



Vienna Programme Office – Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention



Empowering Pastoralist Women in Mountain Areas: Navigating Environmental and Gender Challenges

Consultation Day under the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68)

12th March 2024, 14:30-16:30 CET, 8:30-10:30 EST

Meeting Link:

<https://bit.ly/3wuNqla>

Introduction:

Mountainous regions in Europe harbour not only stunning natural beauty but also communities deeply rooted in pastoral traditions. In these regions, pastoralist women play an integral role in sustaining local practices, preserving the delicate ecological balance, and contributing significantly to the socio-economic development of their regions. Pastoralist women, as the backbone of these societies, have traditionally shouldered responsibilities ranging from animal husbandry to the preservation of cultural knowledge, making invaluable contributions to the sustainable management of natural resources. Due to the vital role they play, empowering women in pastoralist communities is an indispensable and fundamental strategy, essential for developing effective responses to ecological and socio-economic threats and ensuring the resilience of sustainable pastoralism.

Climate change, land degradation, and shifts in precipitation patterns pose significant threats to the availability of forage and water resources. The delicate ecological balance that pastoralists have maintained for generations is now under strain, affecting not only the livelihoods of these communities but also the biodiversity hotspots they inhabit. In addition to environmental challenges, pastoralist women contend with gender-specific issues, including those related to the risk of being exposed to various forms of victimization. Despite their pivotal role in the daily operations of pastoralism, women often find themselves marginalized in decision-making processes, facing limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

The upcoming meeting aims to bring together stakeholders from diverse backgrounds - policymakers, researchers, representatives from pastoralist communities. By fostering a collaborative and inclusive dialogue, the meeting seeks to explore the intersectionality of environmental and gender issues faced by pastoralist women in the Alps, Carpathians, Pyrenees, and Apennines.

This meeting sponsored by UNEP and organized by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women Vienna, the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development Vienna and the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, with the support of Eurac Research, aims at amplifying rural women's and girls' voices and experiences from different rural mountainous regions.

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Speakers:

- **Francesca Pasetti**, European Focal Point International Year of Pastoralism (IYRP) 2026
- **Sara Manuelli**, Mountain Partnership – FAO,
- **Iskra Stojanova and Valmira Bozgo**, UNEP, Western Balkans
- **Maria Buchsteiner**, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, BOKU, Austria, Alps
- **Irina Mkrtychyan**, Co-founder of the Innovative Solutions for Sustainable Development of Communities (ISSD) NGO, Armenia
- **Ibolya Sáfiánné**, Herder, Hungary
- **Constanța Ștefan**, President of the Country Lovișteea Agricultural Association, Vice-President of the National Federation PRO AGRO, representative of the sheep and goat sector at the European Commission in Brussels and at DIGI-AGRI, representative of Romania at the European Commission's meetings of the SOCIAL DIALOGUE GROUP, focusing on sheep and goat meat and habitats of wild carnivorous animals, Romania
- **Helga Hager**, goat's herder and dairywoman in the Vals valley in Tyrol, one of the founders of the "School of the meadow" initiative to involve tourists in pastoralists' work, and also a partner of the "Bergsteigerdörfer"/Mountaineering villages, Austria
- **Laura Martínez Nuñez**, Shepherdess of goats, veterinary, and cheesemaker, Spain
- **Caterina De Boni**, Transhumance Shepherdess of sheep in the Dolomites (Oriental Alps), Italy

Moderator:

Harald Egerer, Head, UNEP Vienna Office-Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention

MEETING AIMS

Identify Environmental Challenges: Explore and understand the environmental challenges faced by pastoralist communities in the specified mountainous regions, including the impacts of climate change, land degradation, and biodiversity loss.

Discuss about Intersectionality: Recognize and discuss the intersectionality of environmental and gender issues, acknowledging the complex interplay between these factors in shaping the experiences of pastoralist women.

Share Best Practices: Provide a platform for stakeholders to share successful practices, initiatives, and interventions that contribute to the resilience and empowerment of pastoralist women. Learn from experiences across different mountainous regions.

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Discuss Policy Interventions: Facilitate discussions on policy frameworks and interventions that can support sustainable pastoralist practices, promote environmental conservation, and address gender inequalities within these communities.

Build Collaborative Networks: Foster collaboration and networking among policymakers, researchers, representatives from pastoralist communities.

Raise Awareness: Raise awareness about the challenges faced by pastoralist women in mountain areas, emphasizing the need for inclusive and equitable solutions that recognize the contributions of these women to both cultural heritage and environmental preservation.

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