

PROGRESS REPORT

for the 16th Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee by the Secretariat

based on activities from December 2024-November 2025 and the Programme of Work of the Carpathian Convention 2024-2026¹

Relevant documents mentioned in the Progress Report are available on the CC website under BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS²

Please note that chapters/COP Decisions that have not demonstrated substantial progress or updates in the implementation are not included in this report.

DECISION COP7/1 Implementation of the Carpathian Convention

Activity: Implement the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework and the accompanying Carpathian Vision 2050

In its Decision COP7/3, the Conference of the Parties encouraged the Parties to further consider relevant EU funding opportunities, including the development and implementation of a Carpathian strategic project to tackle regional environmental challenges while enhancing cooperation for harmoniously and sustainably developing the region and Europe (Decision COP7/3 paragraph 9). The Secretariat consulted the European Commission DG Environment and the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA) and identified a possible source of long-term, large-scale funding for the joint implementation of the [Carpathian Biodiversity Framework](#) (CBF) through the EU LIFE mechanism: LIFE Strategic Nature Project (LIFE SNaP).

To finance the preparation of a LIFE SNaP application, the Secretariat and Blue! advancing european projects (consultancy company) submitted the Technical Assistance Project Preparation (TA-PP) for the CARPATHIAN LIFE SNaP. The TA-PP (101214286 - LIFE24 - TAE - DE - CARPATHIAN LIFE) was approved in December 2024 and has been supporting the project application process since then and will continue to until the CARPATHIAN LIFE full application submission in March 2026. The EU LIFE SNaP Programme is a two-stage application process: a concept note was submitted on 4 September 2025, and successful applicants then submit a full proposal by 5 March 2026.

[The CARPATHIAN LIFE concept note was submitted](#) in September 2025 with the following logistic details:

- **Budget:** 50 million EUR
- **Duration:** 9 years, from 2027-2035
- **Consortium:** 52 partners from all Carpathian countries, including 1 coordinating beneficiary, 37 beneficiaries, 4 affiliated entities, and 10 associated partners

¹ http://www.carpathianconvention.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/CC_COP7_Programme-of-Work.pdf

² <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/2025/10/14/16th-meeting-of-the-carpathian-convention-implementation-committee/>

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The overall aim of the CARPATHIAN LIFE project is to safeguard biodiversity in the Carpathian region by driving the effective implementation of the CBF through reinforced transnational and cross-border cooperation among the seven Carpathian countries. By harmonising national biodiversity conservation efforts, the project will deliver innovative, collaborative solutions that contribute to the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030, and support the implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, as well as, by extension, the Kunming-Montral Global Biodiversity Framework.

To concretise the CBF's Strategic Objectives into an action plan for driving tangible biodiversity outcomes on the ground, the CBF Implementation Plan with specific targets, actions, timeline and budget is currently being finalised. The CBF Implementation Plan will be implemented through the CARPATHIAN LIFE project, guiding the execution of priority actions identified by the Carpathian countries. Although the CBF's overall vision extends to 2050, the planned activities of the CARPATHIAN LIFE project and CBF Implementation Plan will primarily focus on the CBF Strategic Objectives (SOs) that are the most feasible and realistic for implementation within the project's 9-year duration—until 2035. Thus, the planned activities under the joint transnational CARPATHIAN LIFE and CBF Implementation Plan will:

- strongly focus on the implementation of the biodiversity-related CBF SO1
- aim to enhance protection of Carpathian primary and old-growth forests, as well as improve the health and resilience of managed forests. Such activities are fully consistent with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the New EU Forest Strategy for 2030, and the CBF SO2
- promote biodiversity mainstreaming activities aimed at bringing nature back to agricultural land, which constitutes another target of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and is fully in line with CBF SO1 and CBF SO5
- mainstream biodiversity into the tourism and transport sectors via strong cross-sectoral working groups in the CARPATHIAN LIFE, thereby referring to CBF SO3 and CBF SO4
- be framed with a climate change mitigation and adaptation lens—such as invasive species management and water retention activities—to ensure long-term sustainability and biodiversity resilience, aligning with CBF SO6
- include dissemination, education and capacity building, referring to CBF SO7
- transpose the EU nature conservation approach and expertise for supporting biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the Carpathian region of Ukraine (CBF SO8) to enhance the integration of Natura 2000 methodologies into the protected area management practices in the Ukrainian Carpathians.

Eurac Research was selected by the consortium partners as the coordinating beneficiary of the CARPATHIAN LIFE, following consultation with the competent responsible state authorities of all seven Carpathian countries. In close coordination with the Secretariat and blue!, they submitted the concept note and will lead the process for developing the full proposal if the project consortium is invited to do so.

As part of the project preparations, the Secretariat and blue! organised and led the following activities:

- An online meeting with National Focal Points on 28 January 2025. The meeting provided information about the TA-PP and an overview of the proposed roadmap for developing the CARPATHIAN LIFE and CBF Implementation Plan activities, and elicited feedback from the National Focal Points on potential priority topics for the activities and next steps.

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- An online meeting with National Focal Points and lead partners from each country on 15 April 2025. The meeting provided updates on the current state of the CARPATHIAN LIFE development, including how to best utilise the provided materials and guidance for developing potential activities, and further details about the LIFE SNaP rules and partner roles.
- An in-person presentation at the Working Group (WG) on Sustainable Forest Management in Bratislava, Slovakia on 29 April 2025. The presentation informed the WG experts on the project's concept and relevance for Carpathian forests.
- An in-person presentation and interactive session at the WG Biodiversity in Veselí nad Moravou, Czech Republic, on 13 May 2025. The interactive session and moderated discussion focused on facilitating concrete activities to be directly integrated into the CBF Implementation Plan by collecting feedback on (1) developing the CARPATHIAN LIFE consortium and identifying stakeholders for implementing the project/CBF Implementation Plan and (2) developing the CARPATHIAN LIFE concept note.
- An in-person workshop with all potential partners in Krakow, Poland from 4-6 June 2025. The first day involved sharing LIFE SNaP rules regarding financing, budgets, and partner roles. The second day included presentations from each country about their proposed activities and two interactive sessions on transnational and cross-border cooperative activities. The third day involved sharing of LIFE SNaP rules regarding key performance indicators (KPIs), complementary actions and funds, and the application portal system.
- An online meeting with all potential partners on 2 July 2025. The meeting introduced Eurac Research as the coordinating beneficiary, provided an overview of the concept note application procedure, elicited updates on the partnership from each country, and introduced the intended roadmap for facilitating thematic discussions to further develop the project's and CBF Implementation Plan activities.
- An online meeting with all potential partners on 1 September 2025. This meeting gave an update on the partnership/consortium structure, the concept note status, submission details and the outlook ahead after the concept note submission.

All throughout the process, the Secretariat facilitated several bilateral meetings with each country, potential partners, and Carpathian networks.

From the procedural perspective, LIFE SNaP Programme requires that strategies or action plans implemented by the SNaP projects include specific targets, actions, timelines, and budget allocations. Furthermore, such strategies or plans are expected to be fully adopted by the time of the full proposal submission. While CBF and its Annex is considered as strategic document officially adopted by the Carpathian Convention COP7, it is not sufficiently detailed to meet these requirements. For this reason, the Secretariat has been developing the CBF Implementation Plan, which will serve as the official Carpathian Convention document guiding the implementation of the CARPATHIAN LIFE project providing all the necessary information and details. At this stage, the draft document and its structure have been prepared; however, concrete actions, timelines, and budget lines will only be finalised once the project consortium agrees on and specified project activities. To ensure timely compliance with LIFE Programme requirements, it is proposed that the finalisation and adoption of the CBF Implementation Plan be conducted through a silence procedure prior to submission of the final project proposal. This formal procedure is currently being consulted with the Parties.

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Activity: Implement the Ministerial Declaration of the Carpathian Commitments on the impact of war in Ukraine on the environment and the need for cooperation and assistance

Further to the adopted [Set of measures - support to Ukraine within the Carpathian Convention](#), the Secretariat has been working on various activities to support Ukraine, including project development.

1. The Secretariat, together with the Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine and the Institute of Ecology of the Carpathians/National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, has successfully submitted the Project Identification Form (PIF) to the GEF Secretariat. The PIF was approved and the GEF Secretariat has granted the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) for the development of the full project proposal for the GEF-8 project "Enhanced Protected Areas Network for Biodiversity Conservation and Development" in Ukraine. The Secretariat is awaiting the signature of the Internal Cooperation Agreement (ICA) with the UNEP Ecosystem Division, and upon that, together with relevant partners, specifically the Ministry of Economy Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine, will work on the development of the full project proposal.
2. The Secretariat has been actively collaborating with UNIDO on developing potential joint activities, culminating in the successful signing of an UN-to-UN Agreement, aimed at contributing to the implementation of the project "Green Industrial Recovery through Municipality-Based Development in Ukraine" in the Carpathian region of Ukraine. The Secretariat participates in the project's Steering Committee and liaises with UNIDO and Carpathian Convention partners in identifying relevant needs and actors and developing pilot activities and trainings with municipalities in the Ukrainian Carpathians. At the Forum Carpaticum Conference in 9-11 September 2025, the Secretariat co-organised several Ukraine-focused sessions, including the Plenary Session "Supporting Green Recovery of Ukraine", the "Ukraine Abstract Session", and the side event "Collaborations to Address the Needs of Ukrainian Municipalities." UNIDO representatives played an active role in these sessions, presenting key developments and findings from the project and contributing to the broader discussion on Ukraine's green recovery.
3. Participation of Ukraine in the CARPATHIAN LIFE project offers a great opportunity for Ukraine to further align with the EU acquis on environment, as well as a chance for enhancing capacity building in applying for LIFE project and other EU funding opportunities. Proposed Ukrainian partners in the project include 14 protected areas, State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine, Institute of Ecology of the Carpathians National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Ukrainian National Forestry University, and the Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine. More information about the LIFE project is described in the activity above.
4. The Secretariat has been actively supporting efforts for Ukrainian Carpathians recovery through supporting Ukrainian delegates' and stakeholders' meaningful participation - particularly at the Working Group meeting on Sustainable Forest Management in 28-29 April 2025, Working Group on Biodiversity meeting in 13-14 May 2025, and at Forum Carpaticum - and highlighting various initiatives supporting the Ukraine recovery efforts. The Secretariat has been participating in

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various events related to Ukraine's recovery both offline and online, fostering connections and partnerships to enhance the coordinated support to Ukrainian Carpathians.

5. The Secretariat is preparing to host the Ukrainian Carpathians Nature Recovery Dialogue on April 27-28, 2026, in Vienna. The two-day event will bring together Carpathian Convention Parties, donors, development agencies, UN entities, and other stakeholders to identify needs, strengthen donor engagement, and foster partnerships for the sustainable recovery of the Ukrainian Carpathians. The meeting will support the implementation of the [Set of measures - support to Ukraine within the Carpathian Convention](#) and the related Ministerial Declaration to address the environmental consequences of the direct and indirect impacts of the war in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Carpathians Nature Recovery Dialogue follows the mandate given to the Secretariat by Decision COP7/1, paragraph 4, to coordinate the implementation process of the Set of measures and to develop a Carpathian Convention participation/cooperation support project.
6. The Secretariat co-organised three hybrid sessions dedicated to Ukraine at the Forum Carpaticum 2025, namely the Plenary Session "Supporting Green Recovery of Ukraine," the "Ukraine Abstract Session," and the side event "Collaborations to Address the Needs of Ukrainian Municipalities." The Secretariat invited a diverse group of participants, including experts, representatives of civil society organisations, the Ukrainian scientific community, PAs representatives and local and regional authorities. The outcomes of these discussions will inform the Forum's recommendations and guide the Secretariat's future support for the sustainable development of the Ukrainian Carpathians. The findings will also be shared with the Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine to further strengthen collaboration and policy alignment.
7. The Science for the Carpathians (S4C) and its members, together with the Secretariat, have been supporting Ukrainian scientists, particularly through supporting their active engagement in S4C Scientific Steering Committee and Executive Board, in S4C processes and events and engaging in projects and collaborations with Ukrainian partners, including capacity building of early career Ukrainian scientists.
8. The Secretariat continues to closely liaise with the UNEP Ukraine office and was invited to co-organise a panel discussion on Biodiversity and Nature at the First Stakeholders' Forum of the Green Recovery Platform for Ukraine on 7 April 2025 with WWF-Ukraine. This forum, which was organised by UNEP Ukraine office, brought together key actors from government, international organisations, civil society, academia, finance and the private sector to align efforts and enhance coordination in Ukraine's green recovery. During the session, the Secretariat presented its current and proposed initiatives supporting the Ukrainian Carpathians, highlighting their significance for the efforts of Ukrainian Carpathians green recovery.
9. The Secretariat, upon the invitation of the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve, joined the International Award Corona Carpatica as a co-founding partner. The award aims to popularize the cultural and natural values of the Carpathians, foster European cultural and environmental cooperation, and promote the principles of international good neighbourliness. The International "Corona Carpatica"

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Award is conferred annually by decision of a competition commission in four categories: professional writers (genres: poetry, prose, and publicism); representatives of the visual arts; representatives of decorative and applied arts; and environmental scientists from Ukraine and other European countries, as well as patrons of environmental research.

Activity: Promote a regional Carpathian Day celebration

The Secretariat has collaborated with education for sustainable development experts and protected area representatives from Romania to establish a “Carpathian Day” throughout the region for further promotion of the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians and the Carpathian Convention activities at various levels. Such activities associated with the collaboration include:

- A presentation on Carpathian Day efforts at the Forum Carpaticum in Bratislava, Slovakia by Lucia Ursu of Retezat National Park to inspire more Carpathian Day-related action.
- The facilitation of collecting Carpathian Day event registrations on the [Carpathian Day webpage](#) from planned events in Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine.

Efforts to include the “Carpathian Mountains Day” as an official national celebration on 26 September in Romania, inspired by UNESCO heritage initiatives for the protection of natural and cultural values of the Carpathians. Romanian governmental and non-governmental partners, in particular, Dr. Ioana Baskerville of the Romanian Academy - Iasi Branch and Lucia Ursu of Retezat National Park, have collaborated with the Secretariat to draft the legislative text and secured support for placing this legislative initiative on the agenda of the Romanian Parliament through the Parliamentary Commission of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate responsible for relations with UNESCO.

DECISION COP7/2 Cooperation with regional and local authorities and all relevant stakeholders

Activity: Support implementation of relevant projects, including the Central Mountains, which encourage cooperation and involvement of regional stakeholders and promote awareness raising

Thanks to support of the Association of Carpathian Euroregion and a great cooperation with Ecopsychology Society, the Secretariat has been involved in supporting the implementation of the project “[Central Mountains: From the Alps to the Carpathians – strengthening governance models for sustainable development of mountain areas in Central Europe](#)” (Interreg Central Europe Programme) and its ongoing activities. As the project entered its final implementation stage, expert inputs were provided to ensure alignment with the strategic objectives of the Carpathian Convention and to promote approaches relevant to the region. A series of stakeholder consultations was also conducted to gather broader perspectives and examples from across the Carpathians, helping to shape the project’s final outcomes. Within the Central Mountains project, the following pilot actions were carried out:

- Design and testing of a new cooperation system for the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform (more details below)
- Pilot action of the renewed governance structure of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Alpine Pearls

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- Improved cooperation framework for civil society organisations from the Carpathian region
- Strategy and operational model for Transboundary Functional Areas
- Development of a mobile application for Cross-border Transboundary Functional Areas in the Carpathians
- Joint branding in TFAs to strengthen cooperation among rural small and medium-sized enterprises and producers of regional products in the Sudetes

In this respect, the following project activities (result of pilot actions) have been consulted and reviewed within the Carpathian Convention framework:

- **Design and testing of a new cooperation system for the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform:** More information about the developments related to the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform can be found in DECISION COP7/15 Sustainable tourism.
- **Alpine - Carpathian Toolbox for Participation in Central European Mountain Areas** was consulted with the Secretariat and various Carpathian stakeholders, specifically the Carpathian Education for Sustainable Development Expert Network. They provided relevant comments and examples from the Carpathian region, enriching the toolbox and highlighting the importance of participatory governance within the Carpathian Convention. The Alpine-Carpathian Toolbox for Participation provides practical methods for engaging youth, civil society, and other actors in decision-making. By promoting participatory governance, it supports the objectives of the Carpathian Convention and offers Parties and institutions a resource to embed inclusive approaches into policies and strategies for sustainable regional development. In this respect, the Toolbox can be a useful instrument for advancing cooperation with regional and local stakeholders in the Carpathians.
- **Toolbox for identifying, creating and developing Cross-Border Functional Areas in Central Europe** was consulted with the Secretariat and various stakeholders to provide comments from the Convention's perspective. Given the importance of cross-border cooperation for the Carpathian Convention, the document suggests innovative solutions that can strengthen governance and advance sustainable development across the Carpathians and other mountain regions.
- **Strengthened framework for fostering collaboration among civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Carpathian region,** Secretariat provided expert input to the document and consulted on the elaboration process. The [Carpathian Civil Society Platform](#) shall be considered as an instrument (solution) to enhance social cohesion and promote citizen participation in policy and decision-making processes by networking and mobilising civil society actors at the local, subregional, and transnational levels and contribute to strengthening and broadening cross-border cooperation between CSOs. In this respect, the Carpathian Civil Society Platform suggested to establish a memorandum of cooperation between the Platform and the Secretariat.

DECISION COP7/3 Cooperation with the European Union

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Activity: Support closer cooperation with the European Union, its instruments, and programmes

The Secretariat has been actively involved in supporting numerous projects seeking EU funding, either by collaborating with partners on project development or by providing general support to initiatives relevant to the Carpathian region, including:

- “Harmon2 – Addressing the capacity building needs for mainstreaming biodiversity in the transport sector of the Danube region” (Interreg Danube Region Programme). The project was selected for funding.
- “Utilising the potential of Aarhus Convention in facilitating effective participation and inclusion of Roma communities in the EU green transition” (European Climate Initiative/EUKI). The project was selected for funding.
- “Carpathian–Sudeten Transboundary Climate Assessment (CaSuT)” (Copernicus Climate Change Service). The project was recently submitted.
- “CLimate mitigation through CONnecting old-growth FORESTS (CLICONForests)” (EUKI).
- “RESTORA - Understanding Resilient Ecosystems across Scales TO inform terrestrial RestorAtion targets” (Horizon Europe). The project was recently submitted.
- “LIFE LARCA – Protecting grey wolves and brown bear in European landscape: Concrete actions for lasting coexistence and ecological resilience” (EU LIFE Programme). The project was recently submitted.

The following projects that the Secretariat expressed support for in 2024 were not selected for funding:

- “BioLine - Restoration of BIOdiversity and connectivity for ecological management of powerLINE corridors in Danube – Carpathian region” (project supported also by some of the Parties) (Interreg Danube Region Programme).
- “LYCO Project: Institutional Strengthening and Policy Facilitation for *Lynx lynx carpathicus* Conservation” (EU LIFE Programme).
- “Mapping and CONservation status of Natural FORests and Habitats in UkrAine, LIFE CONFORHUA” (EU LIFE Programme).

DECISION COP7/4 Cooperation with United Nations Environment Programme

Activity: Activities related to cooperation with United Nations Environment Programme

1. The Secretariat has facilitated the involvement of a Carpathian representative in the UNEA-7 associated event “Vanishing Ice and Snow: Global Impacts and Regional Solutions for Resilient Mountains” (11 December 2025, Nairobi, Kenya). The event, co-organised by UNEP with the support of Austria, Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Peru, Tajikistan, and several international mountain organisations, aims at highlighting the global significance of glaciers and snow as vital freshwater reserves and their rapid decline due to climate change. It plans to showcase the latest scientific evidence, innovative solutions, and regional governance approaches for preserving snow and ice, while strengthening livelihoods and resilience in mountain areas. The

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agenda includes high-level science-policy dialogues, the launch of the UNEP publication “Mountains in Motion” and a new framework for assessing climate- and disaster-induced loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, as well as awareness-raising for the International Year of Glaciers’ Preservation and International Mountain Day. By facilitating Carpathian participation, the Secretariat ensures that regional perspectives and solutions from the Carpathians are represented in the global dialogue on mountain resilience.

2. The Secretariat has been consulting with the UNEP Corporate Services Division’s Legal Unit regarding its potential participation in the CARPATHIAN LIFE project as a beneficiary, in light of the formal and administrative considerations related to UNEP’s involvement in EU-funded programmes. Full participation of the Secretariat in the project is of utmost importance to ensure the effective engagement and coordination of relevant stakeholders, as well as to guarantee that the project activities are fully aligned with the provisions of the Carpathian Convention.

DECISION COP7/5 Cooperation with other conventions and international bodies

Activity: Activities related to cooperation with other conventions and international bodies, including exchanging on regional mountain governance and interregional cooperation

1. Further to the COP14 of the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and its adopted [Concerted Action for the Eurasian Lynx](#), there is a substantial delay in developing the joint strategy for the conservation of the autochthonous lynx population in the Carpathian Mountains (Carpathian Lynx Strategy) under the auspices of the Carpathian Convention, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the Bern Convention. The Secretariat in consultations with the WG Biodiversity Chair – Czech Republic and relevant partners have been consulting on possible next steps to be undertaken in this regard.

Meantime, a draft Range-wide Strategy for the Rescue and Conservation of the Balkan Lynx (*Lynx lynx balcanicus*) 2026–2035, as a part of the CMS COP 14 Concerted Action for the Eurasian Lynx, has been developed and shall be submitted to the CMS COP15.

2. The Secretariat has facilitated cooperation with the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRS) Secretariat, which aims to protect human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and waste. Based on several meetings between the Secretariats, the following initial areas for a collaboration were identified:
 - a. Assessment study: A joint initial assessment study of plastic pollution in the Carpathian region to establish a baseline and identify key challenges. The scope of the assessment is subject to the availability of funds.
 - b. Joint pilot project: A potential pilot project on environmentally sound management of plastic waste in the Carpathian Mountains, possibly in Ukraine.

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- c. Policy collaboration on waste in the context of the Basel Convention: exploring broader collaboration on policy-level initiatives, facilitating contact among the respective focal points.
- d. Technical collaboration in various fields: including but not limited to tourism and cooperation with the private sector.
- e. Awareness and education: Sharing and disseminating educational and awareness-raising materials developed by the BRS Secretariat on plastic waste in remote and mountainous areas.
- f. Participation in events: Collaboration through presentations, contributions to discussions, or participation in relevant Carpathian Convention and BRS meetings and events. Based on this, BRS took part in the Forum Carpaticum 2025 with a presentation on “Plastic Waste in Mountains and Glaciers.”
- g. Joint webinars: Organisation of webinars to showcase experiences from countries engaged with both the BRS and the Carpathian Convention, and highlight challenges and solutions related to plastic waste in mountain regions.

Given the many areas of collaboration and synergies between the Carpathian Convention and the BRS Conventions, it was decided to consider developing a Memorandum of Understanding between the Secretariats. It has been decided to continue these developments after the 16th CCIC meeting based on the feedback from the Carpathian Convention Parties and the respective recommendations.

3. The Secretariat has been in regular contact with the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention and its relevant bodies, including the Alpine Biodiversity Board, to explore opportunities for cooperation and joint activities. Representatives of the Carpathian Convention Secretariat were invited to a meeting at the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention in Innsbruck, Austria on 18 September 2025 to exchange on ongoing initiatives and strengthen collaboration between the two Conventions. Representatives of the Alpine Convention were invited to present relevant initiatives at the 10th meeting of WG Forests and 16th meeting of WG Biodiversity.
4. The Secretariat has actively participated in interregional meetings with other transboundary cooperation frameworks and mountain-specific alliances, including the Alpine Convention, Andean Mountain Initiative, and the East African Community Mountain Stakeholder Platform, along with broader cooperation platforms and alliances like ICIMOD, the Mountain Partnership, the Scientific Network for the Caucasus Mountain Region and CONDESAN. These ongoing cooperative meetings have focused on identifying opportunities for integrating mountain ecosystems into global biodiversity and climate agendas, especially within the frameworks of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UNFCCC. Such cooperation has resulted in the creation of a joint policy brief, under the [Adaptation at Altitude programme](#), which promotes embedding mountain priorities across both conventions and provides several policy recommendations for operationalising the climate-biodiversity nexus in mountain ecosystems through the conventions. The policy brief is still being developed, and aims to be presented at respective meetings of the CBD and UNFCCC.

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5. The Secretariat supported UNEP in ensuring the participation of Carpathian experts in the online event: Virtual Mountain Country Roundtable on 13 October 2025. The Carpathians were represented by Serbia, Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia, as the Presidency of the Carpathian Convention. With the thematic Programmes of Work of the CBD scheduled for discussion at the upcoming SBSTTA 27 (Agenda Item 6(a)), this roundtable offered a timely opportunity to discuss the role of the CBD Programme of Work on Mountain Biological Diversity in achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) goals and targets. The event focused on how mountain biodiversity is being integrated into national strategies and policies.
6. The Secretariat supported UNEP in ensuring the participation of Carpathian experts in the in-person side event "Mountains at the heart of the Climate–Biodiversity Nexus: Strategic Ecosystems for Advancing Global Frameworks" at CBD SBSTTA-27 on 21 October 2025 in Panama City, Panama. The Carpathians were represented by the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Environment of the Czech Republic, as the Chair of the Working Group on Biodiversity. The side event highlighted mountain ecosystems as a powerful nexus of biodiversity and climate action. The session brought together global, regional, national, and scientific actors to showcase how mountains are critical for achieving KMGBF goals and targets, and to share perspectives on advancing commitments within CBD and UNFCCC processes.
7. The Secretariat initiated discussions with the Permanent Secretariat of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe." This World Heritage Site encompasses 19 member states, including 5 within the Carpathian Convention member states. Building on this engagement, the Secretariat is fostering collaboration with the Permanent Secretariat of the UNESCO Beech Forests on potential joint initiatives such as the CARPATHIAN LIFE activities.
8. The Secretariat collaborated with several institutions on co-convening two sessions and a workshop at the International Mountain Conference (IMC), which took place in Innsbruck, Austria, 14-18 September 2025. The IMC is the largest conference focusing on mountain research, promoting cross-disciplinary exchange and transdisciplinary dialogue, and prioritising holistic understanding of mountain systems. The Secretariat co-convened:
 - a. a session on "The science-policy interface for regional mountain governance," led by the Alpine Convention Secretariat;
 - b. a session on "Safeguarding Pastoralism in Mountain Regions: through education, awareness raising and cross-sectoral collaborations," led by the Carpathian Convention Secretariat, in cooperation with Eurac Research, International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 Coalition, Euromontana, and the Scientific Network for the Caucasus Mountain Region;
 - c. a workshop on "Innovative Approaches for Mountain Resilience," led by the UN GLOMOS programme (Center for Global Mountain Safeguard Research).

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See *DECISION COP7/8 Strengthening science-policy-practice interface and cooperation with scientific networks* for more information.

9. The Secretariat was invited to present the Carpathian Convention at the UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme's Online Seminar Series on 17 September 2025. The session, entitled "*Cooperation and Participation for Preserving Mountains and Glaciers: Focus on Europe and North America*," highlighted the Carpathians and the Convention as a prominent example of an effective cooperation mechanism for a mountain region. The discussion emphasised the importance of adequately addressing water-related challenges in mountain areas and the urgent need for coordinated actions to tackle them. Opportunities for further exchange and cooperation with the UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme will be explored.
10. The second Mountains Connect Interregional Workshop will be held from 16-19 February 2026 in Kathmandu, Nepal (see the briefing of the [first workshop](#) held in 2022 in Vienna). The workshop is being organized by UNEP through the Adaptation at Altitude programme funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Over a 3-day inspiring and interactive workshop, government representatives and experts from the Alps, Andes, Caucasus, Carpathians, East Africa and Hindu Kush Himalaya will come together to learn from respective experiences and insights on regional mountain governance, for the benefit of mountain communities and ecosystems. The event will foster regional collaboration, in-depth capacity development, and inspire joint action. The Carpathian Convention Parties shall receive an invitation soon.

Activity: Contribution to the UN Decade on Ecosystems Restoration 2021 – 2030

To halt, prevent and reverse the degradation of ecosystems and to achieve the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN General Assembly declared 2021–2030 the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (UN Decade). The UN Decade seeks to build a strong global movement to accelerate restoration and conservation efforts, and put the world on track for a sustainable future.

The [Multi-Country Flagship on Ecosystem Restoration in Mountain Regions](#) was among the first ten groundbreaking efforts to be recognised as a World Restoration Flagship, honoured for its pioneering work on large-scale, long-term ecosystem restoration. Coordinated by UNEP, the Carpathian Convention, and the Mountain Partnership—together with Central Asian Mountain Partnership Alatoo, WWF Ukraine, Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration and the Great Apes Survival Partnership—this flagship showcases national restoration programmes for diverse mountain ecosystems in Kyrgyzstan, Rwanda, Serbia and Uganda. These efforts are expected to help restore more than 2.2 million ha by 2030, and have already led to the restoration of over 1.1 million ha. Targeted, demand-driven support is being provided to the selected countries under the UN Decade, offering catalytic technical assistance to overcome specific challenges. This includes targeted, rapid interventions, such as addressing bottlenecks like legislative frameworks or governance issues, or help scale up restoration efforts within each Flagship.

In Serbia, two mountain areas—Kučaj-Beljanica and Stara Planina—have been designated as Flagship sites. These areas will be upgraded to national park status and will implement planned programmes for restoring forests and pastures. These efforts will protect critical habitats for endangered species such as the European

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ground squirrel and the brown bear. In this respect, an assessment of mountain restoration potential across Serbia, with a specific focus on two Flagships and including recommendations for further actions is being developed.

DECISION COP7/6 Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Activity: Implementing the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework and the accompanying Carpathian Vision 2050

1. The Secretariat continues to promote a regional approach to implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), further strengthening both global and regional processes and fostering synergies. Such promotion has involved:
 - a. supporting the exchange of knowledge and experience with other mountain regions of the world. Within this process, the CBF and its regional approach towards the implementation of the KMGBF has been highlighted as a best practice and model for other mountain platforms. See *DECISION COP7/5 Cooperation with other conventions and international bodies* for more information.
 - b. highlighting the CBF and CARPATHIAN LIFE project at the 81st Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention side event “LIFE Projects for the Alps” on 25 March in Rome, Italy, organised by the Italian Presidency of the Alpine Convention.
2. The Secretariat has facilitated concrete efforts for implementing the CBF by developing the CARPATHIAN LIFE project proposal. See *DECISION COP7/1 Implementation of the Carpathian Convention* for more information.

Activity: Promote mountain biodiversity within the CBD and KMGBF processes by fostering synergies among biodiversity-related conventions and mountain regions

Detailed information on the activities undertaken to further promote the importance of mountain biodiversity within the CBD and KMGBF processes and enhancing cooperation with biodiversity-related conventions, mountain countries, and other relevant initiatives and processes can be found in the chapter *DECISION COP7/5 Cooperation with other conventions and international bodies*.

DECISION COP7/7 Cooperation with Eurac Research

Activity: Activities related to the cooperation with Eurac Research

1. Eurac Research, through the Vienna Representing Office and in cooperation with Bolzano Research Institutes and Administrative Departments, continued providing scientific support capacities and

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assistance to the Carpathian Convention, also through the development and execution of projects focused on the implementation of the Convention. Eurac Research supported the development of the CARPATHIAN LIFE project proposal and was endorsed by the Parties to take the coordination role within the project. More information about this process is in chapter *DECISION COP7/6 Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*.

2. The Secretariat and Czech Republic assisted Eurac Research in organising a replication workshop in Hostětin, Czech Republic, as part of the EU Horizon “IMPETUS Project-Dynamic Information Management Approach for the Implementation of Climate Change Adaptation Solutions in European Regions” project. The project aims to demonstrate how European-level climate commitments can be implemented through concrete actions, particularly focusing on adaptation measures under the EU Green Deal. The workshop was held on 27 March 2025 in Hostětin, co-organised by the Centre Veronica Hostětin and Eurac Research. The workshop was made possible through the collaboration of local and international experts (Mountain Research Initiative, Carpathians Convention) who provided funding (MRI) and connections to their international networks. The White Carpathians and specifically the Zlín region in the Czech Republic were selected as a suitable replication site due to their similarities with the Italian demonstration area, including the presence of apple orchards, vineyards, and a predominantly rural landscape with small villages. The aim of the workshop was to identify, through a participatory approach, the primary risks to the agricultural sector in the context of climate change in the Zlín region. In the short term, the workshop enhanced local awareness and understanding of climate risks, strengthened stakeholder engagement, and supported more informed adaptation planning through participatory workshops. In the longer term, this activity can contribute to building local capacities for climate risk assessment, promoted the institutional uptake of participatory risk governance, and reinforced regional and transnational cooperation among local institutions, researchers, and civil society actors.
3. Under the Central Mountains Project, Eurac Research, with the support of the Secretariat, is planning a workshop on governance within the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions, focusing on the role of legal frameworks in enhancing implementation and stakeholder engagement. The workshop is scheduled for 16 December 2025 at the Vienna International Center. It will provide a platform to promote the uptake of project outputs and initiate discussions on strengthening governance mechanisms within the Conventions. Further details will be shared in due course.

DECISION COP7/8 Strengthening science-policy-practice interface and cooperation with scientific networks

Activity: Activities related to strengthening the cooperation and involvement of the Science for the Carpathians network in Convention activities

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The Secretariat played an active role in strengthening the Science for the Carpathians (S4C) network and its contribution to the Carpathian Convention, resulting in the following actions.

1. The Scientific Steering Committee membership of the S4C network was updated and the Secretariat is well represented in the S4C Steering Committee by Tamara Mitrofanenko and Eleonora Musco. [The S4C and its new website](#) are featured on the Carpathian Convention website.
2. S4C members actively participated in WG meetings on Sustainable Forest Management and Biodiversity, as well as in the Carpathian Education for Sustainable Development Expert Network (CESDSEN) meeting in January 2025.
3. The Secretariat played an active role in co-organising the 8th Forum Carpaticum, entitled “Taking stock and building partnership for sustainable development of the mountain and rural areas,” which took place in Bratislava, Slovakia on 9-11 September 2025. The Secretariat was represented in the Scientific Board of the Forum, actively contributing to its programme. Furthermore, the Secretariat co-organised the sessions on Carpathian pastoralism, education for sustainable development and supporting the green recovery of Ukraine, as well as the side events on fostering collaboration to meet the needs of communities in the Ukrainian Carpathians and the Carpathian Fair.
4. The Secretariat facilitated follow-up discussions at the Forum Carpaticum 2025 within the S4C network, including on S4C network development, recommendations to the Carpathian Convention and updating the S4C Research Agenda. Following previous CCIC recommendations, a representative of the Secretariat, Tamara Mitrofanenko, has been nominated to the S4C Executive Board.

Activity: Activities related to strengthening the science-policy-practice interface and cooperation with scientific networks

1. The Secretariat continued its active participation in the Student Conference on Conservation Science (SCCS), held 2-6 September in Balatonvilagos, Hungary and organised by the Hungarian Research Network Centre for Ecological Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The Secretariat presented the Carpathian Convention, the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework (CBF), and its collaboration with the S4C. The researchers attending SCCS were encouraged to provide recommendations for CBF implementation, strengthening the involvement of young and early career biodiversity researchers in Carpathian Convention implementation. Recommendations were received from young researchers on linking Biodiversity with: Agriculture, Climate Change, Forestry, Tourism, Transport and Infrastructure, Education and Public Awareness.
2. In the framework of the project “Promoting Biodiversity through Transdisciplinary Learning Interventions in the Carpathians (ProBioTIC),” S4C partner Jagiellonian University and Leuphana University developed and implemented university courses focused on the Carpathian region, which the Secretariat actively advocated for and participated in. The ProBioTIC project is led by Leuphana University and supported by the German Environmental Foundation (DBU). It is relevant for both

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education for sustainable development and science-policy collaborations, as the project aims to strengthen the participation of young and early career scientists in and contribute evidence-based recommendations to the Convention, particularly for WG Biodiversity, WG Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development, and the CESDEN.

3. In the framework of Forum Carpaticum collaboration, the Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with Comenius University in Bratislava, Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Slovakia and Roma Environmental Sustainability & Development Initiative – RESDI. Upon coordination with the Parties, the Memorandum was signed during the Forum Carpaticum in Bratislava on September 10, 2025.
 4. The Secretariat actively participated in the International Mountain Conference (IMC), held in Innsbruck, Austria from 14-18 September 2025. The Secretariat:
 - a. co-organised the workshop: “The science-policy interface for regional mountain governance,” led by the Alpine Convention Secretariat. At the workshop, the Secretariat presented the Carpathian Convention and its science-policy activities and close collaboration with the S4C, and represented the Scientific Network for the Caucasus Mountain Region in line with established collaboration with the network;
 - b. co-organised the workshop: “Innovative Approaches for Mountain Resilience,” led by the UN GLOMOS programme (Center for Global Mountain Safeguard Research) and provided opening remarks;
 - c. co-organised a session on “Safeguarding Pastoralism in Mountain Regions: through education, awareness raising and cross-sectoral collaborations,” led by the Carpathian Convention Secretariat (see *DECISION COP7/12 Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development - Article 7 of the Carpathian Convention* for more information);
 - d. liaised with representatives of the Network for European Mountain Research and the University Centre of Excellence “Mountain University” (Unimont) to develop relevant collaborations;
 - e. collaborated with other Carpathian Convention partners participating in the IMC and identifying researchers from the Carpathian region who are new to our networks and promoting the Carpathian Convention and S4C.
 5. The Secretariat collaborated with the organisers of the Multifunctional Farming Conference, held in Rzeszów, Poland from 16–18 September, following an invitation to contribute to the event. The Conference addressed topics highly relevant to the sustainable development of the Carpathian region, and the Secretariat aimed to gather valuable recommendations from the Conference and collaborative discussions with the organisers to support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention.
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DECISION COP7/9 Conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity

Article 4 of the Carpathian Convention

Activity: Implementation of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Biodiversity Work Plan and Mandate 2024–2026

The [16th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Biodiversity](#) took place on 13-14 May 2025, in Veselí nad Moravou, Czech Republic, addressing most of the relevant aspects related to implementing the COP7 Decisions. More information about the 16th WG Biodiversity meeting can be found in the [Meeting Final Agenda](#) and the [Meeting Report](#).

Activity: Further implementation of the International Action Plan on Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ensuring Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians, including through relevant projects

1. The Secretariat has actively supported the implementation of the “[LECA project: Supporting the coexistence and conservation of Carpathian Large Carnivores](#).” The project has entered its final stage and is currently focusing on analysing and validating pilot data and developing thematic guidance in three areas: monitoring harmonisation, conflict prevention, and poaching investigation. These thematic guidances will be focus on individual species of large carnivores based on the data from the four cross-border pilot areas and two reference areas.

The Secretariat has been in close cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic, the Chair of the Carpathian Convention WG Biodiversity and Mendel University in Brno in consulting the Carpathian Convention’s Large Carnivores Expert Group and the Alpine Convention’s working group on large carnivores for further input. The Secretariat co-organised an online consultation with the Convention’s Large Carnivores Expert Group on 30 October 2025 to review monitoring, conflict mitigation, and poaching prevention measures under the LECA project. As the project enters its final phase, expert feedback on progress and results will be instrumental in shaping outcomes that inform policy, guide further conservation activities, and contribute to the implementation of and update the Action Plan on the Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ecological Connectivity, as well as other related initiatives under the Carpathian Convention, including new projects.

The LECA project final conference is planned in March 2026 in Zvolen, Slovakia.

2. Building on the momentum generated by the Concerted Action for the Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) under the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Secretariat, the Chair of the WG Biodiversity, the Lynx Institute, and the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group have had ongoing discussions to develop a joint conservation strategy for the native lynx population in the Carpathian Mountains (the Carpathian Lynx Strategy). Led by representatives from the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group in collaboration with UNEP, the Carpathian Lynx Strategy is being developed with experts from the Carpathian countries under the auspices of the Convention for the

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Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Bern Convention, and the Carpathian Convention. The Carpathian Convention Large Carnivores Expert Group will support efforts related to developing the Carpathian Lynx Strategy.

3. The Secretariat has been actively supporting the implementation of the [NaturaConnect](#) project on building a resilient ecological network of conserved areas across Europe for nature and people. The Secretariat participated in, and circulated webinars organised under the project, and will engage in the stakeholder event, “From science to action: Strategic planning for the Trans-European Nature Network” on 26-27 November 2025 in Brussels, Belgium.

The following recent deliverables of NaturaConnect are available for consideration:

- a. The study “[Review and Synthesis of Best Practices in Governance and Land-use Policies to Implement TEN-N](#)” is now published and highlights the Danube–Carpathian region as one of six case study areas. It presents a comprehensive study of governance frameworks and land-use policies across EU member states using the Political Economy Analysis (PEA) framework. It examines economic, political, and social factors influencing policy reforms and identifies key governance challenges such as weak regulations and legal gaps, unsustainable land-use practices, and limited conflict management mechanisms.
 - b. [A series of factsheets](#) has been published to support the development of the Trans-European Nature Network (TEN-N), offering a comprehensive overview of public and private funding opportunities for protected areas and ecological connectivity across Europe. The factsheets provide practical guidance for applicants and stakeholders, highlighting the strengths and limitations of each funding instrument in relation to biodiversity and connectivity projects.
4. The Secretariat has actively supported the project “[ForestConnect: Towards a Climate-smart Forest Connectivity for Large Carnivores in the Balkan-Carpathian-Dinaric Region](#),” led by WWF Bulgaria, involving Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine ,under the EU Interreg Danube Region Programme. The project addresses the significant challenges posed by habitat fragmentation, climate-induced changes, and human-wildlife conflicts, and will contribute to the implementation of the International Action Plan on Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ensuring Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians. For more information on the project and relevant activities under the Carpathian Convention framework, see *DECISION COP7/13 Sustainable Forest Management*.

Activity: Support work and better governance of the Carpathian Network of the Protected Areas

The Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA) continues its efforts to strengthen institutionalisation and governance. The chair of the CNPA, Mircea Vergehet of Piatra Craiului National Park in Romania, has pursued the creation of a new CNPA website. In close collaboration with the Chair, the Secretariat facilitated consultations and supported activities related to the CNPA within the proposed CARPATHIAN LIFE project.

Activity: Support work and better governance of the Carpathian Wetland Initiative

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1. During the 16th WG Biodiversity meeting, the Carpathian Wetland Initiative presented its priorities for 2025, which include:
 - a. Integrating wetlands and their services and benefits into the work of the Carpathian Convention, its Protocols, bodies, thematic WGs, CNPA, and implementation of the CBF;
 - b. Supporting projects and project development on ecological connectivity in the Carpathians, including „sponges“ projects in the region in cooperation with Wetlands International (Latorica, Tisa SK-UA, Orava river, Wetlands of Orava Basin SK-PL);
 - c. Cooperating on designating new Ramsar Sites in the region and within the network of Ramsar Sites managers;
 - d. Sharing ideas and experience on restoration planning and nature-based solutions;
 - e. Providing trainings and capacity building activities;
 - f. Cooperating and networking with the European Coalition of Ramsar Regional Initiatives, Danube Wild Islands Ramsar Regional Initiative, EUSDR PA6, and other partners
 - g. Strengthening CWI's operation and governance by developing a new CWI Strategy 2025-2030, reviewing its Terms of References, and fundraising
2. Wetlands International and the CWI are collaborating on the project, "[Reconnecting the Latorica River Floodplain Landscape in a Transboundary Context](#)," which involves partners from Slovakia and Ukraine and funded by the Endangered Landscapes & Seascapes Programme. The project aims to restore and reconnect approximately 38,000 hectares of floodplain ecosystems along the Latorica River, enhancing biodiversity and resilience to climate change. The overarching goal is to establish the knowledge base, partnerships, and stakeholder engagement necessary for a transboundary, landscape-scale restoration vision for the Latorica River floodplain. Targeting oxbow lakes, floodplain forests, grasslands, and meadows, the area is ecologically significant, supporting rare and threatened bird species as well as diverse indigenous fish populations. Key objectives include rewetting and reconnecting floodplains, implementing transboundary management strategies, developing a shared restoration framework, engaging local communities, and addressing climate-related impacts on water availability and ecosystem health.

DECISION COP7/12 Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

Article 7 of the Carpathian Convention

Activity: *Support activities related to supporting, promoting and protecting the traditional pastoral practices in the Carpathians*

1. The Secretariat continued active exchange and collaboration with the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists Coalition (IYRP 2026) through its designated contact points and respective working groups, whose representatives participated in the WG Biodiversity and Forum Carpathicum. The Carpathian Convention is represented on the IYRP 2026 Europe website.

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2. The Secretariat has been implementing the project, "[Linking biodiversity, pastoralism and cultural heritage through education for sustainable development \(ESD\) in the Carpathian Region](#)" since December 2024, which was approved and funded by the German Federal Environment Ministry's Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP). The project seeks to further the Carpathian Convention's aims in linking activities in protecting and promoting biodiversity, pastoralism and cultural heritage through ESD. It builds upon the recommendations and findings of the previous projects supported by the AAP and will continue until May 2027.

As part of the project activities, the Secretariat initiated building a network of relevant experts to collect knowledge about the relevance of pastoralism to various Convention activities, including its relation to biodiversity (e.g. for the development of activities on traditional ecological knowledge and agrobiodiversity within the CBF Implementation Plan), forest management (e.g. relevance of silvo-pastoralism for preventing forest fires), tourism and cultural heritage, and more.

3. The Secretariat organised the session, "Safeguarding Carpathian Pastoralism" at the 8th Forum Carpathicum conference, in which speakers from Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine and Eurac Research presented their work and offered recommendations to the Convention. The Secretariat also facilitated that one of the Forum keynotes was focused on transhumance, raising awareness about the importance of this topic for the region.

As a result of this exchange, the Secretariat was invited by the Comenius University team to co-author a chapter on Carpathian pastoralism in a book: "Barriers and opportunities to inclusion and participation of vulnerable groups in the EU Green Deal," envisioned to be published by Routledge (TBC), to highlight the vulnerable status of herders and shepherds in the Carpathian region.

4. The Secretariat organised and led the session "Safeguarding Pastoralism in Mountain Regions: through education, awareness raising and cross-sectoral collaborations," at the International Mountain Conference (IMC) in collaboration with Eurac Research, IYRP 2026, Euromontana, and the Scientific Network for the Caucasus Mountain Regions. The session served to exchange experiences and build collaborations beyond the Carpathian region and Convention networks. The Secretariat also attended other relevant IMC sessions, such as "Mountain Transhumance under social-ecological transformations", to integrate knowledge and establish collaborations with experts in the field of pastoralism.

Based on the discussions at these sessions, the Secretariat plans further collaborations with Eurac Research and Euromontana aimed at joint action to support safeguarding pastoralism and transhumance and address the needs of herders and shepherds in the Carpathian region and beyond, including, but not limited to, considering how the EU Common Agricultural Policy can be adjusted to meet the needs of herders and practitioners using traditional agricultural practices.

5. To leverage the expertise of the broader academic community in the Carpathian countries—particularly in relation to the Carpathian Convention's work on sustainable agriculture and rural development—the Secretariat liaised with the organisers of the Multifunctional Farming

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Conference, held on 16-18 September in Rzeszow, Poland, and Carpathian pastoralism experts participating in the conference. Through this collaboration, the Secretariat facilitated the integration of inputs and recommendations into the conference's Manifesto. Entitled "[Traditional farming for better future: The Rzeszów Manifesto](#)," the manifesto been made publicly available as a petition by the organisers.

Activity: Supporting the Inscription of Carpathian Pastoralism to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List of Humanity

The Secretariat actively supported the development of the multinational extension of the file "Transhumance - the seasonal droving of livestock," which was submitted to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) List of Humanity in March 2025. The process was coordinated by Romania and the extension included four additional Carpathian Convention Parties: Poland, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine. The Secretariat provided a support letter for the nomination, maintained close communication with the Romanian expert leading the process, and contributed inputs that were incorporated into the nomination file. The Carpathian region and the role of the Carpathian Convention are referenced throughout the file. Notably, the file includes a subsection on Carpathian collaboration within the Safeguarding Measures, stating, "Since four of the newly joining State Parties are members of the Carpathian Convention, and this extension has received strong support from its Secretariat, hosted by UNEP, the Convention's programs, projects, strategies, and expert groups will continue to provide valuable synergies. This will help Carpathian countries involved in the extension develop shared, cross-sectoral solutions and foster collaboration". Due to these developments, the Carpathian countries already hold a strong position in developing safeguarding measures that integrate natural and cultural heritage entities and address needs of the stakeholders at the national and regional level, reinforced by the guidance provided by the Carpathian Convention Secretariat.

As the Czech Republic and Hungary could not join the multinational extension of the Transhumance file, the Secretariat continued its dialogue with experts and Parties, especially Romania and Slovakia, regarding the next steps toward developing a joint nomination file: "Safeguarding Carpathian Pastoralism." This prospective file could be submitted to the third list of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage: Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. The next steps in the process involve: identifying a coordinating party to lead the nomination while fostering further collaboration among Carpathian country institutions involved in safeguarding mobile pastoralism and jointly developing a clear roadmap outlining the key steps and priorities of the initiative outlining the required actions and the importance of identifying and documenting relevant activities to be reflected in the forthcoming UNESCO nomination. Upon suggestion from the Romanian ICH Focal Point, the Secretariat envisions facilitating an online coordination meeting with interested stakeholders in the Carpathian countries to further support alignment and coherent participation in this process.

More information on activities undertaken to further promote Carpathian pastoralism can be found in the chapter *DECISION COP7/16 Cultural Heritage and traditional knowledge - Article 11 of the Carpathian Convention*.

DECISION COP7/13 Sustainable Forest Management

Article 7 of the Carpathian Convention

Activity: Implementation of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management - Work Plan 2023 – 2026

The [10th Meeting of the Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management](#) took place on 28-29 April 2025 in Bratislava, Slovakia. It was organised by the Secretariat and the Co-Chairs of the WG - Slovakia. Key discussions focused on the [Virgin Forest Inventory](#), [criteria for identifying natural forests](#), and [the final Assessment of climate change risks and impacts on the Carpathian forests and their ecosystem services](#). The meeting also highlighted synergies with EU policies, including the EU Biodiversity Strategy, EU Forest Strategy, and the newly adopted EU Nature Restoration Regulation, underlining their importance for aligning national efforts with regional and European objectives.

One of the priorities of the meeting was support to Ukraine, where war and climate change are causing severe damage to forests. The Ukrainian delegation reported on legislative reforms and efforts to introduce close-to-nature forestry practices. The WG Forest recommended the establishment of a dedicated support programme for Ukraine, combining technical cooperation, policy integration, research, and capacity-building. The Secretariat was tasked with developing a forest-related support program for Ukraine as a part of more general support programme for Ukraine under the Carpathian Convention, continue developing the Carpathian Forest Inventory and aligning national and EU definitions with Carpathian Convention criteria on virgin and quasi-virgin forests.

The meeting also served as a platform to discuss broader regional initiatives, including the CARPATHIAN LIFE project, the Forest Europe Bonn Declaration and Forest Risk Facility (FoRISK), and projects such as ForestConnect and NaturaConnect. Cooperation with partners such as Eurac Research, EEA, UNESCO Beech Forests Secretariat, and the Alpine Convention was emphasised. Participants concluded by reaffirming their commitment to expanding the virgin and quasi-virgin forest inventory, disseminating the assessment of climate change risks on the Carpathian Forests, and strengthening joint action under the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework and specifically ensuring inclusion of forest related topics under the CARPATHIAN LIFE project.

WG Forest invited the EEA to continue the cooperation and explore the possible joint work on piloting concrete application and implementation of the principles of the currently proposed EU Forest Monitoring Law in the Carpathian region and continue the development and expansion of the virgin and quasi-virgin forest inventory.

More information about the 10th WG Forest meeting can be found in the [Meeting Final Agenda](#) and the [Meeting Report](#).

Activity: Consideration of the Assessment of climate change risks and adaptation options for the Carpathian forests and their ecosystem services and implementation of recommendations

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After the endorsement of the [Assessment of climate change risks and adaptation options for the Carpathian forest ecosystems and their services](#) by the COP7, the Secretariat has been working on improving the format and layout of the publication in close collaboration with the lead author, William Keeton. The final version should be available later this year.

Activity: Support implementation of the ForestConnect project on climate-smart forest connectivity for large carnivores in the Balkan-Carpathian-Dinaric region

The Secretariat has actively supported the implementation of the project, "[ForestConnect: Towards a Climate-smart Forest Connectivity for Large Carnivores in the Balkan-Carpathian-Dinaric Region](#)," under the EU Interreg Danube Region Programme. The project, led by WWF Bulgaria, involving Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine, aims to establish climate-smart forest connectivity for large carnivores such as brown bears, wolves, and Eurasian lynxes in the Balkan-Carpathian-Dinaric region. The project addresses the significant challenges posed by habitat fragmentation, climate-induced changes, and human-wildlife conflicts. By developing transnational monitoring tools and technologies, the project seeks to improve the heterogeneity, connectivity, and climate resilience of forest habitats and develop guidelines for protected areas managers. Additionally, it aligns with the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy and emphasises the importance of large carnivores as umbrella species, whose health reflects the overall condition of forest ecosystems.

1. The Secretariat team participated in the Forest Connect Expert Meeting, held 18-20 February 2025 in Villach, Austria, as a moderator and presented the "Assessment of climate change risks and adaptation options for the Carpathian forest ecosystems and their services" and the "International Action Plan on Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ensuring Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians."
2. The Secretariat has actively supported the project's implementation by regularly participating in the monthly meetings of the ForestConnect Strategic Expert Group with experts and project partners. In this capacity, the Secretariat has coordinated the Awareness and Communication Working Group. The aim of the Strategic Expert Group and working groups is to further develop the "Strategic Action Plan with Adaptation Actions and Resilience-Enhancing Forest Management Practices for Protected areas", which seeks to provide solutions to climate change challenges faced by protected areas and Natura 2000 managers in the Carpathian, Dinaric and Balkan regions. The Strategic Action Plan will be later considered by the Carpathian Convention for long-term policy and coordination purposes.
3. During the WG Forests and WG Biodiversity meetings in 2025, the Secretariat dedicated time in the agendas of the WGs for the ForestConnect presentations and interventions to raise awareness regarding the project and gather the necessary feedback.
4. The Secretariat took part in Forest Connect meetings concerning the technical upgrades of the CCIBIS system, which will enable continued data access and use by policymakers, NGOs, and academic institutions.

DECISION COP7/15 Sustainable tourism

Article 9 of the Carpathian Convention

Activity: Support the cooperation and activities within the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform/ Support implementation of relevant projects, including the CentralMountains

1. One of the most relevant activities of the project [Central Mountains: From the Alps to the Carpathians – strengthening governance models for sustainable development of mountain areas in Central Europe](#) for the Carpathian Convention is the design and testing of a new cooperation system for the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform (CSTP), which constitutes one of the pilot actions within the project. Building on and derived from the “Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Carpathians” for Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Romania (developed under the project’s Work Package 1), this pilot action includes two deliverables: a proposed CSTP Work Plan and a concept outlining the proposed solution of establishing Cross-Border Working Teams to foster thematic, in-depth pan-CSTP cooperation. These outputs were developed through close consultations with the Convention Secretariat, the CSTP and its Centres in Romania and Poland and key stakeholders, including the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism. Their joint input ensured that the results directly support the implementation of the Convention’s **Sustainable Tourism Protocol** and other strategic documents, enhancing coherence, coordination and the practical application of sustainable tourism policies across the Carpathian region.

The Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Carpathians for Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Romania, the CSTP Work Plan (2025–2026) and the proposed Cross-Border Working Teams together form a coherent system designed to operationalise a new mechanism of cooperation via the CSTP, supporting the implementation of the Carpathian Convention Protocol on Sustainable Tourism. They respond to a shared necessity: building on existing frameworks into a more adaptable, living, transnational cooperation model across the Carpathian region, towards coordinated, thematic and measurable actions under four development pillars: ecotourism destinations, long-distance trails, local gastro points and sustainability standards.

The Action Plan sets the strategic vision, whereas the CSTP Work Plan translates this vision into a pilot model—testing the capacity of the CSTP to act as a deeper coordination mechanism. It creates a pragmatic bridge between the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism and the realities of national implementation. In this way, CSTP stands out as the backbone of the transnational cooperation architecture, ensuring that local and national actions align with a regional vision while remaining adaptable to each country’s context.

The role of the CSTP through its new pillars is to make sustainable tourism governance tangible and measurable. The Work Plan focuses on four thematic pan-CSTP priorities jointly agreed by the CSTP Centres and national stakeholders:

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1. **Ecotourism destinations** – supporting the development of nature-based, culturally grounded tourism locations,
2. **Long-distance trails** – creating integrated hiking and cycling routes across mountain and lowland areas,
3. **Local gastro points** – promoting regional culinary heritage and local food networks,
4. **Sustainability standards** – facilitating the introduction of and compliance with common frameworks for sustainable infrastructure, services and certification schemes in mountain tourism.

Each pillar represents both a thematic field of action and a horizontal alignment of purpose. Through these, CSTP becomes not just a coordination body, but a laboratory of ideation and projection, where governance, partnerships and common-ground initiatives are co-created and tested.

The innovation of the new cooperation mechanism lies in its *how* as much as in its *what*. The structure moves away from formal institutionalisation toward a dynamic, pilot-based governance model. The CSTP Coordination Committee acts as the strategic nucleus, composed of representatives from national centres, while the Cross-Border Working Teams embody the operational heart of the system. The Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism shall play a pivotal role in providing guidance, ensuring coherence of activities with the overall objectives of the Carpathian Convention Protocol on Sustainable Tourism. The Cross-Border Working Teams will be supported and fuelled by experts designated by the National Tourism Task Forces in each country, ensuring that technical expertise and national priorities are effectively integrated into the implementation process. Each team—focusing on one thematic pillar—connects experts, practitioners and authorities from multiple countries, fostering peer learning and shared methodologies. Instead of a top-down structure, this approach builds capacity through action, creating feedback loops between local pilots and regional coordination. It also introduces common planning tools, shared monitoring systems and consistent branding under the Carpathia identity, reinforcing the region's visibility as a more unified sustainable destination.

This approach represents a significant departure from past cooperation models, addressing long-standing weaknesses such as fragmentation, uneven institutional maturity and limited stakeholder engagement. The new system acknowledges these realities and uses them as entry points for testing solutions rather than obstacles to progress. By embedding learning and adaptation into every stage—from national assessments and SMART objectives to pilot implementation and evaluation—the Work Plan transforms CSTP into a “living mechanism” rather than a static set.

This mechanism responds to both necessity and opportunity: the Carpathians face ecological and socio-economic challenges but also hold great potential for nature-based, community-led growth. By linking countries, sectors and communities, the CSTP aims to transform sustainable tourism into a practical engine of cooperation, trust and resilience—building a shared regional identity and paving the way toward a more connected and sustainable Carpathian future.

2. A key milestone in 2025 was the Interregional Meeting under the CSTP Pilot Action, held on 9–10 July in Poiana Braşov, Romania, with the Carpathian Convention Secretariat participating actively and contributing perspectives on the importance of building an effective mechanism for sustainable tourism in the Carpathians. This meeting served as a key platform for dialogue among partners,

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Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Centres and relevant stakeholders, strengthening transnational collaboration and aiming to harmonise approaches to sustainable tourism management.

3. Further building on this progress, on 2 October 2025, the Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism of Romania, formally recognising the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Centre in Braşov as part of the CSTP network to serve as a regional hub to promote and develop sustainable tourism in the Carpathians, as a model of responsible mountain tourism in Europe and to support the implementation of the Tourism Protocol to the Carpathian Convention.
4. Looking ahead, 11th next meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism, scheduled back to back with the final conference of the Central Mountains, on 11-12 March 2026 in Rzeszów, Poland, with the support of the Central Mountains Project, will further build on these achievements. The meeting will provide an opportunity to present and discuss CSTP-related documents and to identify concrete actions to deepen cooperation, enhance thematic focus and strengthen the role of the CSTP as a driver of regional integration. By fostering more coordinated and targeted efforts, the project contributes to positioning the Carpathians as a more unified and sustainable tourism destination, underpinned by shared governance and joint strategic vision.

DECISION COP7/16 Cultural Heritage and traditional knowledge

Article 11 of the Carpathian Convention

Activity: Promoting and protecting the richness of the cultural and natural heritage of the Carpathian Region, including traditional pastoral practices in the Carpathians

1. Upon invitation from the Romanian and Slovak UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage focal points, the Secretariat participated in the seminar “Mapping Carpathian Intangibles: From Vampires to Traditional Agroecological Knowledge of Romanian Pastoral Communities,” presented by Dr. Ioana Baskerville of the Romanian Academy – Iasi Branch and hosted by the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences on 18 February 2025 in Bratislava, Slovakia. The Secretariat also circulated the invitation among relevant networks, resulting in several Carpathian pastoralism experts joining the seminar online.
2. The Secretariat continued collaborating with the ICOMOS team working on the project “ICOMOS World Heritage Transhumance Initiative: Defining a Thematic Approach Towards Sustaining Transhumance Cultural Landscapes in a Changing Environment,” which aims to enhance the representation of transhumance-related cultural landscapes and sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

As part of this cooperation, the Secretariat actively participated in the expert conference “Transhumance Landscapes of Global Importance,” held on 23–24 June 2025 in Baku, Azerbaijan. The Secretariat sought feedback from Carpathian experts on the draft [Conference Declaration](#).

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maintained close coordination with Dr. Ioana Baskerville—Romania’s lead on the UNESCO Transhumance nomination—and ensured that expert input from the Carpathian region was reflected in the final Declaration.

The discussions at the conference underscored the important role the Carpathian Convention can play in bridging various international frameworks, particularly those focused on the protection and safeguarding of cultural heritage. The Convention also offers a valuable platform for addressing cross-sectoral challenges, such as integrating cultural and natural heritage. Strengthening this role and fostering strategic partnerships, such as UNESCO conventions, can help raise the profile of the Carpathian region while deepening understanding of its cultural landscapes as dynamic socio-ecological systems.

3. The Secretariat organised a side-event “Carpathian Fair” at the Forum Carpaticum 2025 in Bratislava, Slovakia, to showcase and exchange ideas, cultural heritage practices and local products and initiatives from the Carpathian region. As a result, more than 8 various initiatives and communities promoted their traditional products, projects, initiatives and informational materials in a dedicated space at the event venue, which was visited by the participants of the Forum Carpaticum.

More information on activities undertaken to further promote and protect traditional Carpathian pastoral practices can be found in the chapter *DECISION COP7/12 Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development*.

DECISION COP7/17 Environmental assessment/information system, monitoring and early warning

Article 12 of the Carpathian Convention

Activity: Cooperation between the Carpathian Convention, the EEA and EU funded projects on the implementation of the Carpathian Convention

1. The Secretariat aims at continuing close cooperation with the European Environment Agency (EEA) and its European Topic Centres in supporting the Carpathian Convention’s activities. This includes work on forests, climate change adaptation, biodiversity, ecological connectivity, and the integration of common information systems. In June 2025, the Secretariat met with colleagues from the EEA Environment Department to discuss ongoing collaboration and the renewal of the 2026–2027 Work Plan under the Partnership Agreement between the Carpathian Convention and the EEA. Key topics addressed included: the Virgin Forest Inventory and the proposed EU Forest Monitoring Law; harmonisation of criteria for virgin and quasi-virgin forests; the application of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation in the Carpathian region, with the possibility of using the region as a pilot for its compliance; enhanced cooperation with the WG on Climate Change; and further integration of the Carpathian Countries Integrated Biodiversity Information System (CCIBIS) into EEA platforms.

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2. Thanks to the support of the EU Horizon Europe NaturaConnect and the Interreg Danube Region ForestConnect projects, the Carpathian Integrated Biodiversity Information System (CCIBIS) has been and will be further improved.
3. The Secretariat liaised with the EEA and the Austrian Environment Agency on the project "Creation of the standard European database Corine Land Cover of the Carpathian region for an area of 27,000 km²," aimed at providing a dataset for mapping the Carpathian area of Ukraine. The results of the project and data were also presented at the Forum Carpaticum 2025 and are now published under the [EEA website](#).

DECISION COP7/19 Awareness raising, education and public participation

Article 13 of the Carpathian Convention

Activity: Support the Carpathian Education for Sustainable Development Expert Network as a cross-sectoral network of diverse actors

1. The Secretariat organised [an online meeting of the Carpathian Education for Sustainable Development Expert Network](#) (CESDEN) on 30 January 2025 in cooperation with Boglarka Kurka Ivanegova, representing Špirála–Network of Environmental Education Providers in Slovakia. The meeting focused on involving youth, facilitating further knowledge exchange, and discussing future plans for 2025.
2. The Secretariat represented CESDEN at the [20th Meeting of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD](#), held from 28–30 May 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland.
 - a. Upon invitation by the Chair of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD - Cyprus, the Secretariat participated in a [panel discussion marking the 20th anniversary of the UNECE ESD Strategy](#). During the panel, the Secretariat emphasised the relevance of the UNECE ESD framework within the context of the Carpathian Convention, highlighted the Convention's role in implementing the Strategy, and expressed appreciation for the support provided by the Republic of Cyprus to CESDEN's activities.
 - b. Additionally, the Secretariat delivered two presentations in close collaboration with Boglarka Kurka Ivanegova: 1) *Update on CESDEN's activities* under Agenda item 10 "Recent activities promoting education for sustainable development in other international forums and strengthening synergies with other organisations and processes" and 2) *Reflections on the outcomes of the UNECE Forum on ESD: Empowering Youth for Sustainable Futures relevant for the Carpathian Region*, with inputs from Carpathian participants, under Agenda item 8 "Implementation update: fourth priority strand on "Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and education for sustainable development."
3. The Secretariat provided a support letter for the project "[Empowering Roma Communities in the Green Deal](#)", led by the Comenius University, which has been funded by the European Climate

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Initiative (EUKI) and joined the Advisory Board of the project. The project aims to support the participation of marginalized Roma communities from Hungary and Slovakia in Central Europe's green transition via research and bottom-up sustainable social innovation, including via establishing an Aarhus Platform for Roma communities.

4. The Secretariat organised a session on ESD at the 8th Forum Carpaticum, where experts from Poland, Romania and Czech Republic, and Leuphana University Lüneburg presented. The latter presented the developed university courses and the results of students' projects focused on the Carpathian region, as part of the ProBioTIC project (see more details under the chapter *DECISION COP7/8 Strengthening science-policy-practice interface and cooperation with scientific networks*).
5. Based on this session, the Secretariat facilitated collection of recommendations for policy, practice and research relevant to the Carpathian ESD Expert Network, which have been translated by Špirála into a Carpathian ESD Roadmap – a coherent set of actionable measures that could be implemented within the mandate of the Carpathian Convention and in accordance with the vision, mission, and priorities of the Carpathian ESD Expert Network.
6. The Secretariat actively participated in educational activities of the ProBioTIC project, providing inputs on the Carpathian Convention as well as providing feedback to students' presentations, with the aim of strengthening participation of youth, students and early career scientists in the Carpathian Convention.
 - a. A group of students from Poland (Jagiellonian University) developed educational materials on Carpathian meadows and were invited to integrate their results into the CESDEN webpage.
 - b. A group of students from Germany (Leuphana University) worked on a webpage on citizen science, with feedback from the Secretariat, to provide recommendations and potentially integrate the resulting content into the CESDEN webpage.
7. The Secretariat was invited by the National Ecological Centre of Ukraine (NECU) to provide welcome remarks at the International Carpathian School autumn session on the 25th of September 2025. This event marked an official celebration of the Carpathian Day in Ukraine, organized by the NECU within the project "Shifting towards Ecotourism in Protected Areas through Heritage Interpretation", and co-financed by the governments of Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia through the Visegrad Grants of the International Visegrad Fund.
8. Based on the activities and interest generated by the ProBioTIC project and the International Carpathian School, as well as activities of other CESDEN partners, the Secretariat aims to invite participation and integrate presentations and recommendations from youth, students and early-career researchers at Carpathian Convention events, such as Working Groups and CCIC meetings as well as COPs.
9. In light of the European Conference on Educational Research 2025, which took place on 8–12 September 2025 in Belgrade, Serbia, the Secretariat facilitated a meeting between the Serbian

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Presidency and Dr. Aravella Zachariou, the Chair of the UNECE SC ESD on behalf of Cyprus, with the aim to strengthen collaboration between Serbia and the UNECE SC ESD.

10. The Secretariat pursued discussions with the Serbian Presidency of the Convention about organisation of the 3rd Carpathian ESD Seminar in Serbia. It was agreed to postpone the organisation of the Seminar to the spring 2026.