Carpathian ESD Roadmap 2030

November 2026

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1. Background information

The Carpathian Education for Sustainable Development Expert Network (referred to as CESDEN) was **symbolically launched on December 11, 2023 on International Mountain Day**. Its mission is to promote education for sustainable development (ESD)-focused networking and collaborations aimed at improving the quality of life, strengthening local economies and communities, and protecting the natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathians. The network features a cross-sectoral membership that includes government representatives, protected area managers, environmental education organizations, and academics, all united by a shared vision of a prosperous and interconnected Carpathian region.

CESDEN was established **under the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (referred to as the Carpathian Convention)**, whose signatories include the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine. The Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention is hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at the Vienna International Centre.

While the Secretariat has supported several ESD-related initiatives since 2008, the topic became a formal priority during the Convention's Hungarian Presidency (2017–2020). The concept of creating a regional expert network was subsequently proposed at the first Carpathian ESD seminar in Budapest in 2019.

The establishment of CESDEN was **inspired by successful regional ESD frameworks, notably the Steering Committee of the UNECE ESD Strategy and the Mediterranean Education Initiative on Environment and Sustainability** (MEdIES), both chaired by Dr. Aravella Zachariou of the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.

Since 2019, the Secretariat has gathered inputs from a wide range of stakeholders to determine how ESD can support the objectives of the Carpathian Convention and define the role of a regional expert network. In October 2023, the 7th Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP7) officially welcomed the network's establishment, recognizing it as a cross-sectoral network of diverse actors capable of facilitating cross-thematic linkages, expanding Convention networks, and raising awareness about the Convention itself.

Throughout 2023, a participatory process combining in-person and online working sessions, alongside stakeholder surveys, was conducted to collaboratively define the foundational core of the network. This process culminated in the adoption of the following mission and vision statements, along with the strategic priorities for the pilot phase of the network:

Vision of the CESDEN

A thriving and interconnected Carpathian region, where ESD advances respect for its diverse natural and cultural heritage, fosters a Carpathian identity and builds sustainable relationships between people and nature.

Mission of the CESDEN

CESDEN promotes ESD-focused networking and collaborations that aim to improve the quality of life, strengthen local economies and communities, and protect natural and cultural heritage in the Carpathians.

Strategic priorities of CESDEN for the pilot phase

- **Strengthening Network Infrastructure and Management:** Securing necessary resources for network administration, coordination, and long-term management.
- Promoting Carpathian ESD Networking and Collaboration: Clarifying membership pathways for experts, establishing platforms for ongoing communication, and actively highlighting existing regional best practices.
- **Promoting Sustainability and a Carpathian Identity through ESD:** Co-developing educational programs that promote a holistic view of the Carpathians, balancing traditional knowledge with innovation and sustainable practices.
- **Advocacy for ESD Policies:** Analyzing how ESD policies manifest on the ground within individual Carpathian countries to effectively advocate for the integration of ESD principles at local, national, and international levels.
- **Building and Strengthening Partnerships:** Proactively seeking synergies with external organizations, networks, and stakeholders who share aligned environmental and educational goals.

Network coordination and support

CESDEN is coordinated by the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, with the implementation of network activities actively supported by ŠPIRÁLA, the Slovak Network of Environmental Education Providers. Network initiatives are sustained through a combination of international grant resources and dedicated volunteer work. Crucially, the network expresses its sincere gratitude for the ongoing financial and expert support provided by the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. Cyprus's leadership and expertise in the field of ESD continue to serve as an exemplary model, inspiring the Carpathian countries in their regional ESD efforts.

2. Introduction to the Carpathian ESD Roadmap 2030

This roadmap sets out how and on what the Carpathian Education for Sustainable Development Expert Network (CESDEN) intends to work together over the coming years. It is not a static plan but a shared, living tool – a rolling document that is open to iteration and updates.

The roadmap builds on the network's previous activities and documents, notably the vision and mission statements developed through a participatory process with members, and integrates recommendations received at the Forum Carpaticum scientific conference in 2025 (for more information on the origins of the network, see the background information section), and feedback provided by members via online consultation in the spring of 2026 and during the 2026 ESD seminar in Serbia.

Design principles of the Carpathian ESD Roadmap 2030

The roadmap translates the vision, mission and the five strategic priorities agreed by the community into a realistic way forward. It is built on five design principles:

1. It directly integrates the vision, mission and priorities agreed by the CESDEN community.
2. It respects the Carpathian Convention's mandate as a facilitative and coordinating platform.
3. It recognises CESDEN's identity: a network of experts, not a top-down funding agency or formal policymaker, whose strengths are knowledge exchange, coordination and capacity building.
4. It translates into realistic, manageable steps that take into account the network's limited personal and financial capacities.
5. It aims to be genuinely useful to members and to support the professionalisation of the network.

3. How to read this roadmap

Sequencing logic

The activities are not meant to start simultaneously. The roadmap follows a deliberate sequence, while several activities run continuously in parallel:

- **Phase 1 – Foundations:** Pillar 1 first (Activity 1, then Activity 2): a shared conceptual foundation is needed before curriculum and systems analysis can be meaningful.
- **Phase 2 – Knowledge base:** Pillar 2 (Activities 3 and 4) builds on the Interpretive Strategy (Activity 2) and can run in parallel with each other.
- **Continuous – Exchange and visibility:** Activities 5, 6 and 7 do not depend on the conceptual work and can start immediately, developing continuously alongside the other phases.
- **Continuous – Enabling conditions:** Activity 9 starts immediately (funding compendium) and intensifies as the network matures. Activity 8 (governance and membership framework) also starts immediately; its membership conditions should be agreed before the first round of member profiles is collected under Activity 5.

No fixed calendar dates are attached at this stage; sequencing rather than scheduling is the guiding logic. Indicative timing can be agreed by the network once resources are confirmed.

Roles and actors (RACI)

For each activity, roles are assigned using a simplified RACI approach:

- **R – Responsible**: the actor who does the work
- **A – Accountable**: the actor who owns the result and endorses it
- **C – Consulted**: the actor whose input is sought before decisions
- **I – Informed**: the actor who is kept up to date

The following actor groups are used:

- **CM – CESDEN members**: Cross-sectoral experts of the network; may volunteer as country or thematic leads.
- **SEC – Carpathian Convention Secretariat**: Coordinator of CESDEN; convenes, endorses and reports to the COP.
- **ŠPI – ŠPIRÁLA – Slovak Network of Environmental Education Providers**: Implementation support for network activities.
- **NFP – National ministries / Convention focal points**: Provide data, policy context and institutional linkages in each Carpathian country.
- **EP – External partners**: e.g. Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth; UNECE ESD Steering Committee; other allied networks.

4. Carpathian ESD Roadmap pillars and activities

The roadmap is organised into four pillars comprising nine activities. Pillar 1 establishes the strategic and conceptual foundations of the network's work; Pillar 2 builds the knowledge base on the region's educational systems; Pillar 3 sustains exchange, capacity building and visibility; and Pillar 4 secures the procedural grounds, enabling conditions and long-term sustainability of both the network and its members' initiatives. Activities 1 and 2 are sequential and foundational; Activities 3 and 4 follow them and can run in parallel; Activities 5–9 are continuous and can start immediately.

Pillar 1 – Strategic and conceptual foundations

This pillar establishes the strategic and conceptual foundations of the network's work: a shared understanding of international ESD priorities in the Carpathian context, and a common educational narrative on which the subsequent pillars build.

Activity 1 – Develop a Carpathian ESD White Paper

Objective:

To establish a shared strategic understanding of how international strategic priorities in education for sustainable development (ESD) and related fields (such as environmental education, global education and citizenship education) can be contextualised and implemented within the Carpathian region, and to develop a common language on ESD within the Carpathian ESD Expert Network (CESDEN).

Output:

- A Carpathian ESD White Paper (≈10 pages), presenting an overview of key international ESD priorities and their alignment with Carpathian realities.
- A basic stakeholder map indicating who implements ESD strategies and how responsibilities are divided among institutions in Carpathian countries.
- A concise articulation of ESD for the Carpathians – shared terminology, vision and framing within CESDEN.
- Strategic recommendations identifying priority areas for coordination and collaboration under the Carpathian Convention.

Suggested steps:

1. Desk review of international ESD frameworks and their relevance to the Carpathians.
2. Stakeholder mapping per country, based on members' and focal points' knowledge.
3. Drafting of the White Paper by a small drafting team drawn from the network.
4. Review and consultation input by CESDEN members.
5. Finalisation and presentation to the network and, where appropriate, to the COP.

Sequencing:

- First activity of the roadmap; starts immediately. Activity 2 depends on it.

Roles:

- **R – Responsible:** ŠPIRÁLA is responsible for coordinating the activity in close cooperation with the Carpathian Convention Secretariat (SEC).
- **A – Accountable:** The Carpathian Convention Secretariat (SEC) owns the deliverable and its final endorsement.
- **C – Consulted:** SEC, CESDEN members (CM) and national focal points (NFP) are encouraged to provide inputs to the document and are consulted at the finalisation of the output.
- **I – Informed:** External partners (EP), the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee and the Conference of the Parties are informed about the activity and its outcomes. Should they wish to take part in the consultations, they are most welcome to do so.

Activity 2 – Develop a Unified Interpretive Strategy for Carpathian ESD

Objective:

To define a shared educational narrative for the Carpathians that translates the strategic findings of the White Paper into clear learning priorities and competencies. The Carpathian ESD Interpretive Strategy will articulate the values, themes and sustainability goals specific to the Carpathian region, providing a reference point for analysing curricula and identifying entry points for formal and non-formal education. It can also serve as a didactic tool to guide the development of educational resources under the Carpathian Convention.

Output:

- A Carpathian ESD Interpretive Strategy that defines key themes, values and sustainability challenges of the Carpathian region relevant to ESD.
- Learning objectives and core competencies that learners should develop to understand and contribute to sustainable development in the Carpathians.
- Shared principles and terminology for communicating, teaching and learning about the region's natural and cultural heritage and sustainable livelihoods.
- A conceptual framework guiding future curriculum analysis, educational resource development and outreach under the Carpathian Convention.

Suggested steps:

1. Assemble a team of experts with proven track-record in heritage interpretation and ESD.
2. Gather inputs from the White Paper and from existing documents focusing on interpretation in the Carpathian region.
3. Extract key themes and values from these inputs.
4. Facilitated workshop(s) with CESDEN members (online or back-to-back with planned events) to support the development of the Carpathian ESD Interpretive Strategy.
5. Drafting of the Carpathian ESD Interpretive Strategy.
6. Consultation and validation of the Draft Carpathian ESD Interpretive Strategy by the network.

7. Finalisation and presentation to the network and, where appropriate, to the COP.

Sequencing:

- Builds directly on Activity 1; feeds Activities 3 and 4.

Roles:

- **R – Responsible**: ŠPIRÁLA is responsible for coordinating the activity, in close cooperation with the assembled team of experts and the Carpathian Convention Secretariat (SEC).
- **A – Accountable**: The Secretariat owns the deliverable and its final endorsement.
- **C – Consulted**: CESDEN members (CM) and national focal points (NFP) are encouraged to provide inputs to the document and are consulted at the finalisation of the output.
- **I – Informed**: External partners (EP), the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee and the Conference of the Parties are informed about the activity and its outcomes. Should they wish to take part in the consultations, they are most welcome to do so.

Pillar 2 – Knowledge base on Carpathian educational systems

Building on the conceptual foundations of Pillar 1, this pillar develops the knowledge base on how ESD and Carpathian-specific themes are reflected in the region's formal education and vocational and lifelong learning systems, identifying entry points, gaps and good practices.

Activity 3 – Strengthen the knowledge base on ESD and Carpathian priorities in formal education

Objective:

To build a comprehensive understanding of how the key themes, values and sustainability challenges of the Carpathian region (identified in Activity 2) are reflected in national curricula and teacher education systems, and to identify opportunities for better alignment and cooperation.

Output:

- Country-specific briefs mapping on how environmental education and ESD are embedded in primary and secondary school curricula across Carpathian countries.
- An analysis of how Carpathian-specific topics (e.g. mountain ecosystems, traditional knowledge, sustainable tourism) are addressed and where gaps exist.
- A regional synthesis highlighting good practices and trends.
- Recommendations for integrating Carpathian themes into existing national frameworks.

Suggested steps:

1. Assemble a team of experts from CESDEN members with a proven track record in formal education and ESD in Carpathian countries.
2. Gather inputs from existing documents on ESD in the formal education systems of Carpathian countries, such as the UNECE ESD Strategy country reports and the outputs

of the 2026 CESDEN analysis of how pastoralism is embedded in formal curricula in Carpathian countries.
3. Create a common, light analysis template (what to look for in curricula and teacher training), based on the themes emerging from the White Paper and the Interpretive Strategy, and consult the wider network on it.
4. Perform country-level reviews, with one lead expert per country, in consultation with national focal points, and other interested CESDEN members.
5. Produce country briefs.
6. Review and consultation input by CESDEN members on the country briefs.
7. Draft the regional synthesis and joint recommendations.
8. Finalise and present to the network and, where appropriate, to the COP.

Sequencing:

- Starts after Activity 2; can run in parallel with Activity 4.

Roles:

- **R – Responsible**: ŠPIRÁLA is responsible for coordinating the activity, in close cooperation with the assembled team of experts and the Carpathian Convention Secretariat (SEC).
- **A – Accountable**: The Secretariat owns the deliverable and its final endorsement.
- **C – Consulted**: CESDEN members (CM) and national focal points (NFP) are encouraged to provide inputs to the document and are consulted at the finalisation of the output.
- **I – Informed**: External partners (EP), the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee and the Conference of the Parties are informed about the activity and its outcomes. Should they wish to take part in the consultations, they are most welcome to do so.

Activity 4 – Enhance understanding of vocational and lifelong learning systems in the Carpathian countries

Objective:

To understand how vocational education and training (VET), and lifelong learning systems operate in the Carpathian countries and to identify entry points for integrating sustainability and Carpathian-specific priorities into skills development.

Output:

- An analytical overview mapping the structure of vocational, requalification and adult learning systems in Carpathian countries, including mechanisms for micro-credentials and continuing education.
- An analysis of how green skills, sustainable tourism, circular economy or traditional livelihoods, and other themes relevant to the Carpathian Convention, are already addressed, and where gaps exist, in alignment with the Carpathian Convention.

- An inventory of good practices and recommendations for integrating Carpathian themes into VET and lifelong learning.

Suggested steps:

1. Assemble a team of experts from CESDEN members with a proven track record in VET, adult education and lifelong learning in Carpathian countries.
2. Gather inputs from existing documents on VET and lifelong learning systems in Carpathian countries, such as national qualification frameworks, Europass/ESCO resources and other relevant resources.
3. Create a common, light analysis template (what to look for in VET structures, curricula and micro-credential mechanisms), based on the themes emerging from the White Paper and the Interpretive Strategy, and consult the wider network on it.
4. Perform country-level reviews, with one lead expert per country, in consultation with national focal points, VET institutions, and other interested CESDEN members.
5. Produce country contributions.
6. Review and consultation input by CESDEN members on the country contributions.
7. Compile the analytical overview and recommendations.
8. Finalise and present to the network and, where appropriate, to the COP.

Sequencing:

- Starts after (or alongside the later stages of) Activity 2; can run in parallel with Activity 3.

Roles:

- **R – Responsible**: ŠPIRÁLA is responsible for coordinating the activity, in close cooperation with the assembled team of experts and the Carpathian Convention Secretariat (SEC).
- **A – Accountable**: The Secretariat owns the deliverable and its final endorsement.
- **C – Consulted**: CESDEN members (CM) and national focal points (NFP) are encouraged to provide inputs to the document and are consulted at the finalisation of the output.
- **I – Informed**: External partners (EP), the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee and the Conference of the Parties are informed about the activity and its outcomes. Should they wish to take part in the consultations, they are most welcome to do so.

Pillar 3 – Exchange, capacity building and visibility

This pillar sustains the ongoing functioning of the network: regular exchange among members, capacity building, and the visibility of the network and its members' work. Its activities are continuous and do not depend on the completion of the conceptual work under Pillars 1 and 2.

Activity 5 – Document and showcase CESDEN members and Carpathian ESD good practices

Objective:

To make the work and composition of CESDEN visible and accessible – first through public profiles of its members, and second through the identification, documentation and sharing of exemplary Education for Sustainable Development initiatives that demonstrate how Carpathian values and sustainability goals are translated into practice across formal, non-formal and community settings.

Output:

- An interactive directory (online map) of CESDEN members, hosted on the Carpathian Convention's website, with voluntary public profiles indicating members' expertise, affiliation and fields of work. Participation is opt-in; profiles are based on a standard template and updated with each member's consent.
- An ongoing collection and regular publication of good practices, hosted on the Carpathian Convention's website, illustrating diverse educational approaches in: project-based and service learning; transdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration; vocational education addressing Carpathian priorities; education as a tool for community and youth empowerment; citizen-science and participatory learning initiatives.

Suggested steps:

1. Agree the standard member profile template and data-protection arrangements (consent, what is published, how updates are handled).
2. Propose, design, and test the technical solution for the interactive directory and good-practice collection.
3. Collect and publish the first round of member profiles.
4. Agree upon a simple documentation format and selection criteria for good practices, with direct links between practices and the members behind them.
5. Call for submissions of good practices from members and national partners.
6. Publish the first collection on the Convention's website.
7. Regular updates of both the directory and the good-practice collection annually or upon request.

Sequencing:

- Continuous; starts immediately, independently of Pillars 1 and 2. The member directory is a quick, visible early win; the good-practice collection grows over time.

Roles:

- **R – Responsible**: The Carpathian Convention Secretariat (SEC), as website host, is responsible for the technical solution, publication and upkeep of the directory and the collection. ŠPIRÁLA coordinates the content side: developing the templates, compiling member profiles and curating the good-practice collection to ensure comparability of formats.
- **A – Accountable**: The Secretariat owns the deliverable.
- **C – Consulted**: CESDEN members (CM) and (NFP) decide on their own profiles and propose the practices to be documented.

- **I – Informed**: External partners (EP), the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee and the Conference of the Parties are informed about the activity and its outcomes.

Activity 6 - Facilitate CESDEN meetings and knowledge exchange

Objective:
To strengthen cooperation, knowledge sharing, and professional development among members of the Carpathian ESD Expert Network (CESDEN), as well as with key international fora.

Output:

- Biannual (i.e. twice-yearly) online meetings to review progress of roadmap activities, exchange experience amongst each other and with other regions, and discuss emerging international priorities.
- An annual face-to-face Carpathian ESD seminar, hosted by one of the member countries, focused on peer learning, collaboration building and showcasing good practices.
- Support for the participation of CESDEN members in relevant ESD-related networking events, conferences and exchanges – both within the Carpathian region and internationally – to promote knowledge transfer and strengthen partnerships. Special attention will be paid to the exchange and transfer of Cypriot expertise and synergies with the UNECE ESD Steering Committee.

Suggested steps:

1. Agree on the meeting calendar towards the beginning of each calendar year.
2. Draft an event plan for each event organised by and for CESDEN members: at least 4 months ahead for in-person events and at least 2 months ahead for online events, including a draft agenda, roles and responsibilities, and financing options.
3. Hold biannual online meetings (progress reviews, exchange, emerging priorities), each followed by a short progress note on roadmap implementation.
4. Organise the annual face-to-face seminar, hosted alternately in different Carpathian Convention member countries, as resources allow; if in-person delivery is not possible in a given year, it is replaced by an extended online meeting.
5. Map and communicate relevant international ESD events, and coordinate members' participation, including targeted financial support where resources allow.
6. Feed outcomes of international events back into the network (e.g. as agenda items in the online meetings, news on the Carpathian Convention website, shared mail group).

Sequencing:

- Continuous; starts immediately and provides the review rhythm for all other activities.

Roles:

- **R – Responsible**: The Carpathian Convention Secretariat (SEC) is responsible for convening the meetings, setting their agenda and maintaining the calendar; ŠPIRÁLA prepares content and formats as needed, in close cooperation with the SEC; the hosts of the face-to-face events organise the annual seminar with SEC and ŠPIRÁLA.
- **A – Accountable**: The Secretariat owns the activity and its overall implementation.
- **C – Consulted**: CESDEN members (CM) and national focal points (NFP) shape agendas and propose topics, and are consulted on seminar organisation.
- **I – Informed**: External partners (EP), the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee and the Conference of the Parties are informed about the activity and its outcomes.

Activity 7 – Support and Promote Annual Carpathian Day Celebrations

Objective:
To raise awareness of the Carpathians' ecological and cultural value and foster a shared Carpathian identity through education, communication and celebration.

Output:
A coordinated regional celebration that:

- Promotes Carpathian Day as a joint awareness-raising effort across member states.
- Encourages partners to organize educational and public events under a shared regional theme (e.g. *Youth for the Carpathians*, *Education for Carpathian Sustainability*);
- Provides a shared communication toolkit and visibility materials for national and local organizers.

Suggested steps:

1. Agree the annual shared theme by the network, early enough in the year for the toolkit to reach organisers in good time (e.g. at the first biannual online meeting).
2. Prepare the communication toolkit and visibility materials, based on a standard, reusable design that is adapted to the annual theme.
3. Coordinate national and local events by members, with visibility through the network's channels and the Convention's website.
4. Hold joint visibility activities around the day itself.
5. Evaluate briefly and carry over lessons to the next year's cycle.

Sequencing:

- Continuous, annual cycle; independent of other activities and ideal for early, visible network action.

Roles:

- **R – Responsible**: The Carpathian Convention Secretariat (SEC) is responsible for the joint regional frame: the shared theme, the communication toolkit and central visibility.

ŠPIRÁLA supports as needed with content and formats. The members organising national and local events carry the celebrations on the ground.

- **A – Accountable**: The Secretariat owns the activity and its overall visibility.
- **C – Consulted**: CESDEN members (CM) and national focal points (NFP) propose themes and shape the toolkit to national and local needs.
- **I – Informed**: External partners (EP), the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee and the Conference of the Parties are informed about the activity and its outcomes.

Pillar 4 – Enabling Conditions and Long-Term Sustainability

This pillar secures the conditions for the network's long-term functioning: the procedural grounds for its work, and the funding, and cooperation mechanisms on which both the network and its members' initiatives depend.

Activity 8 - Develop procedural grounds for the network's work

Objective:

To establish the procedural foundations of CESDEN as a professional expert network: a shared understanding of the network's functions and boundaries, the conditions and pathways of membership, and the way its work is organised, complementing the mission and vision with a description of how the network operates in practice.

Output:

A concise governance and membership framework (e.g. a Terms of Reference or Network Agreement, ≈3–4 pages) that:

- Defines the functions of the network, and, just as importantly, its non-functions (what CESDEN does and does not do, consistent with its identity: knowledge exchange, coordination and capacity building, not funding allocation or formal policymaking).
- Sets out who can join: eligibility criteria, and conditions of membership (rights and responsibilities of members).
- Describes the organisation of work: coordination roles, decision-making practices, the role of the biannual meetings and annual seminar, and the rotation of tasks such as seminar hosting.
- Provides for light evolution: how the framework itself and the roadmap are updated (the rolling-document principle).

Suggested steps:

1. Collect and review existing models of comparable regional expert networks, so the framework builds on recognised practice and the Carpathian Convention's mandate.
2. Draft the framework, in close alignment with the vision, mission, design principles and roles as set out in this roadmap.
3. Consult CESDEN members and national focal points on the draft.
4. Agree the framework and communicate it to members and publicly.

5. Review the framework when circumstances change (e.g. alongside COP meetings or every 2–3 years), as part of the roadmap's review rhythm.

Sequencing:

- Foundational. The membership conditions should be agreed before the first round of member profiles is collected under Activity 5; the full framework can be developed alongside the other continuous activities.

Roles:

- **R – Responsible**: The Carpathian Convention Secretariat (SEC) is responsible for coordinating the development of the framework, given its mandate as network coordinator and its accountability to the COP; ŠPIRÁLA supports with content and drafting.
- **A – Accountable**: The Secretariat owns the deliverable.
- **C – Consulted**: CESDEN members (CM) and national focal points (NFP) are consulted on the draft framework, in particular on membership criteria and the organisation of work.
- **I – Informed**: External partners (EP), the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee and the Conference of the Parties are informed about the activity and its outcomes; the COP may be invited to take note of the framework.

Activity 9 – Enhance Enabling Conditions and Sustainability Mechanisms for Carpathian ESD Initiatives and CESDEN

Objective:

To strengthen the long-term sustainability of both ESD initiatives in the region and CESDEN itself, through improved access to resources, innovative funding models, facilitated cooperation among members, and the mitigation of institutional barriers to cross-border work.

Output:

A coordinated effort by CESDEN and the Carpathian Convention Secretariat that:

- Maps and communicates funding and cooperation opportunities relevant to CESDEN members and to the network itself.
- Encourages and facilitates members' cooperation on joint projects and applications, within the framework of the roadmap and among each other, building on the good practices and expertise documented in Activities 5 and 6.
- Explores social entrepreneurship and self-financing models, including mentoring and training through CESDEN.
- Maps administrative and regulatory barriers hindering cross-border educational or ecotourism cooperation, with a view to identifying solutions as capacities and mandates allow.
- Produces practical outputs: a compendium of funding sources, a guidance note on financial sustainability and social entrepreneurship, and a brief report summarising

institutional barriers and recommendations, including options for sustaining the network's own coordination and activities.

Suggested steps:

1. Systematically map and communicate cross-border funding opportunities relevant to members and to the network, compiled into the compendium.
2. Identify where members' interests align with funding opportunities, and facilitate the formation of project consortia among members (e.g. dedicated matchmaking slots at the annual seminar or online meetings).
3. Explore social entrepreneurship and self-financing models, including mentoring and training offers.
4. Map administrative and regulatory barriers, based on members' experience.
5. Assess, on an ongoing basis, the resources needed for the network's own coordination and activities, and match them against available funding and in-kind support.

Sequencing:

- Starts immediately (funding compendium); the barrier mapping and dialogue intensify as cross-border cooperation grows. The network's own resource needs are reviewed at each biannual meeting.

Roles:

- **R – Responsible**: The Carpathian Convention Secretariat (SEC) and ŠPIRÁLA are jointly responsible for the mapping of funding opportunities. ŠPIRÁLA is responsible for the mentoring, training and matchmaking components, in close cooperation with the SEC.
- **A – Accountable**: The Secretariat owns the deliverable.
- **C – Consulted**: CESDEN members (CM) and national focal points (NFP) are the primary source of on-the-ground experience — barriers encountered, funding needs, and interest in joint projects.
- **I – Informe**d: External partners (EP), the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee and the Conference of the Parties are informed about the activity and its outcomes.