

Development of a Carpathian Ecological Network

Strengthening the capacities of the Carpathian Eco-Region Initiative (CERI) in supporting the implementation of the Carpathian Convention

4th progress report

March 2008

1. Executive summary

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. The tool which will help to advocate for the protection of the Carpathian natural treasury is a design of a Carpathian Ecological Network based on sound data gathered by the Carpathian experts and assessed in cooperation with European experts on this topic. An important output of the project is Carpathian Biodiversity Information System as a base for the design of a regional ecological network for the Carpathians. Important aspect of the project 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.

2. Introduction

Position of this report

This is the Fourth Progress Report prepared per 1 March 2008 according to the Art. 7 Reporting of “*Agreement with CERI in the frame of the BBI/MATRA Project no 2005/026*” for the period 1 September 2007 – 29 February 2008. 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.

Summary of main activities and progress in reporting period

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 two work packages - Carpathian Ecological Network design and strengthening of CERI capacities to support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention and support and monitor sustainable development in the Carpathians.

The activities were focused on collection of input data for a design of an ecological network. Under this contract a set of socio-economic data is collected (situational data required to provide the context for building the ecological network were collected, the data on roads, settlements, ski-locations, protected areas, mines, FSC credited forests).

The CERI activities supporting implementation of the Carpathian Convention addressed the issues of preparation of the Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape diversity, building Carpathian Biodiversity Information System and the design of the Carpathian Ecological Network, position in a Steering Committee to the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA), 2012 PAP project (WWF DCP) and a support to Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWA).

The activities within both the work packages are in line with the Project Implementation Plan.

3. Project management

Project management issues (meetings, contacts, etc)

The project management issues were discussed via e-mails (Project Management Team) and teleconferences (Working Groups) and on the Project Management Team meeting held 5 December 2007 in Brasov, Romania. The project issues were discussed here in detail, that is why also the Working Group experts (Irene Bouwma, Bob Smith and Bohdan Prots) participated. The team outlined the list of priority activities to work upon in the following period:

- organize the training workshop in Romania in June/July 2008
- agree on the training in Serbia, finalize biodiversity data collection
- prepare GIS layers for the conservation feature occurrences which subsequently enter the analysis leading to models for ecological network design
- prepare the target setting meeting in April 2008
- prepare a proposal for CERI side event at the Conference of the Parties 2 (COP2) to the Carpathian Convention in June 2008, where the current status of the project will be presented
- prepare the project Steering Committee meeting during the period of (COP2)
- prepare CERI national network meetings to strengthen the CERI network

The Minutes of the meeting are enclosed in Annex 2.1. The next Project Management Team Meeting is foreseen on 21 – 22 April 2008 in Košice, Slovakia.

Contracting of experts (status and changes)

The following subcontracts are pending:

- S-2.15-1/06 for the expert on Ecological Network Design (budget line 4.8)
- S-2.11-2/2006 for the head of the Work Group on Ecological Network Design (budget line 4.7)
- S-2.15-1/08 for updating CERI web site (budget line 5.5)
- S-2.15-3/08 for expert work on landcover types for Ukrainian Carpathians (budget line 4.3) and for purchase of Landsat images (budget line 2.2)
- S-2.15-2/08 for compilation of GIS layers on location of roads, settlements, rivers, railways, country-borders, ski-locations, FsC forests; add (if relevant) missing data on ski-resorts, protected areas, mines for CZ, SK, PL, HU, SB, RO (budget lines 4.4 and 4.10)
- S-2.7-1/08 for compilation of GIS layers on location of roads, settlements, rivers, railways, country-borders, ski-locations, FsC forests; add (if relevant) missing data on ski-resorts, protected areas, mines in Ukraine (budget lines 4.6 and 4.12)

The following subcontracts were completed during reported period:

- S-2.14-1/07 for graphic design and layout of the poster presenting the method which is used in the project to design a Carpathian Ecological Network. The poster will be presented on the 6th Ministerial Conference within the “Environment for Europe” process, which will be held 10-12 October 2007 in Belgrade.

S-2.15-1/07 for updating CERI web site and creation of specific site within the CERI web for Matra project (budget line 5.5)
S-2.6-1b/07 for Local Project Manager and Local Project Director for 2007 (budget lines 4.1 and 4.2)
S-2.6-2b/07 for CERI Development Strategy (budget line 4.13)
S-2.6-1b/08 for Local Project Manager and Local Project Director for January 2008 (budget lines 4.1 and 4.2)

Amendments

Amendment to the contract 2005/026 of 13 November 2007 (amendment to the budget and bank details)
Amendment to S-2.15-1/06 (amendment to the budget)

Working groups (overall conclusions on progress)

The core working groups were established during the Inception phase of the project and its initial phase. The members actively identify additional collaborators or experts, if necessary. The work discusses important issues via e-mails and teleconferences groups and hold meetings.

Overall judgement of the project implementation process

The project is now at its implementation phase. The focal activities contribute to the assessment the knowledge and implementation of N2000 where relevant, to a design a provisional regional ecological network tuned with the PEEN through a collection of relevant socio-economic data and to identification of flagship species and key habitats to evaluate the connectivity of the provisional ecological network. The CERI's capacities were strengthened through two trainings designed according to the results of a Training Needs Assessment. The CERI's position in the region was strengthened through its active participation at the preparation of a Biodiversity Protocol to the Carpathian Convention and cooperation with other relevant regional processes.

Related projects and contacts

1. "Seizing opportunities, addressing threats", 3-4 October 2007 in Hostetin, Czech Republic.

The activities of CERI under BBI-Matra project correspond to several Carpathian – regional projects. Two of them currently running are Carpathian project (Interreg IIIB CADSES, UNEP Vienna – Interim Secretariat of Carpathian Convention) and Protected Areas for a Living Planet (MAVA Foundation, WWF DCP). CERI participated at the twin seminar. The aim of the part related to the topic "Responding to threats to nature conservation in the Carpathian Mountains" was to gain an overview and critical perspective on threats to nature from infrastructure projects across the Carpathian Mountains, to gain an overview and understanding of legal and other tools available at EU and national levels for addressing threats to Carpathian nature from infrastructure projects, to gain insight, best practice and generate recommendations for addressing threats to Carpathian nature from infrastructure projects, to discuss opportunities for regional or international approach to

addressing specific threats or issues and to discuss and critically assess draft “checklist” of tools for addressing threats to Carpathian nature. CERI contributed with a big picture of threats to nature across the Carpathian Mountains, which is an output of the WP 4 (Annex 4 to the Progress report 3). The event welcomed up to 20 participants from the Carpathians (Poland, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic as well as international experts (WWF European Policy Office).

Annex 2.2 and 2.3

More information: Andreas Beckman, WWF DCP, abeckmann@wwfdcp.org

2. The Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, 10-12 October 2007, Belgrade, Serbia

The Environment for Europe process since its launch in 1991 has been an important platform for policy development in the Pan-European region. With the endorsement of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) at the Third Ministerial Conference in 1995, biodiversity has become a major issue of the process, underpinning the importance of biodiversity and ecosystems in sustaining social and economic processes. The participating Pan-European states also committed to achieving nine targets for halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010, which are set out the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity endorsed in 2003. This unique Pan-European cooperation and the strong commitments of the Kyiv targets created a lot of momentum around the 2010 target to halt biodiversity loss. However, three years before the 2010 deadline and on the eve of the Sixth Ministerial Conference, it is time to evaluate the past cooperation and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the process. In light of the 2010 target, NGOs also find it outmost necessary to formulate recommendations for more effective future cooperation, where Pan-European cooperation provides the highest added value. The CERI activities within the Matra project were presented during the side event “Mountain Initiatives”, with ca 40 participants and during a side event about CBD, with a Director of EEA and some other key persons participating. The CERI poster was placed in the IUCN Biodiversity lounge.

Annex 3

3. Meeting of the Extended Bureau of the Carpathian Convention, 17-18 October 2007, Vienna, Austria

Based on the Decisions of the COP 1 to the Carpathian Convention (11-13 December 2006, Kiev) CERI was appointed to be an observer to the process of the activities of the Working Group on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity under the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee. One of the main tasks of the Working Group is to finalize and negotiate the Protocol on Conservation of Biological and Landscape Diversity (“Biodiversity Protocol”) to the Carpathian Convention. The aim of the meeting was to prepare for the Implementation Committee of the Carpathian Convention, discussion on the status quo of the Draft Protocol on Conservation of Biological and Landscape Diversity, consider the progress in developing a proposal for a draft Protocol on Sustainable Tourism and consideration of other recommendations concerning Protocols and to discuss and start preparation for the 2nd Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP 2), to be held 17-19 June 2008 in Bucharest, Romania.

More information: Harald Egerer, UNEP ROE, Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, harald.egerer@unvienna.org

4. Ukrainian CERi national network meeting, 25 October 2007, Lviv, Ukraine

The aim of the meeting was to contribute to the strengthening of the CERi network. As it was an extension of the training on Natura 2000 issues (Work Package 1, reported separately), it was a unique opportunity to meet up to 35 representatives of Ukrainian CERi members and also non-members (NGOs and research institutes). Current activities of CERi were summarized and the main issues prior to General Assembly explained. These were election of the National Focal Point (NFP) for Ukraine, which is also a country representative in the CERi Board and contribution to the CERi Development Strategy. The members were introduced to the both topics and had an opportunity to raise comments on the NFP and the draft document of Development Strategy.

Annex 2.4

5. 2nd meeting of the Working Group on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity to the Carpathian Convention, 19-21 November 2007, Budapest, Hungary

This was a second meeting within the process of preparation of the Biodiversity protocol to the Carpathian Convention. CERi is an observer to the process and delivering comments on the text of the protocol, based on experience and current activities in the region conducted within the BBI-Matra project. The objective of the meeting was to finalize the draft of the Protocol to be proposed for the approval by Conference of the Parties 2 to the Carpathian Convention in June 2008 in Bucharest, Romania. The Working Group discussed the comments raised by the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, CERi and REC.

More information: Harald Egerer, UNEP ROE, Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, harald.egerer@unvienna.org

6. 2nd 2012 Protected Areas for Living Planet Steering Group Meeting and Carpathian Network of Protected Areas Steering Committee Meeting, 22-23 November 2007, Budapest, Hungary

The aim of the 2012 PA4LP Steering Group Meeting was to update on the project progress including the Clearing House Mechanism, the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool, the CNPA logo and the Training Needs Assessment, discussion on the Scorecard developed by WWF International, project baseline data and the communication and advocacy strategy, further to discuss the workplan for 2008, EUROPARC Federation/CNPA Annual Conference in Romania, 24-28 September 2008 and the 9th COP to CBD. The aim of the CNPA Steering Committee Meeting was to prepare permanent arrangements to the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (CCIC), discuss an agree on offers for the host of the CNPA to be sent to CCIC to be considered by COP 2, CNPA Work Programme, Contribution of the CNPA at the 2nd Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention, the Swiss Cohesion contribution and the CNPA website.

More information: Harald Egerer, UNEP ROE, Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, harald.egerer@unvienna.org; David Strobel, WWF DCP, dstrobel@wwfdcp.org; Mircea Verghelet, Carpathian Network of Protected Areas, vmircea@pcrai.ro

Annex 2.5

7. A seminar on Phare project on High Nature Values in Maramures, 29 November 2007, Bucharest, Romania

CERi was invited to share experience with the work on ecological network in the region and participate at the seminar. The project aims to increase NGOs involvement in adaptation and

implementation of community acquis in the environmental protection sector, especially in the case of natural resources (natural and semi-natural ecosystems), which are characterized by pastures and mountain meadows in the rural areas from Maramures county. The project is implemented in partnership with local NGOs from Maramures and involves local administration and local communities. According with the project, the small network established between these entities in Maramures, called "Alliance for Biodiversity" will have to adhere to a bigger network functioning at European level. The participants were local NGO's and Landscape Areas representatives, DCPO, DCP RO and Rural Development Ministry representatives.

More information: Raluca Dan, WWF DCP Romania, rdan@wwfdcp.org

8. CERI Board Meeting, 5 December 2007, Brasov, Romania and CERI General Assembly 2007, 5-7 December 2007, Brasov, Romania

The project partly supported further activities aiming to strengthen the CERI network. These were two crucial meetings – autumn Board meeting followed by the Annual meeting of CERI members (General Assembly).

CERI Board Meeting

The objective of the meeting was to elect new CERI Chair, discuss in detail the upcoming General Assembly, the steps which are to be taken towards finalizing CERI Development Strategy and Communication Strategy, to discuss fundraising issues and Work plan for 2008. Jan Seffer was re-elected to be a CERI Chair. The Board decided to allocate larger space for the topic of strengthening CERI network in the General Assembly Agenda, namely to have 4 discussion blocks.

Annex 2.

CERI General Assembly

Apart from compulsory agenda items, the greater part of the Annual meeting of CERI members was linked to the issues linked to or supported by the BBI-Matra project. These were:

- 4 discussion sessions towards strengthening CERI national networks
- update on the state of implementation of the project
- working session "Contribution of CERI members to the development of a Carpathian Ecological Network"

More details are given in the section 5 Status per work packages, 5.4.

Annex 2.7 and 2.8

9. Link to the studies on landcover for Ukrainian Carpathians by Humboldt University Remote Sensing Centre, Berlin

The negotiations on the possibility of cooperation in acquiring the data essential for the development of the Carpathian Ecological Network with the team of Prof. Patrick Hostert were finalized. The subcontract for the work on GIS layers of the major landcover types including arable land, broadleaved forest, coniferous forest, mixed forests, dense settlements, open settlements, grasslands, shrub land, water and wetlands on the basis of available satellite Landsat images of Ukraine for the UA part of the Carpathians was signed during the reporting period. The work shall be available to the team working on the ecological network design in May 2008.

More information: Patrick Hostert, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, patrick.hostert@geo.hu-berlin.de

10. Swiss Cohesion Fund Preparation Meeting, 18 February 2008, Vienna, Austria

CERI as a member of the Steering Committees to the Carpathian project (Interreg IIIB CADSES, UNEP Vienna) and the Protected Areas for a Living Planet (MAVA Foundation, WWF DCP) participated at the Swiss contribution Preparation Meeting. The objective of the meeting was to identify common objectives and common or coordinated activities for project for the Swiss Fund contributing to implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity Programme of Work on Protected Areas in the Carpathian areas of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. CERI presented the status of the work on Carpathian Ecological Network and outlined priority activities for future, which were also included in the CERI Development Strategy, which support implementation of the Carpathian Convention, mainly the issues covered by the Biodiversity protocol.

More information: Harald Egerer, UNEP ROE, Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, harald.egerer@unvienna.org
Annex 2.9 and 2.10

Problems encountered and recommendations

There were no unexpected problems or events during the reported phase of the project.

Review of likelihood to achieve the planned outputs

The tasks for the work on both project components were clearly set at the beginning of the year 2007 (reporting period 2). They were also revisited and more elaborated during the The Planning meeting (Annex 3.1). The project teams are working according to these plans, which is being discussed and revised either during bilateral or expert meetings or teleconferences. Likelihood to achieve the planned outputs is in line with the Project Implementation Plan.

4 Objectives and achieved objectives

4.1. Long-term objective

“To support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention through the development and implementation of a coherent transboundary ecological network as part of sustainable development of the Carpathians”

The results of the project (gathering and analyses of biodiversity and socio-economic data and work to improve the organisation of CERI’s work) enable CERI to support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention through its position as an observer in the Working Group on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity. An immediate task of the Working Group is to elaborate and negotiate the Protocol on Conservation of Biological and Landscape Diversity (“Biodiversity Protocol”) to the Carpathian Convention. CERI is responsible for drafts of the Annexes to the “Biodiversity Protocol”).

4.2. Immediate objectives

1. Design a coherent transboundary ecological network

2. Strengthen the capacities of CERI to support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention

The work towards a design for a coherent transboundary ecological network included mostly activities covering collection of data based on which the network will be designed. A big part of data collection process was already concluded (mostly under the work carried out by the team of Work Package 2):

collection of the data on distribution of the conservation features in the three project countries, being the basis for the creation of GIS layers which will be used in the analysis to delimit core areas/biodiversity important areas for the ecological network, was finalized and evaluated

situational data required to provide the context for building the ecological network were collected

Collection of the data on roads, settlements, ski-locations, protected areas, mines, FSC credited forests and add the missing ski-resorts, rivers and railways was proceeding.

The CERI activities supporting implementation of the Carpathian Convention address the following issues:

Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape diversity

Building Carpathian Biodiversity Information System and the design of the Carpathian Ecological Network

Steering Committee to the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA)

Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWA)

2012 PAP project (WWF DCP)

CERI experts delivered comments on already available information on socio-economic issues gathered by Working group on Ecological Network Design (BBI Matra project) on a special meeting. This was opportunity for the CERI experts to contribute to the process of designing the network, bringing local experience to the regional level. The work towards the main outcomes of the project raises CERI's profile and makes it easier for CERI to negotiate with the Carpathian Convention and the member states about the need for a strategic and coherent approach to the protection of the unique biodiversity of the Carpathians.

The outputs of the BBI-Matra project (data stored in the Carpathian Biodiversity Information System) enable CERI to be an active member of the Working Group on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity under the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee. The aim of the working group is to prepare a Biodiversity Protocol to the Carpathian Convention. CERI delivered comments to the working drafts of the Protocol and participated at the meetings of the Working group in 2007.

5 Status per work-package

5.1. Training to increase the understanding of the NGOs on the principles and techniques of ecological network development and implementation (Natura 2000, Emerald, PEEN)

Activities:

1. Training needs assessment of network partners in the three target countries in the field of N-2000 implementation, responsible forestry and ecological network designing.
2. Designing training programs according to training needs
3. Assess expertise available in the non target countries to provide the training
4. Select the team of trainers from non target countries and if needed other EU countries.
5. Carrying out training program through twinning and workshops.

The activities within this work package do not fall within the contract. The teams working on the activities linked to establishment of Carpathian Biodiversity Information System and Ecological Network Design supported the Work Group I leader with the feedback and assistance with carrying out training program when necessary. During the reporting period, the training on Natura 2000 issues for Ukrainian experts from the research institutes and NGOs was held in October 2007 in Lviv, Ukraine. The report on the meeting with the Annexes is also available on CERI website (www.carpates.org).

5.2. Establishment of a joint Carpathian Biodiversity Information System (GIS, database structure, data storage, set up criteria for adding data and methodology) as a base for the development of an ecological network

Activities

- Assess existing data bases in the Carpathian countries
- Assess availability and reliability of biodiversity and geographical data in the Carpathian countries with focus on the three target countries.
- Assess capacities and capabilities of the focal CERI members in the three target countries to set up and manage databases and geographical information systems
- Improve the capacities and capabilities of the focal CERI members in the target countries to set up and manage the data base (hard ware, soft ware, training)
- Set up and agree on the criteria for compatible and harmonised data bases and information systems
- Decide on the information (priority habitats, key species) to be processed into the data bases.
- Agree on a structure for the biodiversity information system including the priority habitat types and species
- Agree on a joint methodology for collecting, analyzing and processing data on habitats types and species.
- Improve the existing GIS by adding land use information where lacking.
- Advice on the gathering of field data to be processed into the data base in the target countries harmonised with N-2000 development

The activities within this work package fall within a separate contract and they are reported separately.

5.3. Development of a design for the Carpathian Ecological Network

Activities

1. Gather and process information (boundaries, Land use, data on habitat types and species) of existing protected areas (local, regional national) pSCIs, SPAs, Ramsar sites, etc) into the Carpathian Biological information System
2. Analyse the juridical status of the protected areas, land use plans and other relevant plans impacting the landscape and/or biodiversity.

3. Review the existing national networks of the countries in the Carpathians (including result of the PIN-MATRA project 'development of a ecological network for large carnivores in Romania' and the PIN-MATRA project "Supporting the development of a National Ecological Network in Ukraine in the framework of the Pan European Ecological Network")
4. Assess the knowledge and implementation of N-2000 where relevant.
5. Design a provisional regional ecological network tuned with the PEEN
6. Identify flagship species and key habitats to evaluate the connectivity of the provisional ecological network
7. Elaborate management recommendations for the maintenance or improvement of the ecological network (core areas, ecological corridors and buffer zones)
8. Organise a conference with representatives of government and stakeholder groups (agriculture, forestry, nature protection, tourism) to present and discuss the proposed network.
9. Finalize the recommendations to the Carpathian Convention and the responsible governments to protect and manage the ecological network and to tune that with the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directive.

From September 2007 to February 2008, the working group on ecological network focused on the following activities which contribute to the Activity 4 Assess the knowledge and implementation of N2000 where relevant, Activity 5 Design a provisional regional ecological network tuned with the PEEN and Activity 6 Identify flagship species and key habitats to evaluate the connectivity of the provisional ecological network:

Collation of threat and opportunity data

The main activity during this period has been the collection and collation of the situational data required to provide the context for building the ecological network. This data is being collected to create an information base on the threats and opportunities for achieving the conservation targets in the Carpathians.

Data is being collected on road and rail networks (existing and planned), ski resorts (existing and planned), settlements and areas with likelihood of land abandonment. This data is being collated at Alterra in the Netherlands.

Data confirmation meeting

In December 2007, members and experts of the Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative (CERI) met in Brasov, Romania (Annex 2.13). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss threats and pressures for Carpathian Ecoregion based on the maps of all the data collated on the threats and opportunities. These maps were prepared in the preceding weeks and printed in time for the meeting. During the meeting, the experts broke out into national teams. Each team then scanned and examined the maps for missing data and inaccuracies. Information from the experts was compiled and discussed by the Work Package team and was collected by Irene Bouwma of Alterra. Irene Bouwma then made arrangements for the GIS work required to amend the data and prepare more accurate and complete information base. Based on the revision of these maps a new set of maps shall be finalized to be ready for target setting meeting in April 2008. These maps shall be 1:1 km, 1:200000 scale.

Contracting GIS and data experts

In order to supplement the general collection of the data mentioned above, a number of sub-contracts have been made to collect and analyze specific pieces of vital data and information. Data is particularly lacking in Ukraine. For most of Europe, for instance, there is land use data called CORINE. However this is lacking for Ukraine. Landcover and land use data is the most important dataset for the ecological network. Therefore a team in Ukraine and Germany have been contracted to compile data on landcover and produce a landcover map compatible with the CORINE maps which are being used for the rest of the Carpathians. This process included the purchase of satellite imagery and an analytical process to interpret these images and convert to useful data for the Ukrainian Carpathians. In addition to the landcover map, GIS-layers on location of roads, settlements, ski-locations, protected areas, mines, FSC credited forests and add the missing ski-resorts, rivers and railways will also be collected for Ukraine. These will then be compiled with data from all the other Carpathian countries.

Another important set of data is the location of Natura 2000 sites. As protected areas supported by the European Union, Natura 2000 sites represent an increased feasibility of successful conservation and therefore will represent the key places for conservation opportunity within the Carpathian EcoRegion.

The consultants hired to collect and compile this data will prepare the GIS layers in preparation of the next analytical stage, the target setting stage, of the process to design the ecological network.

Preparations for target setting meeting

In Brasov in December 2007, a project meeting was held to prepare for the target setting meeting. The work package III team identified the data needs, discussed the potential participants and identified the dates for the meeting. The meeting will be held in Slovakia during the week of April 21-25 2008.

5.4. 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

Activities

1. Analyse existing policies and strategies of national and regional governments towards the Carpathians
2. Analyse the long term objectives and strategies for the Carpathian Convention
3. Identify threats and obstacles for sustainable development of the Carpathians
4. Elaborate a draft strategy for sustainable development (with a focus on forestry and tourism) for the CERI to address these threats and to support sustainable development.
5. Elaborate a plan for CERI to maintain and improve the Biological Information System including planning of data gathering, monitoring, management and protection of the ecological network.
6. Propose an organisational and operational structure to secure the sustainability and increase the effectiveness of CERI.
7. Organise meetings and discussions to secure common understanding and agree on the future structure, strategy and activities between the CERI members.
8. Build capacity of CERI members to support the implementation of CERI's strategic objectives (monitoring, communication, awareness raising, conflict management etc.)

From September 2007 to February 2008, the working group on CERI issues focused on the following activities: a plan to maintain and improve the Biological Information System including planning of data gathering, monitoring, management and protection of the ecological network (Activity 5); organize meetings and discussions to secure common understanding and agree on the future structure, strategy and activities between the CERI members (Activity 7) and build capacity of CERI members to support the implementation of CERI's strategic objectives (monitoring, communication, awareness raising, conflict management etc.) (Activity 8).

a plan to maintain and improve the Biodiversity Information System (Activity 5)

CERI identified as a priority here to improve the Information System which is being built under the BBI-Matra project for Ukraine, Romania and Serbia, through its extension to the Western Carpathian countries – Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. The crucial action here was to search for additional funding for the activities in the remaining 4 Carpathian countries. In the reporting period CERI's proposal for building the Information System in the Western Carpathians was approved. The project „*Proposal for Western Carpathian Ecological Network as a precondition for effective cross-border nature protection*“ is thus a logical extension to the activities performed in the Eastern Carpathians under the BBI-Matra project, although the timing is not absolutely compatible (duration of the project is February 2008 – January 2010). CERI and its German partner IBN – Institut für Biodiversität (www.biodiv.de) start this common project supported by DBU – Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (www.dbu.de).

CERI Development Strategy (Activity 7)

The Development Strategy is a very important issue for the CERI. Discussions on this issue secure common understanding on the future strategy and activities of the CERI members. Under the BBI-Matra project, several meetings were organized with the aim to agree on a common direction for future activities. During the reporting period the National Networks had a chance to review the DS from May to December 2007. The CERI members were advised to be all very clear what they want to do within the CERI including fundraising, area of work etc.

A national meeting of Ukrainian CERI members (see also the section *Related project and contacts* above) was prepared in October 2007 in Lviv, Ukraine. Besides CERI institutional issues (election of the National Focal Point), the contribution to the CERI Development Strategy was also discussed. The output of the meeting was comments to the draft document, which was presented during CERI General Assembly in Brasov in December 2007.

The Development Strategy document was finalized during the CERI General Assembly in December 2008 in Brasov, Romania (Annex 2.11 and 2.8). The annexes to the Strategy (Rules of Cooperation, Communication Strategy and Fundraising strategy) will be prepared until the next General Assembly (Decision #2). In the course of this Annual meeting, there were several sessions, leading step-by-step to the approval of the final text. At the very beginning the topic was introduced by Henk Zingstra, who also gave CERI members a brief overview on the BBI-Matra project meeting that took place the day before the GA (Annex 2.6).

Build Capacity of CERI members to support implementation of CERI's strategic objectives (Activity 8)

CERI's strategic objectives for the 2008-2012 are:

1. contribution and influence to the achievement of a strong, focused Carpathian Convention; the Secretariat and parties to the Convention recognize CERI as an effective grass-roots, civil society partner for implementation and development of the Convention
2. support sustainable development in the Carpathians linking it always to the creation of a Living Carpathians
3. CERI is the recognized first-stop regional source of data and information and the centre of expertise for biodiversity and biodiversity conservation in the Carpathians
4. the CERI membership is an effective and efficient organization with the capacity to deliver on its objectives through its „5C“ approach providing support and equal opportunities to all its members

The activities supporting implementation of the Carpathian Convention address the following issues:

Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape diversity
Building Carpathian Biodiversity Information System and the design of the Carpathian Ecological Network
Steering Committee to the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA)
Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWA)
2012 PAP project (WWF DCP)

During the reporting period, CERI performed the activities leading to fulfillment of the above mentioned strategic objectives. Based on the Decisions of the COP 1 to the Carpathian Convention (11-13 December 2006, Kiev) CERI was appointed to be an observer to the activities of the Working Group on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity under the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee. The Working Group's task is to finalize and negotiate the Protocol on Conservation of Biological and Landscape Diversity ("Biodiversity Protocol") to the Carpathian Convention. The outputs of the BBI-Matra project (data stored in the Carpathian Biodiversity Information System) could potentially become a part of the annexes of the draft "Biodiversity Protocol". The annual CERI meeting – General Assembly enabled to build capacity of CERI members on the stage of the development of the Biodiversity Protocol.

Annex 2.12

CERI is the member of the Steering Group to the 2012 Protected Areas Programme – the Carpathian Mountain Region. The objectives of the project is to establish a mechanism to drive, support and coordinate the implementation of the PoWPA's, ensure that Carpathian Protected Areas are supported by a network of skilled professional practitioners, increase participation of key stakeholders, ensure that critical gaps in the Protected Area network are filled and improve capacity for the valuation of Protected Area goods and services and for cross-sectoral planning for effective management and benefit realization as well as increase public awareness. The main

elements of the 1st meeting were summarized in the previous progress report. At the 2nd meeting, held 22-23 November 2007 in Budapest, CERI contributed to the Clearing House Mechanism, the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool, the CNPA logo and the Training Needs Assessment, discussion on the Scorecard developed by WWF International, project baseline data and the communication and advocacy strategy, further to discuss the work plan for 2008, EUROPARC Federation/CNPA Annual Conference in Romania, 24-28 September 2008 and the 9th COP to CBD.

To build the capacity of CERI members in the topic of regional data sources and information on biodiversity, the National Focal Point for Slovakia, being Daphne – Institute of Applied Ecology, organized the first database and GIS training for CERI members. This activity is, however, reported in detail separately (Activity report for Daphne).

Regularly updated CERI website contributes to building capacity of CERI members on strategic issues. Currently, a separate site on the BBI-Matra project was launched (http://www.carpates.org/matra_index.html), bringing all the outputs on biodiversity issues which were done within the project.

6 Planned results

- Increased understanding of the NGOs on the principles and techniques of ecological network development and implementation (Natura 2000, Emerald, PEEN)

The progress is evaluated in the separate report.

- A joint Carpathian Biodiversity Information System (GIS, database structure, data storage, set up criteria for adding data and methodology)

The progress is evaluated in the separate report.

- Concept for a Carpathian ecological network based on an analysis of existing protected areas, (p)SCIs and SPAs and other priority areas (incl. high conservation value forests) 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 collection of socio-economic issues (roads, railways, ski-resorts, urban growth and land abandonment) is in its final phase and shall be closed prior to the end of April 2008. The Carpathian Biodiversity Information Team suggested three approaches for selection of flagship conservation features for the ecological network design. Both datasets (biodiversity features – species and habitats and socio-economic issues) will be ready for the target setting meeting in April 2008, where the first analyses to get the interactive map with zonation of the project area, will be carried out. Further iterations of the map and comments are foreseen for autumn 2008.

The activities are in line with the updated Project Implementation Plan.

- Strengthened 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.

The project activities supported four strategic objectives of CERI defined in the CERI Development Strategy. Capacities of CERI members were increased in the field of Natura 2000 issues, biodiversity conservation, Carpathian Convention and communication.

The activities are in line with the updated Project Implementation Plan.

7 Communication

➤ Web-site

The CERI web site (www.carpates.org) is regularly updated, bringing documents relevant to the project (concise/narrative versions of the biannual reports, minutes from the meetings, presentations, photo gallery, general descriptions) are accessible for the visitors. The website was supplemented with a separate subsite on the BBI-Matra project (http://www.carpates.org/matra_index.html).

➤ Leaflet

Project Management Team identified a need to promote the project and its outputs in the region in more detail through another leaflet. Next, the team outlined the main aspects to be covered by the leaflet and a timeline for leaflet preparation was set. The leaflet would be distributed similarly as the previous one, being introduced at the CERI side event at the COP2 to the Carpathian Convention.

➤ Brochures

The brochure is foreseen for the final phase of the project, promoting the outcomes and outputs of the project. First common discussion on the concept and contents of the publication is planned for the meeting on Design of Carpathian Ecological Network – Carpathian Biodiversity Information System, which is held 3 – 5 March 2008 in Bratislava.

8 Time planning

The activities under this contract are on schedule according to the updated time plan.

9 Proposals for changes (project interventions)

Budget amendment which was prepared during the previous reporting period was approved by the donor. Subsequently, an amendment to the CERI contract 2005/026 was signed (13 November 2007). An outlook of the activities for 2008 was discussed with International Project Manager and also the links of the activities to the budget lines. A draft of the proposals for changes in the budget was prepared. It will be discussed during the Project Management Team Meeting in Košice, Slovakia, 21 – 22 April 2008.

As already mentioned, CERI was successful in fundraising to secure the funds for compatible building of Carpathian Biodiversity Information System and consequently a work on a design for ecological network in the Western Carpathian countries – Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. These countries are not eligible for BBI-Matra funds any more. The project „*Proposal for Western Carpathian Ecological Network as a precondition for effective cross-border nature protection*“ is a logical extension to the activities performed in the Eastern Carpathians under the BBI-Matra project. The project is supported by DBU – Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt. CERI’s German partner is IBN – Institut für Biodiversität. However, the timing is not absolutely compatible with BBI-Matra project - duration of the new project is February 2008 – January 2010. It would be very welcome, if the key activities, e.g. the exercises on a computer software Marxan for ecological network design, a publication of the outputs of the work, could be performed together and thus cover all the area of a Carpathian arc. In view of this, a request for prolongation of BBI-Matra project to the donor will be elaborated.