

DEVELOPMENT OF A CARPATHIAN ECOLOGICAL NETWORK

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITIES OF THE CARPATHIAN ECO-REGION NETWORK (CERI) IN SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CARPATHIAN CONVENTION

2ND PROGRESS REPORT

MARCH 2007

1. INTRODUCTION

The activities of the international, transboundary programme supported by the Netherlands government (BBI-Matra) are focused on increase of the awareness and understanding about the need to secure the protection of biodiversity of the Carpathian region through securing the connectivity between core areas for species and on creation of Carpathian Biodiversity Information System as a base for the design of a regional ecological network for the Carpathians. Political aspect is to strengthen profile of CERI – the network of NGOs and expert institutions in the region, to support implementation of the Carpathian Convention and to enable strategic and coherent approach to the protection of the unique biodiversity of the Carpathians.

• Position of this report

This is the Second Progress Report prepared per 1 March 2007 according to the Art. 7 Reporting of “*Agreement with CERI in the frame of the BBI/MATRA Project no 2005/026*” for the period September 2006 – 28 February 2007. The report covers all the activities which were carried out during the reporting period according to the Terms of Reference CERI (Local Project Management) of March 2006.

• Main activities and progress

Main activities within the contract relevant to the reporting period as outlined in the Time Plan of the Inception Report submitted in May 2006 and Revised Project Implementation Plan fall within the following three groups according to the operational and organisational structure of the programme:

1. Project Management Activities

	Deadline	Progress
Meet with team leaders of relevant projects to tune	30/9/2006	completed
Review budgets, actions, structure & timetable	30/9/2006	completed
Identify & contract experts & organisations & establish WGs	30/9/2006	completed
Establish PSC & hold first PSC meeting	31/12/2006	completed

Meet with team leaders of relevant projects

- 2012 Protected Areas Programme – 11 September 2006, 12 December 2006, 26 January 2007.
- Carpathian Network of Protected Areas – 11 September 2006, 26 January 2007.
- Carpathian Wetland Initiative – 15-17 November 2006.
- CADSES Carpathian project

Review of structure

No changes or supplements

Identification, contracting of experts, organisation & establishment of WGs

Work Group on Ecological Network Development

The core group of experts was established during the first reporting period. For the purpose of the first planning meeting on conservation features for ecological network it was complemented by the experts from 6 Carpathian countries with biological and ecological background. More information is given under point 3 Activities. The socio-economic issues of Romania were covered by Mr Ciprian Popovici. Expert who will cover this work in Ukraine and Serbia are being identified now. Additional experts

(ichthyology, freshwater issues, amphibians and reptiles preferably from northern part of the Carpathians) will be a part of the team for the coming phase.

Work Group on strengthening CERI's capacities to operate in the region

The work group was established during the first reporting period and then performed the work. CERI National Focal Points (Ukraine – Ecoclub Carpathians, Romania – University of Brasov, Faculty of Forestry, Serbia – Ecolibri Bionet) were contracted to deliver the work on the fact sheet on existing policies and strategies towards the Carpathians. Five CERI workgroups – Biodiversity WG, Information System WG, Management Planning WG, Ecotourism WG and Environmental Policy WG, worked on identification of threats and obstacles for sustainable development of the Carpathian Ecoregion.

There are several methods for elaboration of Ecoregion action plan. Jan Seffer prepared the overview and analysis and presented that to the CERI members on General Assembly, November 2006, for comments.

Communication work group headed by Tamara Malkova (Green Dossier) elaborated a draft of the Communication Strategy. The draft was discussed on CERI General Assembly November 22-24 2006 with other CERI members. Environmental policy Work Group headed by Nenad Robajac (Ecolibri) prepared a draft of Organisational and Operational Structure of the CERI.

2. Development of a design for the Carpathian Ecological Network

	Deadline	Progress
Identify flagship species to evaluate connectivity of ecological network	31/12/2006	completed
Design of the system	31/01/2007	completed
Design of the first planning meeting	31/01/2007	completed
First planning meeting – conservation features	02/2007	completed

The system was designed after the technical meeting in May 2006 and tuned during the expert meeting in Canterbury, October 2006. More detail information is given in the section 2 Outputs.

A 1st planning meeting was held to identify those features which will be used to define the parameters of the ecological network. These parameters are referred to as the conservation features. These features include focal species, habitats and ecological processes. These were identified by a team of experts during the meeting. A preliminary analysis of the factors contributing to the successful conservation of these features (threats and opportunities) was undertaken. These factors were then further prioritised in order to identify a series of social and economic data that will be mapped to help design the location of the zones within the ecological network. The information collected during this meeting will define the needs for the data collection phase of the project which follows the meeting.

3. Strengthening the organisational structure and capacities of the CERI to support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention and to support and monitor sustainable development in the Carpathians

	Deadline	Progress
Fact sheets on current situation	31/12/2006	ongoing
Identify threats & obstacles for sustainable development of the Carpathian Ecoregion	31/12/2007	ongoing
Elaborate communication strategy for CERI to ensure effective external communication	31/12/2007	ongoing
Propose organisational & operational CERI structure to secure sustainability & effectiveness	31/12/2008	ongoing

Threats and obstacles for sustainable development of the Carpathian Ecoregion have been identified in the area of sustainable tourism. The T&O identification was initiated also in the field of biodiversity conservation and environmental awareness raising and education. The work will be completed in July 2007.

The draft Communication strategy of CERI has been elaborated and will be finalized in 2007 to be approved by the CERI General Assembly 2007.

Within the organizational structure of CERI seven working groups have been established in 2006 as an effective tool to strengthen the practical and focused cooperation among member NGOs. The CERI General Assembly 2006 has formulated and approved the Rules of Procedure for Working Groups and also for the financing of National Focal Points. These documents significantly support the sustainability of CERI.

Concerning operational structure of CERI, in 2006 the Memorandum of Cooperation has been signed between CERI and the ISCC, what provides important bases for strengthening the cooperation and further common activities of the two institutions.

Cooperation and coordination meeting was organised with the main CERI partners in the Carpathian Region – ISCC, CEEWEB, REC, ANPED, WWF DCP – in order to discuss the focus, current activities and future plans of the individual organizations. The outputs of the meeting will contribute to the identification of CERI role in the region as well as to the proposal of the most effective option for the CERI structure.

2. OUTPUTS

Describe the status of the project and the result of the discussions with relevant stakeholders, Ministries and Institutions

- *Ministry of Environment and natural resources of Ukraine, Deputy Head of the Department for Land Resources Management - National Focal Point of the Carpathian Convention*
 NFP CC of Ukraine Mr Igor Ivanenko participated at the 1st Steering Committee Meeting of the project, held 11 December 2006 in Kyiv. Being interested in the implementation process, Mr Ivanenko advised some additional information sources in Ukraine which could contribute to the project. One of them is the national register of protected areas, to be finalized and soon printed out. The quality shall be secured by the authors – expert institutions of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and State Agency for Protected Areas.

- Ministry for Science and Environmental Protection of Serbia, National Focal Point of the Carpathian Convention*
 During the meeting in Evian (Carpathian Wetland Initiative), November 2006, NFP CC of Serbia Ms Alexandra Doslic considered the process of designing ecological network important also for recognition of the natural values of the official part of Serbian Carpathians as well as of other orographical units delineated by the experts. Mr Milutin Pantovic, who participated at the 1st Steering Committee Meeting of the project, held 11 December 2006, made a remark on the importance of economic evaluation of the biodiversity and stressed the importance of selection of indicator species.
- Ministry of Environment and Water Management, Directorate of Nature Conservation, Biodiversity, Biosafety, Romania*
 NFP CC of Romania Ms Carmen-Gabriela Damian participated at the 1st Steering Committee Meeting of the project as well and was updated on the implementation process.
- Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA) and 2012 Protected Areas Programme*
 There is a clear link and necessity to cooperate with the CNPA as the approach of development of the ecological network is partly based on the identification of biodiversity important areas. CNPA as a thematic network of mountain protected areas in the Carpathian region was formally established in the 1st Meeting to the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention in Kyiv, 11-13 December 2006. The CNPA shall closely cooperate with the Working group on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity under the Carpathian Convention. CERI is an observer in the Steering Committee to the CNPA.

The CNPA process is widely supported by the programme which just started in January 2007 – 2012 Protected Areas Programme, coordinated by WWF DCP and funded by MAVA Foundation. CERI is a partner to the project and actively participated in preparation of the project application in 2006. CERI shall substantially contribute to the Objective 4: “Ensure that critical gaps in the protected area network are filled with a particular focus on the creation of large intact block, freshwater areas and wilderness.” CERI is also a member of the Steering Group to the project, as decided during the Side event of CNPA and Carpathian Wetland Initiative during the COP 1 to the CC in Kyiv, 11 December 2006.
- Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWI)*
 CWI aims to operate as a Regional Initiative within the framework of the Ramsar Convention as well as a working instrument under the Carpathian Convention. Both Conventions are connected through MoU, which was signed at COP 1 to CC in Kyiv 2006. During the meeting held in Evian, France, November 2006, where CERI participated as well, key points for action of CWI were outlined. One of them is to gather information on wetland ecosystems. The level of information varies greatly between the Carpathian countries. One of the possibilities how to harmonize the data is through ongoing work of CERI.
- UNEP Vienna - Interim Secretariat of Carpathian Convention and Carpathian Project (Interreg IIIB CADSES)*
 Head of UNEP – ISCC and CERI Chair signed the Memorandum of Cooperation between UNEP-ISCC and CERI at COP1 to CC in Kyiv, December 2006. The Memorandum aims at providing a durable basis for mutual collaboration in the field of information and experience exchange. The joint efforts shall contribute to the activities aiming to support further development of the Protocol on Biological and Landscape Diversity, to prepare programmatic documents for developing the Carpathian ecological network and to support the activities of the CNPA (providing background information to the CNPA Steering Committee or Working Groups meeting).

UNEP Vienna – ISCC along with further partners developed the Carpathian Project building upon the intergovernmental cooperative platform of the Carpathian Convention. The long term objective is to strengthen the protection and accelerate the sustainable development in the Carpathian region by improving the internal as well as European cohesion of the area and by preserving its natural and cultural heritage for future generation. The Project supports the Working Group on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity established by the COP 1 to Carpathian Convention and activities on the development of the ecological network in the Carpathians. CERI is an observer to the project.

Review the planned outputs and the progress that has been made.

Immediate outputs and objectives

1. Design of a coherent transboundary ecological network
2. Strengthen the capacities of the Carpathian EcoRegion Initiative (CERI) to support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention.

The program results covering the CERI contract include

1. *Concept for a Carpathian Ecological Network based on an analysis of existing protected areas, (p)SCIs and SPAs and other priority areas linked through a network of ecological corridors for a number of flagship species and taking into account the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives, the CBD and the PEEN.*

The ecological network experts Irene Bouwma and Bob Smith met in Canterbury, at the University of Kent, 19 October 2006. They discussed, which data will be required for the software Marxan, which are available at present, the way to identify corridors, the way to include socio-economic developments in design and presentation of the steps at CERI GA.

Bob Smith produced a draft Carpathian conservation planning system to illustrate the types of outputs that the project will produce. This system used data provided by Daphne on existing protected area boundaries and land cover and divided the Carpathian planning region outside of the existing protected area system into a series of 5km x 5 km grid squares. Eight conservation features were mapped in this system and these were land cover types extracted from the CORINE land cover maps. The target for each of these conservation features was set as being 40% of current total cover and the CLUZ and MARXAN software were used to identify priority conservation areas for meeting these targets. This conservation assessment is for illustrative purposes only, as they are based on arbitrary targets and a limited number of conservation features. The exercise provides an example of the type of outputs that will be produced by the final Carpathian Conservation Assessment.

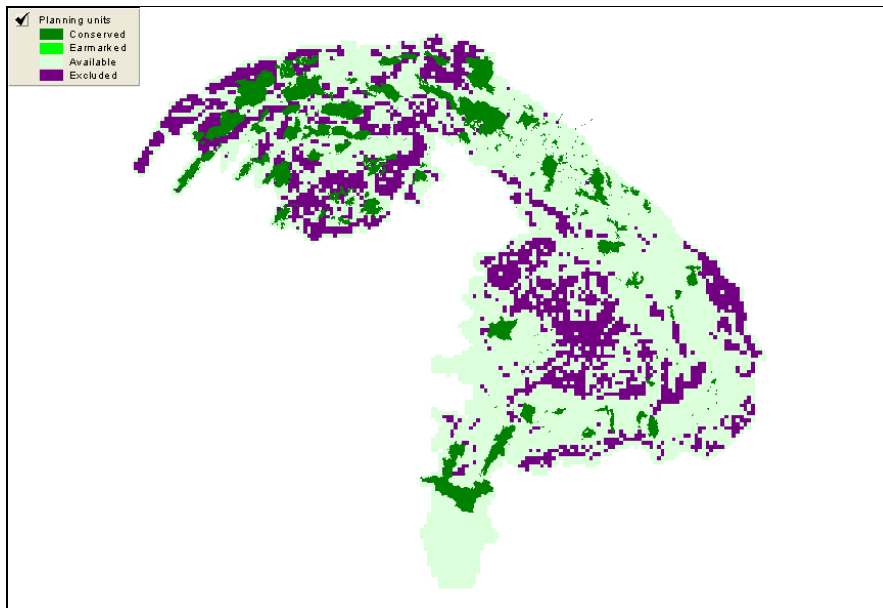


Fig. 1. The draft Carpathian conservation planning system

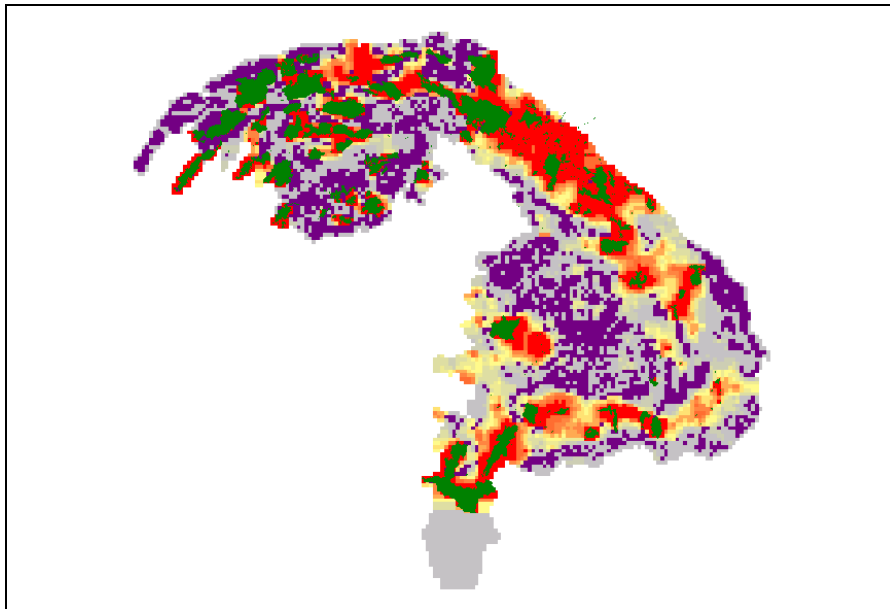


Fig. 2. Illustration of output from the Carpathian CPS, showing important areas in red

The expert team headed by Mike Baltzer designed the first planning meeting on ecological network focused on conservation features. The meeting was combined with expert meeting on biodiversity data collection, because the expert on biodiversity were required for this stage of work on ecological network design. It was held 7-8 February 2007 in Bratislava. 27 experts from 6 Carpathian countries participated at the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to identify the conservation features to be used to define the parameters of the ecological corridor and to identify those factors that determine the feasibility of their successful conservation. The goal of the meeting was to compile a list of conservation features and a list of the factors of threats and opportunities, both to be used for the data collection.

The expert part of the day one and day two was chaired by Mike Baltzer, altered by Bob Smith and Irene Bouwma. He presented the state of art of the work on ecological network design, steps which will lead to the design of the network and clarified the objectives of the current meeting to all the participants. In turn, Bob Smith introduced the software which is to be used for creation of the final product – interactive map with zonation and management recommendation.

After general introduction part the group of experts was split into two – habitat and plant species experts and those who have affinities towards this subject and animal experts. The task of the sessions was to make a shortlist of the species and habitats which will be used in the analyses, to identify main threats and opportunities for each feature (species) or for “ecosystems”, to identify possible data sources..

2. *Strengthened organisational structure and capacities of the CERI to support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention and to design implement and monitor sustainable development in the Carpathians, with a specific emphasis on Ukraine, Romania and Serbia.*

CERI launched the process of identification of methodology for the development of the Ecoregion Action Plan. Draft methodology was agreed by the CERI General Assembly in November 2006. CERI initiated the process of identification of threats and obstacles to sustainable development of the Carpathians and elaborated the 1st draft of the CERI Communication Strategy. The information on the project was distributed between CERI members in 2nd issue of CERI Newsletter.

3. ACTIVITIES

- Establishment of working groups

Work Group for Development of a design for the Carpathian Ecological Network was already established during the first reporting period. Its core comprises the following experts:

Mike Baltzer – head

Irene Bouwma, Karina Kitnaes, Bob Smith – ecological network experts

Jan Seffer, Rasto Lasak – biodiversity data and GIS/IT experts, interface with the collection of biodiversity data and development of the Carpathian Biodiversity Information System

Further experts from the Carpathians join the group when necessary. The members will be selected within the CERI network or outside it, when necessary, in consultation with the CERI secretariat and Project Management Team. During the first planning meeting February 2007, Bratislava, these were biodiversity experts and ecologists.

Work Group for Strengthening the organisational structure and capacities of the CERI to support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention and to support and monitor sustainable development in the Carpathians was established as well. During the reporting period it comprised the following experts

Monika Chrenkova – head
 Tamara Malkova (Green Dossier, Ukraine) – communication strategy
 Nenad Robajac (Ecolibri, Serbia) – development strategy

- Workshops and meetings

The following workshops, meetings or missions took place during the reporting period:

Date	Place	Event	Purpose
September 11, 2006	Wien – Vienna International Centre	(CNPA) Preparatory Meeting	establish synergies between projects/programmes run by the organizations; proposal for an agreement of a common and complementary approach for establishment of the CNPA
September 19, 2006	Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia, Belgrade	Workshop „Support and capacity building for implementation of Ramsar and Carpathian Conventions in Serbia“	introduce the project to the Serbian experts, identification of biodiversity experts in Serbia
October 19, 2006	University of Kent, Canterbury	Expert meeting on ecological network	to clarify which data are required for Marxan, the way to identify corridors, the way to include socio-economic developments in design, presentation of the steps at CERi GA
November 15-17, 2006	Evian, Royal Hotel	Evian Encounter Carpathian Wetland Initiative	presentation of activities relevant for the Carpathian Wetland Initiative; harmonization of the activities
November 22–24, 2006	Poprad, Hotel Satel	1. CERi General Assembly 2006 2. Project Management Team meeting	· presentation of the project and the state of the art to the CERi members · assess the state of affairs, input of CERi members, budget, project activities 2007, Steering Committee Meeting
December 11-13, 2006	Club of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine	COP 1 to the Carpathian Convention – CERi side event 1st Steering Committee Meeting	Introduction to the project, CBIS, proposed ecological network – approach, way of working, communication, training activities, strengthening the CERi capacities
January 26, 2007	Vienna, VIC	1 st Meeting of the CNPA Steering Committee	preparing the CNPA conference in 2008 communication and PR issues, visibility guidelines, support by the ALPARC project and MAVa capacity building, coordination, integration with 2012 PAP (MAVA) and UNDP GEF thematic work and interaction with the BDWG of the Carpathian Convention
February 7-9, 2007	Bratislava, Hotel Sorea	1. Expert meeting - design of ecological network, Carpathian Biodiversity Information System 2. Project Management Team meeting	· identification of conservation features to be used to define the parameters of the ecological corridor and to identify those factors that determine the feasibility of their successful conservation · assess the state of affairs, budget, project activities 2007

TIME PLANNING

The activities connected to the design of ecological network are on schedule according to the time plan updated in the inception phase of the project. More details about the timing of WP4 activities are in section 3 *Strengthening the organisational structure and capacity of the CERL*.