## Eighth Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (CC-WGST)

April, 13-14, 2016, Brasov

**DRAFT**

**Proposal for a Detailed Description to the**

**Country Action Plan**

**of the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Carpathians**

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

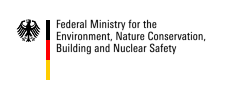
**Implement. organisation**: Ökologischer Tourismus in Europa (Ö.T.E.) e.V. (Ecological Tourism in Europe, ETE)

Contact person: Michael Meyer, Member of the Board, E-Mail: m.meyer@oete.de,

Postal address: Koblenzer Str. 65, 53173 Bonn, Germany

Tel. - Fax - Internet: Tel: +49-228-359008, Fax: +49-228-18470820, www.oete.de

***Funding institution:***

******

1. **Initiate destination and/or country specific tourism product development (e.g. rural tourism, slow tourism, heritage tourism, ecotourism in protected areas, spa tourism, dark sky parks, social tourism and handicapped tourism), focusing on all seasons**

Tourism products are the basis for a destination tourism sector operation: unless the tourism product meets the needs and expectations of tourists, the destination cannot realize its full potential. However, only few destinations focus their attention on the development and delivery of the various attractions and activities that make up the tourism product.

(<http://www.etc-corporate.org/reports/handbook-on-tourism-product-development>)

The prime areas for nature-based tourism — including ecotourism — are evidently those that are legally protected, since they offer the best guarantee for maintaining their attractions in the long term. The most commonly used category for tourism purposes around the world is the national park.

In order to reach a common understanding in developing the products, definitions for various sections of tourism are proposed below.

**Rural tourism**

There are a variety of terms used to describe tourism in rural areas, including farm tourism, agri-tourism, soft tourism and even ecotourism (Beeton, 2006). According to the Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), rural tourism is defined as tourism taking place in the countryside (Reichel et al., 2000). Rural tourism is located in agricultural landscapes and is characterized by enjoyment of a tamed nature or highly modified landscape. It is about the land uses and human cultures that the interaction between humans and the land have created. It positions agriculture and farms as the foundation upon which the attraction is built (Knowd, 2001). Any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural tourism.

**Slow tourism**

Slow tourism is the name given to a type of tourism allowing tourists to spend their free time and take to the road liberated from the worries and stress caused by today’s fast-paced way of life.

The designers of tourism products (tourist agencies, national parks, municipalities, local development agencies, etc.) offer slow tourists activities that proudly bear the ‘slow’ designation; these include pleasure trips and hiking, bicycling (mountain biking), equestrianism, rowing and other water sports, discovering subterranean caves (caving), visits to numerous protected areas, birdwatching, hot air ballooning, paragliding, dog sledding, cross country ski running, snowshoeing, etc.

This type of tourism is based on a long-term vision and good relations with local communities as well as respect for the environment and its protection.

(<http://www.slovenia.info/en/Slow-Tourism.htm?slow_landing=0>)

**Heritage tourism**

Heritage tourism can be defined as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past,” and heritage tourism can include cultural, historic and natural resources.

(<http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/economics-of-revitalization/heritage-tourism/#.VtAcwpMrI6U>)

The global wealth of traditions is one of the principal motivations for travel, with tourists seeking to engage with new cultures and to experience the global variety of performing arts, handicrafts, rituals and cuisines.

**Ecotourism**

According to IUCN ecotourism is defined as: "Environmentally responsible travel to natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and accompanying cultural features, both past and present) that promotes conservation, have a low visitor impact and provide for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local peoples."

Most tourism in natural areas today is not ecotourism and is not, therefore, sustainable. Ecotourism is distinguished by its emphasis on conservation, education, traveler responsibility and active community participation. Specifically, ecotourism possesses the following characteristics:

* Conscientious, low-impact visitor behavior
* Sensitivity towards, and appreciation of, local cultures and biodiversity
* Support for local conservation efforts
* Sustainable benefits to local communities
* Local participation in decision-making
* Educational components for both the traveler and local communities.

(<http://www.nature.org/greenliving/what-is-ecotourism.xml>)

**Spa tourism**

The purpose of spa tourism is to travel in order to strengthen health and well-being through physical or psychological activity. Spa tourism is a part of medical tourism, in which people are travelling as a reaction to their illness and direct treatment. You can also include a wellness tourism here. The difference is though, that people travel for wellness proactively - as a result of lifestyle or as a prevention. The destination of spa tourism can be a hospital, hotel or a resort. Nowadays people look for retreats - short-term programs for couple of days to relax, free from stress, often connected with other activities (e.g. city trip, hiking)

**Dark Sky Parks**

Dark Sky parks is a concept of a land that has an exceptional quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is specifically protected for its scientific, natural, educational, cultural heritage, and/or public enjoyment. Because of light pollution, general public does not have an easy access to places where they can observe the dark skies. Therefore a conservation program was created that promotes the stewardship of the skies.

**Social Tourism**

“Social tourism” is a term used to describe a wide variety of holiday types, destinations and target groups: social tourism initiatives can be commercial and non-commercial, governmental and private. They range from small charities organizing holidays for children from low-income backgrounds, over government plans improving accessibility in hotels, to private tour operators offering ecological holidays. What all of these initiatives have in common, is that they bring a moral dimension to tourism, and that their primary aim is to include people in tourism who would otherwise be excluded from it.

(<http://www.holidayparticipation.be/downloads/Prog09MinnaertLongSynopsis_0.05Mb.pdf>)

**Handicapped tourism**

There are ongoing calls for ensuring that the tourism is accessible to all, regardless of their physical state. The Accessible tourism would enable people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments. This definition is inclusive of all people including those travelling with children in prams, people with disabilities and seniors. (Darcy, S., & Dickson, T. (2009). A Whole-of-Life Approach to Tourism: The Case for Accessible Tourism Experiences. Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 16(1), 32-44.)

1. **Identify and support the establishment of Carpathian wide authentic clusters of sustainable tourism products, e.g. thematic tours (e.g. architecture, cuisine, land use, mixed cultural/technical heritage etc.), agri-tourism, hiking, cycling, ski touring**

The spatial expansion of tourism and the growing diversification of this activity in the world create opportunities for countries, regions and communities to seek to bring about their development. A cluster is a progressive form of business network, which has strong business objectives focusing on improving sales and profits. It makes the exchange of information and technology possible, encouraging different ways of co-ordination and collaboration within them. Clustering is a process that enables the participants to exploit their synergies and the complementarities between their outputs, involving several benefits. (E.C., 2003). Clusters are vital for regional development increasing the competitiveness, the productivity and local businesses’ critical mass.

Cluster strategy emphasizes the need to exploit a home-grown source of competitive advantage. In some cases, local clusters and multinational enterprises can be interdependent. The local cluster provides important competitive advantages, whereas the multinational enterprise can provide the spark influence their creation and evolution. To extend Michael Porter’s notion of the role of government and local authorities in upgrading clusters (Porter, 1998), rules and regulations may actually influence the business case, enhance the local development and create a basic structure for implementing sustainability.

Hence, clusters are considered as being efficient management and marketing tools for tourist destinations and local economies. These tools must be used in appropriate manner in order to contribute at achieving competitive advantages through local development and setting sustainable development basis.

Acluster is a collection of business or industries within a particular region that are interconnected by their products, their markets and other businesses or organizations, such as suppliers, with which they interact. Porter defines clusters as ‘geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions (for example, universities and trade associations) in particular fields that compete but also co-operate’ (Porter, 1998: 197)

The four key features of the Cluster are identified as: Cooperation, Competition, Trust and Networking opportunities.

1. **Identify, assess, and where applicable, remove conditions unfavorable for the development of sustainable tourism**

The tourism industry is based on natural resources and therefore tourism businesses have to switch their interest to sustain them, otherwise the sector will suffer in longer term.

The successful accommodation of sustainability practices is largely related to personal believes. Graci (2010) states that unsupportive management can be a great limitation towards the development of sustainability.

The other barrier towards sustainability is a lack of knowledge. Implementation of sustainability requires long term thinking. In contrary, capitalistic environment of tourism businesses leads to short term goals. The main problem noted by Graci (2010) is that without increase in general environmental awareness there is no incentive for tourism enterprises to implement sustainable ideas, except the ones who bring fast economic gain.

Another limiting factor are financial resources. The investment into sustainable solutions does not come back in short term therefore the government could give incentives to the tourism businesses in the form of e.g. tax cuts, subsidies on new technology or vice-versa make the tax higher for the unsustainable solutions as they harm the environment and hence the society.

Companies often use the “greenwashing” campaigns which helps them with their image and attracts certain groups of tourists however their form of business in this case is not sustainable.

Policy instruments for more sustainable tourism management are not different in essence from instruments in other fields of environmental public policy. They can be classified into economic (or market-based), regulatory (or command-and-control) and institutional instruments. Economic instruments comprise environmental taxes, user fees, financial incentives and tradable market permits, regulatory instruments include quotas and zoning, while institutional instruments refer to eco-labels and changes in [property rights](http://www.ejolt.org/2012/12/property-rights/). Sometimes a combination of various policy instruments might be more effective than implementing a single one. (http://www.ejolt.org/2012/12/policy-instruments-for-sustainable-tourism/)

1. **Set principles and develop guidelines on sustainable tourism infrastructure and activities**

Tourism industry can present serious challenges to environmental management, particularly through its consumption of resources, the pollution and waste generated by the development of tourism infrastructures and facilities, transportation and tourist activities. In the absence of proper planning and management, tourism development can encourage the intensive or inappropriate use of land which can lead to deforestation, soil erosion and loss of biological diversity. Ironically, damage to the environment threatens the very viability of the tourism industry because tourism depends heavily on the natural environment.

(<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1267>)

Therefore it is necessary to develop a set of principles and guidelines when it comes to the development of tourism infrastructure and activities.

These principles should take into account socio-economic impact, environmental impact and cultural impact on the destination whereas the development needs to be based on sustainable management.

There are already existing global standards criteria for sustainable tourism development such as the Global Sustainable Tourism Council Criteria which can act as a good baseline for setting up country specific principles and guidelines for the tourism development.

All in all, in general, the sustainable tourism principles should consist of cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, strong community involvement, urban as well as rural planning, land use etc.

Guidelines can be created with the account of good practices from inside of the country or abroad and should give the actors an overview on steps that need to be carried out when developing tourism infrastructure.

Fulfilling the principles and following the guidelines should help to maintain a sustainable tourism destination.

1. **Support rural tourism which is maintaining traditional land use (e.g. beekeeping, food production)**

In broad, we can define rural tourism as a tourism, which takes place in the countryside.

Rural tourism in its purest form should be:

* Located in rural areas.
* Functionally rural – built upon the rural world‘s special features of small-scale enterprise, open space, contact with nature and the natural world, heritage, traditional societies and traditional‖ practices.
* Rural in scale – both in terms of buildings and settlements – and, therefore, usually small scale.
* Traditional in character, growing slowly and organically, and connected with local families. It will often be very largely controlled locally and developed for the long term good of the area. (Lane B., (1994, ―What is rural tourism‖, Journal of sustainable tourism Volume 2, No.7).

One form of rural tourism is agri-tourism, which refers to the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. It includes taking part in a broad range of farm-based activities, including farmers‘ markets, ―petting farms, roadside stands, and “pick-your-own” operations; engaging in overnight farm or ranch stays and other farm visits; and visiting agriculture-related festivals, museums, and other such attractions. (Dane, S. (2001). A new growth industry: agri-tourism in Minnesota)

There are number of benefits that rural tourism brings to the society:

* service retention
* attracting in-migration
* new skills and training
* addressing depopulation
* housing
* opportunities for women
* image building and synergies
* creating a focus for regional planning
* environmental benefits
* socio-cultural benefits
* preserving the cultural heritage.

(http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/495840/IPOL-TRAN\_ET(2013)495840\_EN.pdf)

1. **Support the establishment of regional Carpathian touristic (destination) brands contributing to the preservation of landscape character and tangible/intangible cultural heritage, possibly connected to a Carpathian brand**

According to ETC and UNWTO, the term ‘brand’ is often misunderstood. The term ‘destination brand’ is used refers to a destination’s competitive identity. It is what makes a destination distinctive and memorable. It differentiates the destination from all others. It is the foundation of the destination’s international competitiveness.

A destination brand represents a dynamic interaction between the destination’s core assets and the way in which potential visitors perceive them. It really only exists in the eyes of others. It is the sum of their perceptions, feelings and attitudes towards the destination, based on the way in which they have experienced the destination or on how it has presented itself to them.

A destination brand generally cannot be manufactured like a consumer product brand. It inherits its core assets: its landscape, people, culture and history. It exists in the way in which these assets are perceived by potential visitors and the emotional value they attach to experiencing them.

It is therefore very important to look at the brand from the perspective of the visitors but as well from the point of view of the local stakeholders.

Creating a brand requires local participation as the people living there and knowing the culture help shape the destination itself hence being a crucial factor to sustain the destination. Cooperation with the local people helps to create a more authentic and stronger brand which leads to benefits of tourists as well as the locals thus leading to a quality tourism experience.

By branding, the destination can often promote itself in a different manner than people perceive it, thus helping their image. As part of the branding, the stakeholders need to have a strategy how the destination wants to develop itself long-term and how to ensure the sustainability of the destination. This creates a good opportunity to include sustainable solutions into destination development.

1. **Support the development of cross-border tourism cooperation, favorable visa regime where applicable, and linking of trails-implementation to joint cross-border tourism products**

The relationship between national borders and tourism development is complex, for borders manifest themselves in tourism and influence it in many ways. Border institutions are built up and maintained by state governance in order to control and regulate movement and transport between states. A physical border can form a barrier to tourism flows, or it can be crossed almost unnoticed. Border permeability, the barrier effects caused by the border such as regulations for the movement of people and goods, will directly influence tourism flows and the development and distribution of tourism infrastructures in a border region. Border permeability, political situations and socio-cultural cohesion also affect to the potential emergence of cross-border partnership and development (Timothy 1999, 2001). The meaning of state borders for tourism, tourism development and cooperation in border regions has gained more attention in recent years since the Iron Curtain collapsed and EU opened it borders among the states, as well as the cooperation with neighboring countries.

Thanks to this development, the border regions are becoming the goal of tourism development - building new cross-border tourism destinations and thus giving the border regions new potential - making them a place where countries connect and not divide.

There are numerous advantages coming from the cross-border cooperation, such as:

* exchange of good practices and sharing of technologies
* common branding
* joint efforts in promotion of sustainability
* easier access for the tourist leading to increased arrivals and subsequently to higher income.

Of course, the cross-border cooperation should not be only pushed from the national level however a country should educate and motivate local people to start the cooperation that will lead to a strong destination.

Cross-border cooperation also poses challenges into the tourism development, such as visa regimes or lack of agreement in marking the trails, unification of quality etc. These can however be overcome by involving all the relevant stakeholders on the local levels and public officials to try to overcome the political obstacles.

1. **Establish incentive measures for local tourism businesses developing and implementing sustainable tourism products, incl. measures for removing barriers to effective sustainable business operations**

There are a variety of ways that governments and private-sector operators can make tourism more sustainable. A long-term prospects for sectoral growth depend on building adequate infrastructure and supply chains, and strengthened policies and institutions to ensure that tourism activities are carried out sustainably, meeting economic, social and environmental objectives. As the sector matures, planning at the national level, environmental regulations and cultural preservation initiatives will also become increasingly important. In the short term, however, some of the main requirements for implementing sustainable tourism would include the following: (a) Creating awareness of how environmental damage can reduce the attractiveness of destinations; (b) Promoting knowledge of principles and methods of environmental management, including energy and water conservation strategies; (c) Providing tourism firms with access to market information and financial resources; (d) Enhancing coordination between government departments dealing with tourism and the environment and private investors in the tourism sector; (e) Upgrading infrastructure in isolated tourism sites where private-sector investment is unlikely to go.

Building linkages in tourism requires an effective national strategy comprising targeted policies, regulatory and institutional frameworks, and sufficient incentives to stimulate private investment and the development of domestic supply capacity. Having a national strategy is critical, but active government involvement in the development of basic infrastructure is equally important. Developing countries that have been most successful in tourism development have been those that have designed a clear public- and private-sector strategy for investment and the development of essential tourism-supporting infrastructure.

In light of the potential negative effects of tourism, the need for promoting sustainable tourism to ensure future gains and to minimize the possible negative impact on the environment and cultures has acquired renewed urgency. This, in turn, has heightened the awareness of policymakers, tourists and tourism business operators about the need and value of conserving unique natural, social and cultural assets of destinations. Tourists are becoming more demanding of the environmental quality of destinations. Similarly, tourist destinations have incentives to conserve and improve the environment, not only for their own sake, but also for creating value. Indeed, sustainability and creating pro-poor and environmentally conscious tourism business have become important marketing tools and could also provide tourism service providers with a competitive edge.

(<http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/ciem5d2_en.pdf>)

In order to have a successful sustainable tourism business, the stakeholders as well as the countries need to try and overcome barriers posed by implementation. The barriers are usually caused by lack of information or lack of money. However, with a good awareness raising campaign and support from local authorities, local stakeholders can see that many steps to a sustainable business can be carried out with none or little money and create an income in long term.

1. **Ensure participatory involvement (e.g. workshops, online consultations) of local communities in regional product development**

Communities prosper through the sound use of their resources, or their natural, economic, and social capital. Together with their stakeholders, they therefore need to develop long-term plans that protect the natural environment while leveraging and building upon this capital to support the growth of strong and resilient communities. This approach can be applied to any development of sustainable business, product or destination.

When creating a regional product, it is necessary to have a long-term engagement of local communities and stakeholders as these later ensure the quality of the product. This should be done via consultations, workshops, questionnaires and even beyond. It is crucial that the businesses, as well as local authorities keep the local communities in the loop throughout all stages of creating the products - from planning to implementation, possibly also leading to involvement with actual work, e.g. creating job opportunities.

From experience in the Carpathian countries, local communities are often reluctant to cooperate with local authorities or with foreign stakeholders and therefore in these cases it would be advisable to have a trusted facilitator who would ensure the communication between relevant parties is swift and common goals are reached.

This created a great opportunity to exchange the knowledge and good practices on sustainability between the groups thus having a better ground for developing the business sustainably and with the support of each relevant stakeholder.

1. **Develop programs for promoting and funding the preservation of local cultural and natural heritage through tourism**

The countries should work on establishing a scheme on how to finance the preservation of heritage through tourism as for example cultural tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing global tourism markets. Culture and creative industries are increasingly being used to promote destinations and enhance their competitiveness and attractiveness.

Some examples already exist and the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Program worked together to create a new approach based on dialogue and stakeholder cooperation where planning for tourism and heritage management is integrated at a destination level, the natural and cultural assets are valued and protected, and appropriate tourism developed.

##### A key goal of the program is to strengthen the enabling environment by advocating policies and frameworks that support sustainable tourism as an important vehicle for managing cultural and natural heritage. Developing strategies through broad stakeholder engagement for the planning, development and management of sustainable tourism that follows a destination approach and focuses on empowering local communities is the central to UNESCO’s approach.

In order to do so, specific tools have been developed, such as online platforms, handbooks and tourism checklist. (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/tourism/>)

A good example on how to preserve the heritage through tourism is a creation of heritage routes, such as the Silk Roads Heritage Corridors.

This and other programs can pose as a guideline to develop country specific programs to promote the heritage of the Carpathian countries.

The WGST also presented ideas for possible Carpathian Trails such as:

* Carpathian Heritage Trail
* Local Gastronomy Trail
* Extension of EuroVelo – the European cycle route network to the Carpathians
* Wallachian Trail
* Via Carpathia Trail.

1. **Establish the Sustainable Tourism Task Force as part of the Sustainable Tourism Working Group of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians**

The governmental institutions (e.g. Ministry for Tourism, Ministry for Economy, and Ministry for Regional Development) responsible for tourism and those responsible for the environment establish the Carpathian Tourism Task Force. This task force will form an integral part of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (CC-WGST). Other institutions from the seven countries working in the field of tourism development, education or business may be invited to join this task force. Aim of the task force is to monitor the effective implementation of the Carpathian Tourism Strategy and the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism and to formulate recommendations to the Parties of the Convention on the further improvement and periodic review of the protocol and the strategy.

Terms of Reference should be developed and agreed by the Parties of the Carpathian Convention.

1. **Enhance the national coordination structure and encourage establishment of management centers on sustainable tourism, if applicable, in the Carpathians**

Tourism management is not limited to management activities in tourism and hospitality services, but is closely connected to all major functions, processes and procedures that are practiced in various areas related to tourism as a system. Tourism management involves the functions of planning, organizing, coordinating, training and monitoring-evaluating at all levels (international, national, regional and local).

The unitary, coherent, effective evolution of tourism, as any other field of activity, requires an appropriate institutional framework, a set of links with clearly defined attributions, a system of functional relations between them, and an adequate information system.

In most countries, tourism activity is coordinated nationally by a central body whose functions depend on the development and importance of tourism in that economy. This central body may be synonymous with the national administration and often correlated with the international bodies and their structures. Its primary functions are: to coordinate tourism activities nationally, to draft the strategy of tourism development, to promote tourism domestically and internationally, to initiate and promote specific laws and regulations, to be representative within international bodies.

Regional organizations develop and coordinate the local tourism strategy (in collaboration with municipalities), carry out tourism marketing - by providing information services and using a variety of promotional activities.

Organizing tourism activities currently tends toward decentralization, interest groups are increasingly involved in tourism policy and tourism development and competitiveness concerns have become major objectives for the national tourism agencies and strategic objectives for the regional tourism organizations. The systematic and permanent information about supply and demand in tourist (national, regional, local) destinations are essential in achieving an effective tourism policy. The legislative, organizational and administrative measures represent the institutional support necessary to carry out tourism activities.

(http://www.scientificpapers.org/wp-content/files/1319\_Simoni\_Mihai\_Tourism\_Organization\_and\_Coordination\_in\_Australia\_and\_the\_Managerial\_Strategy\_for\_Tourism\_Developmen.pdf)

In planning, development and management of sustainable tourism at regional or local level, there should be a partnership between the tourism industry represented by tourism businesses’ owners, environment with its defenders, local community with its residents, stakeholders, local leaders and local authorities. Such a partnership, by working together interactively and without prejudice, will lead to a sustainable and effective tourism, a better life quality for the local community, environment and touristic resources protection, and reasonable benefits for the tourism industry. Based on this partnership, a coordination or management center for sustainable tourism can be established.

1. **Support the integration of the Carpathian dimension into the national and regional coordination of sustainable tourism**

As stated in the Background Document to the Strategy, The Carpathians are currently home to an estimated 18 Million people. The region is shared by seven Central and Eastern European countries, five of which have already joined the European Union (EU). This increases the possibilities of sustainable development based on the rich natural, environmental, cultural and human 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 range, their architectural styles, etc.

This is a great asset to the Carpathian countries and therefore the governments should take the into account the possibilities the Carpathians bring in terms of natural resources and cultural heritage thus helping establishing the Carpathians a tourism destination.

Many countries are currently using the Carpathian potential on their national or local levels however the cooperation with other Carpathian countries can bring further advantages - common branding and promotion can bring more tourists and money to the countries.

In order to do so, the countries should put the establishment of the Carpathians as a tourism destination into their strategies or as a recommended cooperation to their local stakeholders. Along with good examples, this can be a great motivating factor for local businesses to find partners across the borders in creating their tourism products.

1. **Zone the key touristic areas with a focus on carrying capacity issues, and implement assessment measures based on EIA process principles**

Zoning is a geographical approach to a land-use planning and has been used by national, regional and local governments. The term comes from the practice of designating permitted uses of land, based on mapped zones that separate one set of land-uses from another.

Tourism planning has tended to be more geographically focused on the countryside and has not normally been perceived by planners as issue and therefore was not a common praxis.

However, we can still see a form of zoning that was used before and that is the establishment of National Parks.

In many parts of the world the development of human usage of the environment has taken place over a long period of time. In terms of zoning, this results in significant problems as i tis almost impossible to establish zones that are exclusively for one use only.

Once a tourism zone has been established, management of tourists/visitors is a key objective. Visitor management involves a number of key processes including regulating usage of tourist attractions, managing visitor behavior, modifying the resource for tourism and educating visitors.

Zoning will usually indicate areas in which specific types of tourism, depending on, e.g. intensity of land-use and likely environmental impacts, can take place and where they are not permitted.

In order to determine how to zone an area, it is necessary to carry out a research or an assessment of the given area to see what influences the environment as well as the people in the area. For this purpose, a set of measures shall be created that are going to be based on the EIA process principles. (Andrew Holden, David A. Fennell, The Routledge Handbook of Tourism and the Environment, 2012)

1. **Contribute to a common set of indicators on the effects of implemented policies and strategies to develop sustainable tourism in the Carpathians**

Indicators are valuable tools that can help policy makers define their priorities for intervention, assess the progress made and inform the public on what has been financed and achieved.

As per UNWTO, sustainability indicators are the information sets which are formally selected for a regular use to measure changes in key assets and issues of tourism destinations and operations.

In 2004, UNWTO published a guide on Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations. Some of these could surely be transformed into the common set of indicators the measure the effect also on Carpathian level.

When creating indicators, one must firstly analyze and research what is the goal of the policy and who is going to carry out the changes. Once this is clear, the set of indicators can be created. For this, it needs to be clear what the priority of a policy is, definition of the indicators and then check if these will be measurable in praxis. Once the indicators are set, the implementation phase will start which encompasses the analysis and data collection in order to measure the progress.

1. **Develop programs for promotion of local cultural heritage tourism in the Carpathian countries taking into account the specificity and diversity of all the regions and sub-Carpathian areas**

Promotion and marketing of tourism destinations require a coordinated approach developed jointly with the private sector. Investment promotion agencies can play an important role in reaching out to foreign investors, guiding them towards sustainable development, and targeting foreign investors in economically, socially and environmentally sustainable projects.

The government joined by the private sector can create a program for promotion of local cultural heritage that can be communicated in the Carpathian countries in a way that they point out differences as well as similarities of their local heritage. This can be an interesting way how to motivate the tourists from inside the Carpathian countries to visit one another resulting into cultural exchange and promotion by personal experience.

In the first phase these cultural exchanges can be carried out with the help of European or cross-border programs. The national governments should however at the beginning create some incentives in order for the people not to choose perhaps a more attractive (western) destination.

As proposed at the 7th WGST meeting in Hungary in 2015, there is a possibility of having a Carpathian Day which will celebrate of the Carpathian heritage and its uniqueness, at the same time giving a great opportunity to promote and raise awareness about the Carpathians and the Carpathian Convention’s activities. Every year, a different Party would host the event.

1. **Enhance and support trans-boundary cooperation by:**

**- Organizing „both-sides“ events (fairs, exhibitions, workshops, etc.)**

**- Design trail network from „both-sides“ perspective**

**- Introducing non-Schengen border crossings solutions for tourist movement**

**(if applicable)**

**- New tourist border crossings, new bridges and footbridges over border rivers**

**- Tourist business initiatives**

Just as explained in the Action 7, cross-border cooperation serves as a new approach to border regions giving them the image of a connecting place rather than a dividing area.

Organizing events on “both-sides” of the border helps the border regions to exchange the good practices and allows the visitor to see “both-sides” of the border. This is a big asset to the tourism experience as it allows the visitor to gain the experience from two different countries. In addition, it creates a feeling of a connectedness to the region.

It gives tourists an easier access to the natural and cultural sights on both sides of the border thus having a bigger variety.

1. **Establish a working group for assessing tourism impact on natural and cultural heritage (including Protected Areas), also using the results of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) processes and other tools**

Just like with the Tourism Task Force, the National, Regional and Local Authorities together with relevant stakeholders should create a working group that will assess the tourism impact in natural and cultural heritage.

This shall be carried out by following a specific methodology, using the results of EIAs, SEAs, measuring the set of indicators given and other available tools.

The working group will then give reports to the authorities that shall take their findings into account when taking decisions in regards to the tourism development in the areas.

This will require collecting a lot of data especially at the beginning in order to compare the results in the future.

As it is a country specific Action Plan, the government can decide how many members can be part of the working group and to whom the group reports. However, it is advisable that the organization responsible will have decision-making powers in order to ensure the sustainable development of the areas.

1. **Support the establishment of destination management organizations (DMO) in key touristic areas (if applicable) to implement sustainable tourism management schemes with local stakeholders**

Tourism is a rapidly evolving industry that has become increasingly competitive in the global marketplace. With destinations now competing directly with others around the world, it is possible to assert that the tourism is a sector in a state of transition. For DMOs, this transition means becoming a destination management organization instead of just a destination marketing organization. In this regard, DMOs are becoming more prominent as "destination developers" by acting as catalysts and facilitators for the realization of tourism developments. (<http://dinamico1.unibg.it/turismo/material/RoleDMO.pdf>)

The World Tourism Organization (2004) defines DMOs as the organizations responsible for the management and/or marketing of destinations and generally falling into one of the following categories: • National Tourism Authorities or Organizations, responsible for management and marketing of tourism at a national level;

* Regional, provincial or state DMOs, responsible for the management and/or marketing of tourism in a geographic region defined for that purpose, sometimes but not always an administrative or local government region such as a county, state or province; and
* Local DMOs, responsible for the management and/or marketing of tourism based on a smaller geographic area or city/town.

DMOs are an important part of the tourism organization in the country as they are closer to the people and promote and can manage the destination within its borders. DMOs have the ability to manage the destination in a sustainable manner as they see the carrying capacity and other assets/obstacles of the destination.

1. **Develop a system of incentives to support the improvement and use of local supply chains to and from tourism**

The supply chain comprises the suppliers of all the goods and services that go into the delivery of tourism products to consumers. It includes all suppliers of goods and services whether or not they are directly contracted by tour operators or by their agents (including ground handlers) or suppliers (including accommodation providers). Tourism supply chains involve many components - not just accommodation, transport and excursions, but also bars and restaurants, handicrafts, food production, waste disposal, and the infrastructure that supports tourism in destinations.

Supply chains operate through business-to-business relationships, and supply chain management delivers sustainability performance improvements alongside financial performance, by working to improve the business operations of each supplier in the supply chain. Tour operators have enormous influence over activities throughout the tourism supply chain, since they direct and influence the volume of tourism, the tourist destinations and facilities that are used. Tour operators can use this to help in promoting general improvements in sustainability performance as part of good commercial practice.

(http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/images/media/5.\_Tourism\_supply\_chains.pdf)

Few tour operators have supply chain initiatives on the production and distribution of local, sustainable food and crafts, but some work with their local suppliers to promote local sourcing of food and other local products. However, there is often the case that the local products do not have sufficient quality and the tourism businesses are not willing to spend time in order to enhance the quality long-term and rather choose a “foreign” supplier.

This could be at the beginning solved by giving incentives to support the improvement to sustainable local suppliers as well as to the “buyers” by recognizing and rewarding them for their improvements on key environmental, social and economic issues.

1. **Establish and support a Carpathian Coordination Platform, if applicable and based on available funding**

The establishment and operation of the Common Sustainable Tourism Coordination Platform (CSTCP) should be supported by each Party to the Convention and all relevant stakeholders in the Carpathians as described in the strategy document. There is a need that each country provides expertise in the office(s) of the CSCTP by seconding an expert or being connected through electronic means. Furthermore, Parties and other stakeholders need to synergize their own funding schemes and international funding for the benefits of common projects and initiatives to be operated by the CSTCP.

1. **Revise National Tourism Development Strategies by incorporating the principles of sustainable tourism and the Carpathian dimension**

As a part of the project for Developing the Strategy, Assessments of National Tourism Development Strategies have been carried out. Based on the methodology, the tourism strategies of Carpathian countries were assessed by tourism experts. The outcome as well as the recommendations can be found on the CEEweb website: http://www.ceeweb.org/work-areas/working-groups/sustainable-tourism/activities/

Outcome of the assessments shows that the Carpathian countries still have space for the improvement in regards to sustainable principles in their tourism strategies.

1. **Create a platform for cooperation of farmers linked with tourism entrepreneurship (to be integrated into the common online Carpathian platform on sustainable tourism)**

Agri-tourism represents one of the sub-categories of rural tourism and therefore is an important part of the sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians.

There is a number of agri-tourism tourism products inside the states as well as on the Carpathian levels. These are however scattered on quite a big area and therefore it is difficult to find and contact other farmers facing the same challenges.

To create a platform for the cooperation of farmers would mean an easier access to the information for the agri-tourism entrepreneurs leading to exchange of good practices, possible cooperation, as well as promotion.

In addition, creating a platform would help unifying them one roof thus making it easier for them to contact the authorities and helping to set new principles into development of agri-tourism in the national and later perhaps on the Carpathian wide level.

Moreover, they can find partners for cooperation thus having a better chance to access the funding of their projects.

1. **Establish a system of continuous education and training for relevant target groups on sustainable tourism development, e.g. education programs at schools, raising awareness of the public in regards to natural and cultural heritage**

Presently, there are no existing schemes driven by the governments to educate the relevant target groups in the area of sustainable development, not alone in the sustainable tourism development. This role is at the moment carried out by civic societies, NGOs or volunteers coming to schools or public places, raising awareness among students and local people.

When it comes to tourism development, it is crucial to educate the locals on the impact the tourism currently has on the environment and teach them it can be developed in a sustainable manner, showing them that the long-term income ensures them more social and financial stability than a fast gain.

It is necessary that the government takes necessary steps and promotes the education on sustainable tourism development at the universities, which currently still focus on the traditional tourism development. It is also advisable that the national or local government create opportunities also for professionals to get to know the new approaches in the tourism development with emphasis on the natural and cultural heritage.

This can be carried out by series of workshops and exchanges of good practices from home and from abroad.

1. **Enhance international cooperation of entities responsible for sustainable tourism development in individual Parties**

As part of the process of developing the Strategy, we could see that the entities responsible for the sustainable development in the countries often did not come to the meetings or commented on the Strategy drafts.

In order to achieve the sustainable tourism development on the Carpathian level, it is important that the Parties find the time and assets to strengthen the cooperation not only among each other but on the international level as well.

International cooperation will be valuable not only to the Parties themselves but also to the stakeholders inside the country as it would give their international partners a signal that the countries are moving towards sustainable tourism development thus creating more opportunities for responsible tourism.

Another advantage would be a timely efficient process, where the changes would be adopted and implemented in a shorter time hence leading to the profit much faster.

This can be reached by designating a responsible person for the sustainable tourism development in each country that would be acting as a voice of the respective ministry.

1. **Implement campaign, especially in the Carpathian part of the country, to raise the awareness among local population of sustainable tourism and the Carpathian Convention**

In some of Carpathian Countries, people are still not aware that the mountain ranges belong to a bigger group called the Carpathians. This poses a limit on the development of the Carpathians as a tourism destination as it has no support from the local people.

It is inevitable to create a campaign to raise awareness with the assistance of local authorities, DMOs, tourist information centers and relevant stakeholders for people to understand the importance of the local as well as Carpathian natural and cultural heritage.

This can be carried out firstly by contacting the local administration and informing them about the Strategy. These can then implement the principles of sustainable tourism development into their strategies and contact the local stakeholders.

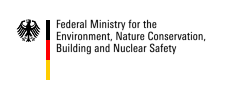
Next ways for the campaign can be workshops, events or small bulletins in the local info centers and accommodation facilities, small lectures at schools and cooperation in creating small projects with the local communities.

1. **Contribute to a common Carpathian education, interpretation and awareness raising program**

By fulfilling the Actions 24, 25 and 26 on the national level, the Parties can coordinate their policies and good practices and come to a process for enhancing the common Carpathian education in their countries in regards to the sustainable tourism.

In order to do so, however, it is necessary to have a common understanding on various terms so the policy makers and public perceive the topics in the same manner.

The educations should be carried out by one Carpathian brand or an umbrella organization that would be responsible for guidelines and adjustment to the current education schemes.

***Funding institution:*** *Federal Environment Agency (UBA) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety with funds from the Advisory Assistance Programme for environmental protection in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and other counties neighboring the European Union (AAP). It is supervised by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN).*

******