of the national and regional (Carpathian related) tourism stakeholder groups,
* Creation of a **database** on completed and ongoing **projects on sustainable tourism** in the Carpathians in order to share best practices. The first database is completed by end of 2016. Further consolidation of data will be done to the end of the project and made available on the common Carpathian online platform,
* Creation of a **database** of existing **finance instruments** available for the development of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians. This database will be kept up to date throughout the project duration and presented on Carpathian online platform,
* Creation of a database of **manuals and guidelines** on the components of sustainable tourism applicable in the Carpathians. For this purpose, relevant and up-to-date manuals will be collected throughout the project duration.

Selected results of the project (further detailed Action Plans and the Terms of Reference of the Carpathian Coordination Platform) are presented for approval at the 5th Conference of the Parties in October 2017 in Lillafüred, Hungary.

## Partners and other Contributors (Project Phases 1 and 2)

### Ecological Tourism in Europe (ETE)

Ecological Tourism in Europe (ETE) (*German: Ökologischer Tourismus in Europa e.V.*) founded in 1991 in Bonn, Germany, supports the development of sustainable tourism in both, Germany and Europe. In cooperation with partner organisations, ETE plans and implements model projects, which focus on regional development through environmentally and socially friendly tourism - often in protected areas and mountainous regions.

ETE has been active in Central and Eastern European Countries for many years, and thus has gathered a large variety of on-site experiences.

Moreover, capacity building and education represent further key activities of ETE. Regarding tourism policy ETE is supporting the implementation of international agreements and conventions related to tourism, in particular those of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) with its Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development, the UN-Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the Framework Convention for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention). The essence from these multi-lateral agreements are incorporated into all project activities of ETE

ETE was responsible for the coordination of and cooperation among project partners, also during the time between meetings. All partners were involved in the development and the support to the implementation of the Tourism Strategy. Results from the meetings were incorporated in the Strategy and prepared to be revised in the official meetings. The Government representatives of the seven Carpathian States, consisting of environment and tourism ministries, were involved in the meetings of the WG TOURISM and the national consultations.

### UNEP – SCC

The Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (SCC), hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) coordinates all regular meetings of the Convention: the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (CCIC), the Conference of the Parties (COP) and the topic related Working Groups. Therefore, the SCC had a central role in this project concerning the support of the process of development and completion of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy on the political platform.

The UNEP Vienna Office is also UNEP’s liaison office with the Secretariats of the Alpine Convention and the ICPDR and assists UNEP in the collaboration with the Regional Environment Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) and with UN organisations and institutions based in Vienna. UNEP - SCC also promotes cooperation on the protection and sustainable development among countries in South-Eastern Europe and Caucasus, including UNEP activities in the ENVSEC initiative. UNEP - SCC is the Environmental Reference Centre of the Mountain Partnership.

During the two project phases the SCC was responsible to update and integrate emerging official meetings of the Carpathian Convention and other relevant meetings into the work plan of the project. The Secretariat in its function as the coordinating body for the Convention has communicated the project interim progress and results to the Focal Points of the Convention and the wider members of regular meetings on a continuous basis. According to the work plan further specific tasks of UNEP-SCC were communicating with partners on the regular meetings of the Carpathian Convention (CCIC, COP, WG TOURISM, the timely delivery of documents relevant for tourism, and the upload of project documents to the website of the Carpathian Convention.

### WWF-DCPO

The WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme Office is led from its head office in Vienna and is responsible for leading, and to a significant extent implementing, WWF’s efforts to preserve, restore and sustainably manage the natural values of the Danube-Carpathian eco-regions.

They work across political borders through an eco-regional approach based on project management, policy, networking, capacity building, communication and crisis response. Their mission is to find solutions to the challenges that the region faces in order to achieve its vision of prosperity, sustainability and biodiversity conservation.

During the project the WWF - DCPO was involved in the first project phase and responsible for the communication with the tourism business sector in the Carpathians and consulting with the tourism sector on the drafts of the Tourism Strategy, gathering their comments and improving the Tourism Strategy. As a continuous member of the official meetings to the Carpathian Convention, the DCPO contributed to the lobbying activities targeting on government representatives. Also they were responsible for organizing two meetings for the business sector with the support of partners. For this purpose, two seminars were planned: Poiana, Brasov / Romania in October 2013 and ITB Berlin in March 2014.

### CEEweb for Biodiversity

CEEweb for Biodiversity was founded in 1994 (under the name of Central and East European Working Group for the Enhancement of Biodiversity), with the support of the European Union and two Hungarian NGOs; the National Society of Conservationists and Green Action.

CEEweb represents the network of several dozens of nature conservation organisations from Central and East European countries, working together to protect the natural heritage of the region. The mission of CEEweb is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development. CEEweb works through advocacy, influencing decision making, common projects, capacity building, networking and awareness raising. It targets its members, and local, national and international decision makers, NGOs and NGO networks, companies and the scientific community.

The main tasks of CEEweb in both phases of the project were coordination, implementation and technical support of the working meetings. CEEweb also coordinated the preparation of the 14 case studies on sustainable tourism and was responsible for communicating and consulting the drafts of the Tourism Strategy and all other results to wider community of NGOs in the Carpathians. CEEweb also contributed to the documentation of the process of developing the Tourism Strategy and the elaboration and the host of the data bases.

Four meetings of the Sustainable Tourism Working Group of CEEweb were organized during the two phases of project to discuss and gather comments on the strategy and its implementation.

### Country Experts

For the country consultation processes in the first project phase, which started on June 13, 2013, ETE contracted seven country experts:

* Czech Republic - Eliska Balharova, Centrum Veronica Hostetin,
* Hungary - Imola Fuzi, Ecological Institute for Sustainable Development,
* Poland - Monika Kotulak, Naturalists Club,
* Romania - Andrei Blumer, The Association of Ecotourism in Romania,
* Serbia – Ivan Svetozarevic, Vavel – tourism business company,
* Slovakia – Zuzana Okanikova, OZ Pronatur,
* Ukraine – Andrej Taras-Bashta, Associaton FAUNA.

At the beginning of the project the following tasks were assigned to the experts concerning country consultations:

* Compiling a list of stakeholders including the tourism, governmental, NGO, and science sector,
* Communicating to the stakeholders by a variety of means on the project, the consultation process and the elaboration of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy,
* Submitting a questionnaire to the stakeholders giving them the opportunity to contribute to the content of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy,
* Organizing meetings with stakeholders to discuss current challenges in the development of sustainable tourism.

In April 2014, an extension of the assignment for the project for the elaboration of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy was approved by the funding institution. The purpose of the extension was to organize consultation meetings with the tourism sector in each country of the Carpathians separately in order to inform tourism stakeholders about the strategy and gain their commitments for its implementation. Country experts were in charge of organizing the meetings.

During phase 2 of the project, which was implemented between August 17, 2015 and December 15, 2017, the composition of partners and contributors changed slightly.

While UNEP-SCC and CEEweb remained as regular partners to maintain the network communication to Parties and observers, as well as other stakeholders in CEE countries, other partners were sub-contracted for contributing to the specific activities in this project phase.

In order to feed the three data bases, ETE contracted one expert in each of the seven Carpathian countries, as previously in phase 1 of the project, but with different tasks:

* Czech Republic – Igor Kyselka, Institute for Spatial Development, Brno,
* Hungary – Agnes Zolyomi, CEEweb fo Biodiversity, Budapest,
* Poland – Katarzyna Śliwa-Martinez, Łańcut and Małgorzata Fedas, Krakow,
* Romania - Andrei Blumer, The Association of Ecotourism in Romania, Brasov,
* Serbia – Ivan Svetozarevic, Vavel – tourism business company, Knjaževac,
* Slovakia – Zuzana Okanikova, Civic Association Pronatur, Banská Bystricá,
* Ukraine – Iryna Shchoka, European Wilderness Society, Uzhhorod.

### Indicator Experts

For elaboration of the common set of indicators measuring the positive and negative impacts caused by tourism in the Carpathians, which started in August 2015, ETE contracted 7 experts, incl. their teams:

* Ms. Cinzia de Marzo (former ETIS at DG Enterprise) (Belgium),
* Dr. Edward W (Ted) Manning, President of Tourisk Inc. (Canada),
* Mr. László Puczkó and his team at Xellum Ltd. (Hungary),
* Dr. Dirk Glaesser and his team at the Sustainable Development of Tourism Department of World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (Spain),
* Mr. Carlos Romero and his team (Ms. Lourdes Maria de Pedro, Ms. Susana Garcia, Mr. Luis Javier Gadea Lucas) at Segittur (Spain),
* Ms. Silvia Giulietti and her team at the European Environment Agency (EEA) – Natural Systems and Sustainability Programme (Denmark),
* Mr. Krzysztof Borkowski and his team (Mr. Marek Łabaj, Mr. Tomasz Pasierbek, Mr. Sandor Nemethy) at the University of Tourism and Ecology (Poland).

# Requirements and Implementation

## Project Phase 1: Drafting and Approval of the Strategy

The goal of the project was the participatory elaboration of the Strategy involving relevant stakeholders in the region into the sustainable tourism topic. This goal was fulfilled successfully as the project brought together stakeholders from all the seven Carpathian countries and beyond. It gave space for the governmental, non-governmental and business sectors to work together, share their views, ideas and good practices. The Parties received direct feedback from the stakeholders working in their states and vice versa. This helped the discussion, and the Strategy reflects the consensus reached.

Project Work Plan Development of the Tourism Strategy

According to the project application submitted to the donor, the project work was divided into three different work packages:

**Work Package 1: Drafting the Carpathian Tourism Strategy**

This work was carried out by the expert team which consisted of the project partners – UNEP-ISCC, WWF – DCPO, ETE and CEEweb for Biodiversity. In addition, two tourism experts were hired to assist ETE experts in drafting the Strategy. Furthermore, the content was based on material and research provided by the seven country experts.

The work was planned as follows:

* 1. Draft until May 2013,
* 2. Draft until September 2013,
* 3. Draft until November 2013,
* 4. Draft until March 2014,
* 5. Draft until June 2014,
* Final Draft ready for adoption for the 4th Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention on September 26, 2014.

**Work Package 2: Decision making process to finalize the Carpathian Tourism Strategy**

In order to complete the work on the drafts and prepare a Final Draft for the adoption, meetings with various stakeholders took place throughout the project time – meetings with NGOs, tourism business stakeholders, etc. In addition, for the decision-making part, meetings of the Working Group on Sustainable Tourism to the Carpathian Convention (WG TOURISM) took place. The aim of these meeting was to keep the stakeholders involved throughout the whole process of drafting the Carpathian Tourism Strategy.

The meetings were scheduled as follows:

* Meeting of project partners to prepare the work plan (March 2013, Vienna, AT),
* 1st NGO meeting – CEEweb STWG(June 2013, Banska Stiavnica, SK),
* 4th WG TOURISM meeting (September 2013, Brasov, RO),
* Meeting of Tourism Agencies of the Carpathian countries – National Tourism Agencies and tour operators (September 2013, Brasov, RO),
* Expert meeting – project partners and seven country experts (October 2013, Vienna, AT),
* 5th meeting of CCIC (December 2013, Vienna, AUT),
* Meeting of Tourism Agencies at ITB 2014 (March 2014, Berlin, DE),
* 2nd NGO meeting (March 2014, Ceske Budejovice, CZ),
* 5th WG TOURISM meeting (June 2014, Lviv, UA),
* Final Conference during COP4 (October 2014, Bile Karpaty, CZ).

**Work Package 3: Awareness-raising among stakeholders**

The seven country experts hired for the project along with the government representatives created a network of relevant stakeholders and kept them informed about the process of drafting the Strategy. The stakeholders submitted their comments and proposals to be taken into account when preparing the next draft. The network served as a platform for exchanges of good practices among stakeholders.

For this purpose, various activities were planned:

* Consultation with stakeholders in each Carpathian country on the content of the Strategy – measure worksheet, SWOT Analysis,
* Assessing the National Tourism Development Strategies of Carpathian countries based on methodology created by experts. This was to measure how well the strategies fulfil the sustainability criteria for tourism development. Results were to be disseminated to relevant governmental bodies, tourism stakeholders and institutions,
* Developing 14 Good Practices on Sustainable Tourism – 2 per each country,
* Publishing press releases on websites of project partners and Facebook pages.

### Defining the structure of the strategy

The first important activity in the participatory process was that stakeholders in the Carpathians agree on a structure of the future Strategy. A very first draft structure was discussed and agreed upon at the 2nd Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (WG TOURISM) in 2007. This first draft structure of the Strategy went through another stakeholder consultation process in parallel to drafting the content of the Strategy almost during the entire process from May 2013 until March 2014.

The reason for this rather lengthy and challenging process of defining the structure (table of content) was the intense discussion of the stakeholders within the WG TOURISM on the content of the different chapters. By the end of the discussion process it was agreed upon by stakeholders to develop a short and concise strategy which is easily understandable and measurable. In consequence thereof, all chapters with more descriptive content were collected in a document called “[Background Paper](http://www.carpathianconvention.org/tl_files/carpathiancon/Downloads/03%20Meetings%20and%20Events/COP/2014_COP4_Mikulov/WORKING%20DOCUMENTS/BD4_BACKGROUND_Carpathian%20Tourism%20Strategy.pdf)”, which aims to give an overview of the current situation on tourism in the Carpathians and reflects the discussion among stakeholders on the strengths and weaknesses of the tourism sector as well as the future challenges to overcome.

At the end of the consultation process the concluded structure of the strategy was well received by all stakeholders and the representatives of the seven Parties to the Convention.

### Assessing National Tourism Strategies and Master Plans

The NGO network CEEweb for Biodiversity undertook – together with Ecological Tourism in Europe – an assessment of the national tourism strategies of the seven countries belonging to the Carpathians. The assessment was conducted in the years 2012 and 2013 with the objective to identify the integration of biodiversity-related topics in these strategies, master plans, and development plans. The undertaking has been co-financed by the Core Fund of the European Commission.

The results of the assessments showed that biodiversity is not adequately integrated in national tourism plans. However, the quality of these plans differs to a great extent, if a comparison is even possible. The results of this assessment were taken into consideration during the drafting process of the strategy, especially while identifying the specific measures of the two action plans (Country Action Plan and Carpathian –joint- Action Plan).

The assessments are [available here](http://www.ceeweb.org/work-areas/working-groups/sustainable-tourism/activities)

### Setting of goals and objectives for the strategy

The formulation of goals and objectives of the Tourism Strategy went through a smooth process, since stakeholders shared visions on what this Strategy should accomplish.

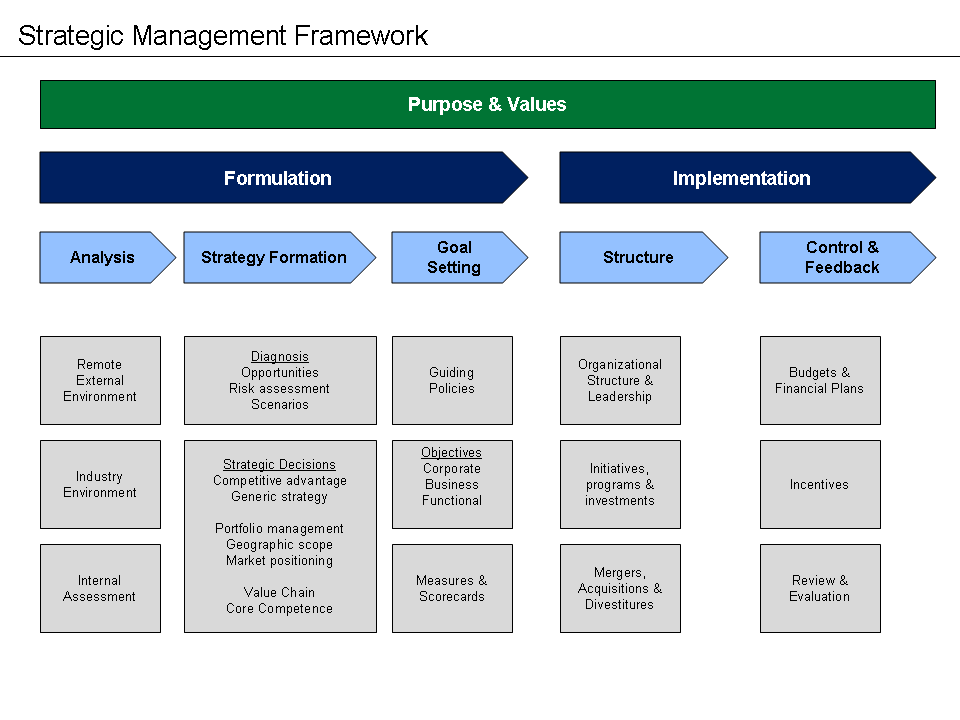
However, similar to the structure of the strategy, a first set of objectives was previously formulated in 2007 at the 2nd meeting of the WG TOURISM and further on re-formulated and agreed to during the consultation process starting in May 2013.

As the objectives have to reflect the overall understanding of the stakeholders on the achievements of the strategy in the mid-term (10 years), the agreement on its content and composition formed a milestone in the consultation process, because it paved the way for drafting the two action plans (one overall action plan for all seven Carpathian countries and one action plan for each national level).

### Drafting the Strategy

Before describing the process of drafting the strategy, it is necessary to present the theoretical background of strategic planning in order to understand its complexity:

“Strategic planning is a process and thus has inputs, activities, and outputs. It may be formal or informal and is typically iterative, with feedback loops throughout the process. Some elements of the process may be continuous and others may be executed as discrete projects with a definitive start and end during a period. Strategic planning provides inputs for [*strategic thinking*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_thinking), which guides the actual strategy formation. The end result is the organisation's strategy, including a diagnosis of the environment and competitive situation, a guiding policy on what the organisation intends to accomplish, and key initiatives or action plans for achieving the guiding policy.” (Rumelt, Richard P. (2011). [*Good Strategy / Bad Strategy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Good_Strategy_/_Bad_Strategy&action=edit&redlink=1). Crown Business. [ISBN](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Standard_Book_Number) [978-0-307-88623-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/978-0-307-88623-1).)



Source: "Strategic Management Framework" by Farcaster - Created diagram from a variety of sources. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikipedia - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File>: Strategic\_Management\_Framework.png#mediaviewer/File:Strategic\_Management\_Framework.png

The experts involved in the initial first drafting phase of the project built the Strategy as a process-oriented approach – as outlined in the theoretical framework – which was agreed by the partners of the project and the bodies of the Convention, foremost the Carpathian Convention WG TOURISM.

Throughout the whole process, stakeholders had time to submit their comments on subsequent drafts. The input to the drafting stages were received either during the scheduled meetings or facilitated via electronic consultations in order to ensure that all comments from the stakeholders are documented and processed in the updated versions of the strategy. The different consultation steps are listed below:

* 1st Strategy draft (September 24, 2013),
* Discussion and revision of the draft at the 4th WG TOURISM (October 21 - 22, 2013, Poiana/Brasov, RO),
* 2nd Strategy draft (December 16, 2013),
* 3rd Strategy draft (February 9, 2014),
* Discussion and revision of the draft at the 5th CCIC meeting (February 20, 2014, Prague, CZ). Mandate for finalizing the Strategy given to the WG TOURISM,
* 4th Strategy draft (April 11, 2014),
* Discussion and revision of the draft at 5th WG TOURISM meeting (May 12 - 14, 2014, Bratislava, SK),
* 5th Strategy draft (May 15, 2014),
* 6th Strategy draft (August 5, 2014),
* Discussion, revision and approval of the final Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians at COP4 (September 23 - 26, 2014, Mikulov, CZ)

Further details about the results of the different meetings you can find in Annex 8.8

The project phase 1 was very successful in fulfilling its goals. As the main outcome, the Strategy itself was adopted at COP4, which contributes to the implementation of the Tourism Protocol and to sustainable tourism development in the Carpathian region. The stakeholders have the opportunity to take both Action Plans and come up with project proposals. The Strategy, as international document developed among seven countries, shall help them to get the proposals approved and receive necessary funding. The full text of the strategy is available in Annex 8.2.

The Background Document to the Strategy was welcomed by the Parties as well, as it provides information on why the Strategy is necessary and on the status quo of sustainable tourism in the region.

Thanks to many meetings organized throughout the project, the stakeholders got better overview on projects and activities happening inside the countries and also on the Carpathian and international level. Especially when the Action Plans were discussed, the participants often found out about existing initiatives and possible new project partners.

Due to the work with stakeholders from seven different countries that have a broad range of expertise from different fields, exchange of experiences represents a high value of the project. The countries face very similar issues and often a different country has already overcome it in the past. And despite each country trying to pursue mainly its own interest, this project was very successful in reaching a high level of cooperation.

## Project Phase 2: Preparing the Structure for the Implementation of the Strategy

### Work Plan Implementation of the Tourism Strategy

The project work was divided into three different work packages:

**Work Package I: Action Plans and Establishment of Carpathian Coordination Center**

1. Elaboration of a draft for a nationwide Action Plan (August 2015 - May 2016),

1a. Consultations nationwide Action Plan (June 2016 - September 2017),

1. Draft of joint and nationwide Action Plan (August 2015 – May 2016),

2a. Consultations nationwide Action Plan (June 2016 – September 2017),

1. Elaboration of a Coordination Platform for the implementation of the sustainable tourism strategy,

3a. Development of work and terms of reference for the Platform (Aug.-Nov. 2015),

3b. Consultations about the establishment (December 2015 – April 2016),

1. Facility of the platform and ongoing support of the work (May 2016-November 2017),

**Work Package II: Development of Indicators**

1. Compilation of suitable measuring instruments (indicators) (November 2015 – March 2016),
2. Consultations and agreement with delegates of the Parties, tourism industry, nature and environment protection organisations (April – July 2016),
3. Revision and completion of the template (August 2016 – February 2017).

**Work Package III: Elaboration of databases and planning basics for financial instruments, actual tourism projects, handbooks and manuals**

1. Creation of the database of financial instruments (August 2015 – March 2016),

1a. Presentation of database (March 2016,)

1b. Continuous updates (April 2016 – November 2017),

1. Creation of the data base of tourism projects (August 2015 – February 2017),

2a. Presentation of data base (March 2017),

2b. Continuous update (April – November 2017),

1. Analysis and provision of suitable handbooks and manuals (August 2015 – November 2017).

The prepared drafts of the elaborated documents were presented to and discussed with country experts and NGO delegates and then finally discussed and adopted during meetings of official bodies of the Carpathian Convention.

### Country Specific and Joint Action Plan towards the Implementation of the Strategy

The Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians consists of two action plans, one country action plan, which is targeting on each of the Carpathian countries and one joint action plan, which is supposed to be implemented between two or more countries.

In the text of the strategy, which was approved by COP4 in 2014, each action was not described in detail, but appears as single lines, e.g. ***Art.15 Develop a methodology for monitoring the impacts of existing and planned tourism development on biodiversity and landscapes, including the social, economic and cultural impact.*** This might cause misunderstandings between those responsible for its implementation.

In order to reach a common understanding about the meaning of each action, ETE has formulated a descriptive chapter to each of them. This common understanding becomes necessary as soon as Parties and other stakeholders start implementing an action in their country or jointly with involvement of a number of countries.

These more descriptive action plans were submitted to the WG TOURISM at its 8th Meeting in 2016 and approved after electronic consultation.

### Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform (CSTP)

According to its Terms of Reference, the WG TOURISM is responsible to guide and oversee the implementation of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy. However, the WG TOURISM is not a permanent operating body of the Carpathian Convention, which meets once a year, and has therefore its limitations for implementing this strategy.

For this reason, the Parties to the Convention emphasise in chapter 4.1 (institutional arrangements) of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy the setting up of a **common international mechanism** to support the implementation of the Tourism Protocol and the Carpathian Tourism Strategy. The Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee was planned to be in charge of overseeing the arrangements of the common international mechanism.

The 6th and 7th meeting of WG TOURISM focussed intensively on the preparation for the establishment of the common international mechanism, which was then called “Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform (CSTP)”. ETE has developed, based on the request of WG TOURISM, a Terms of Reference for the CSTP, which was approved by the WG TOURISM prior to its 8th meeting.

Between the 7th and the 8th meeting of the WG TOURISM, three offers were presented for the establishment of the CSTP. One in Poland, one in Ukraine and one in Romania. Since there was no consensus on the selection of offer, WG TOURISM decided at its 8th meeting (March 2016) to agree to a “joint proposal” of three **Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Centres** (CSTC), which should jointly operate the CSTP. The joint proposal, incl. the ToR were submitted to and approved by the 6th CCIC, which took place in November 2015 before the 8th WG TOURISM meeting.

The next 7th CCIC, in November 2016 asked UNEP-SCC to elaborate an agreement for the establishment of the CSTP to be signed by the 3 CSTCs (PL, RO, UA) based on the joint proposal and ToR. However, such agreement was under discussion since the 8th meeting of WG TOURISM in March 2016, but no consensus could be achieved with the contracting Parties and UNEP. ETE delivered a draft “Memorandum for Cooperation” to UNEP-SCC in May 2016. Finally, Romania submitted a compromise as Letter of Exchange, which was signed with Ukraine in May 2017.

Also in May 2017 Romania announced the official establishment of the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Centre (CSTC) in Brasov. This gave opportunity to ETE for an intensive coaching of the staff at the CSTC, which finally resulted in the first work programme incl. indicators and a reporting format (see Annex 8.6). The example of the CSTC in Brasov serves now as the light house for the establishment of other CSTCs in the Carpathians.

In August 2017 Ukraine announced the establishment of the Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) for Zakarpattia oblast in Ushgorod. This RTO will be responsible for the establishment of the CSTC for Ukraine jointly with the office of the European Wilderness Society, which has done the pioneer work for the CSTC in Ukraine since early 2016 (www.cstp.center).

### Common Carpathian Online Platform on Sustainable Tourism

During the 7th meeting of the WG TOURISM, the participants wished to establish a joint online platform for the promotion of tourism products all over the Carpathians. The phase 2 of the project has taken on board this wish, however, since the criteria for the selection of sustainable tourism products have not been further elaborated, it was decided at the 8th meeting of WG TOURISM to establish the online platform as soon as the 7 National Tourism Boards have identified suitable sustainable products.

### Establishing of National Tourism Task Forces (NTTF)

The Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Carpathians outlines in chapter 4.1 (institutional arrangements) that each Party to the Convention should establish a National Tourism Task Force in order to coordinate the implementation of the strategy in their country and to foster cross-border cooperation with their neighbouring countries.

For this purpose ETE has developed in September 2016 a Terms of Reference for the establishment and functioning of NTTFs, which has been so far used by Romania and Ukraine.

It has to be considered that each government in the Carpathians already runs its institutional mechanism for the coordination of tourism, which involves partially stakeholders from the country for the exchange of information on ongoing initiatives.

Czech Republic, Poland and Serbia have their own systems of e.g. National Tourism Committees, Inter-governmental Working Groups, so that the establishment of a separate NTTF targeting on the Carpathian part of the country was not required or deemed necessary. In the Slovak Republic the governmental bodies are facing a constant structural change, so that the establishment of a NTTF was so far not possible. In Hungary, ETE took part in the first meeting of NTTF, however, since then, due to governmental changes, no further meetings could be organised. Ukraine established the NTTF at its first meeting on 22nd August 2017, based on the ToR provided by ETE.

Romania has the longest track-record with establishing the NTTF in 2015 and organising since then 4 meetings. The benefits of such meetings in Romania in terms of transparent communication with stakeholders and exchange of information on initiatives for sustainable tourism are evident and will certainly substantially support the operation of the CSTC in Romania.

### Creation of Databases for Sustainable Tourism in the Carpathians

Together with CEEweb, ETE has established successfully three data bases:

* Project and initiatives on sustainable tourism in the Carpathians,
* Financing schemes applicable for sustainable tourism in the Carpathians,
* Handbooks and guidelines on components of sustainable tourism.

ETE formed an expert team, which first agreed on the methodology for the collection of data, which then tested how such information can be integrated in an online data base. This online data base was developed by CEEweb.

By the end of phase 2 of the project in December 2017, the three data bases will consist of more than 100 single sets of information, which then will be handed over to the CSTC in Romania for the further updating.

# Lessons learned

## Limitations during the Strategy Development Process (1st phase)

Throughout the Strategy development process, the project partners faced a range of issues and obstacles that had to be overcome in order to move to the next step.

Each new draft of the Strategy required direct feedback from the Parties along with feedback from other involved stakeholders. The biggest challenge faced during this process was a lengthy response time from relevant departments from the Ministries. This was mostly caused by the fact that in none of the countries (with the exception of Poland) there is a Ministry for Tourism and therefore the responsibilities for tourism are being split between several Ministries. In addition, due to parliamentary elections in Serbia and Romania and the conflict in Ukraine, these countries went through institutional changes and had no governmental person assigned throughout the drafting process. In some countries, the focal points for tourism had not even been assigned by the end of the project time.

Concerning the cooperation of Parties, another considerable challenge was the lack of funding for attending necessary meetings as well as internal issues, such as nominating a person to join the Working Groups. Moreover, representatives often lacked a full mandate for decision-making at the meetings and therefore online consultation had to be launched after each meeting to discuss the proposed changes. This caused an extensive email ping-pong and the frequent postponement of deadlines, which made it difficult to integrate all changes into the draft Strategies in due time.

From the project management point of view, it often happened that ETE relied on their partners and involved stakeholders to provide information or to arrange meetings. Many partners were overloaded at times and therefore it caused some delays in the process. Moreover, a lesson learned is that it was necessary to be in more active contact with the involved stakeholders and that they had to be reminded to meet deadlines and fulfil their tasks. This however is a challenge of most projects as the experts hired are usually simultaneously engaged with other projects or full-time job.

In general, the problem the project faced quite often was a language barrier and the resulting misunderstandings. Fortunately, this could always be solved with positive, active communication and cultural understanding.

## Limitations during the Strategy the Implementation Process (2nd phase)

During the consultation process on the establishment of National Tourism Task Forces (NTTF), one governmental representative emphasised that there was an expectation by all Parties to the Convention that the Convention would have soon an own financial instrument (funding source). This expectation was actually justified, due to the fact that for instance the Alpine Convention, their Parties and other stakeholders can apply for funding at the Alpine Space Programme of the European Commission INTERREG. It is one of the macro-regional funding schemes in the European Union. However, this unique funding scheme was never established for the Carpathians. This might be one reason why there is a decrease of interest for the implementation of the Carpathian Convention.

As in phase 1 of the project certain “bottlenecks” became obvious again, which are the changes of National Focal Points and the change of focal points on tourism in several countries. So, new official governmental representatives appeared at meetings (e.g. WG TOURISM, CCIC) and agenda topics needed to be explained in extensive details to bring them up to the same information level as those frequently participating in those meetings.

Some focal points were caught in the restructuring process of their governmental bodies that no further communication on the implementation of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy was possible. This caused not only a delay in the establishment of bodies relevant to the implementation (e.g. NTTF, CSTP), but actually hindered a full implementation as outlined in the strategy.

# Recommendations

What would be necessary to describe in this chapter is an overview of the steps to produce a multi-national sustainable Tourism Strategy and what this would look like. However, this is beyond the scope of this document.

Nevertheless, it can be stated that the following factors are required in order to undertake such a challenging and multi-facetted process:

* The initiative for developing a Sustainable Tourism Strategy, which covers a number of countries, should come from the countries and their stakeholders,
* In the best case the financial support for the “system” to develop this strategy should come from the countries involved in the process,
* The “system” for developing the strategy consists of a technical team experienced with the coordination and communication throughout the process,
* An expert team might be formed, as in the case of this project, in order to provide the stakeholders with a first draft and assist them with the further formulation of the text,
* The consultation process should allow for considerable time so that stakeholders can be informed throughout the phases and contribute to the drafting with their inputs,
* Any institution involved in the process, may it be governmental or non-governmental, should ensure that all information is handed over from person to person, so that new staff has not to start from scratch.

At the end of the day, such a strategy is about people and these people create the personal contact and communication, which make such an initiative alive and running. Therefore, it is of crucial importance to motivate all stakeholders to become the owners of such strategy. This is the largest part of the success.

# ANNEXES

## Protocol on Sustainable Tourism

## Strategy for the Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians

## Updated Terms of Reference for the Working Group on Sustainable Tourism

## Terms of Reference for the National Tourism Task Forces

## Terms of Reference for the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform

## Work Programme and Reporting of the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Center Romania

## A Common Set of Indicators Measuring the Positive and Negative Impacts Caused by Tourism in the Carpathians

## Meetings on the Development of the Tourism Strategy

## Meetings on the Implementation of the Tourism Strategy

## Charts on Carpathian Convention and the Project

### Structure of the Carpathian Convention

### Implementation Steps Project Phase 1

### Implementation Steps Project Phase 2