

## **Development of a Carpathian Ecological Network**

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

**5<sup>th</sup> progress report**



**September 2008**

## 1. Executive summary

The activities of the international, transboundary programme supported by the Netherlands government (BBI-Matra) under this contract are focused on establishment of a joint Carpathian Biodiversity Information System (CBIS) as a base for the development of a Carpathian ecological network in the three project countries – Ukraine, Romania and Serbia. The development of the CBIS is based on existing biodiversity data in the project countries, which are either published or distributed in non-published sources. Information threshold on location is an orographical unit and what is more, for priority species and habitats also more precise information (coordinates, polygons etc.).

## 2. Introduction

Position of this report

This is the Fifth Progress Report prepared per 1 September 2008 according to the Art. 7 and 8 of “*Agreement in the frame of the BBI/MATRA Project no 2005/026*” for the period 1 March 2008 – 31 August 2008. The report covers all the activities which were carried out during the reporting period according to the Terms of Reference Daphne of August 2006.

*Related projects and contacts*

### **Science for Carpathians (S4C) – Strategy Development and Networking Workshop, 27 – 28 May 2008, Kraków, Poland.**

The objective of the meeting was to define the current status of Global Change research in the Carpathians in specific disciplines, to draft a research strategy for the Carpathians focusing on topics relevant to the region, to identify potential partners for jointly developing research proposals and projects on Global Change impacts in the Carpathian mountains and to establish an active S4C Network. To day outputs related to the Carpathian Biodiversity Information System were presented to 72 participants from Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Hungary, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and Germany, with a view to search possibilities for extension of the activities in future. More information on <http://www.carpates.org/news.html> and <http://mri.scnatweb.ch/events/mri-events/s4c-science-for-the-carpathians-27-28-may-2008-krakow-pl.html>. The meeting was organized by Jagiellonian University Kraków – Poland, Mountain Research Initiative, EURAC, Joanneum Research Graz, University of Applied Sciences Eberswalde – Germany, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin – Germany with a support of UNEP and Interim Secretariat of Carpathian Convention – Vienna.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention, 17–19 June 2008, Bucharest, Romania**

The Carpathian Convention is a framework type convention pursuing a comprehensive policy and cooperating in the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians. The meeting in Bucharest was the second one. The main agenda items were: cooperation with EU, other conventions and international bodies, scope of application of the Carpathian Convention, permanent secretariat arrangements, preparation of the Ministerial Declaration, arrangements for COP 3. For high level segment the main items covered: achievements and future of the Carpathian process, stakeholders message, adoption and signature of the Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity. More information on [www.carpathianconvention.org](http://www.carpathianconvention.org). There were up to 150 registered participants of the Conference from seven Carpathian countries and international organisations

The to date outputs of the work on Carpathian Biodiversity Information System were presented to the participants of the Conference during CERL side event and were discussed also during Project Steering Committee meeting.

## **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”*

Interim project results (gathering and analyses of biodiversity data) substantially contributed to the above cited objective mainly through the support to preparation of the Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity to the Carpathian Convention, which was adopted by the COP 2 of the Carpathian Convention in June 2008. The method how to support creation of the ecological network, which was agreed in the inception phase of the project, secures a coherent approach for creation of ecological continuum not only on the territory of three project countries (Ukraine, Romania and Serbia) but also in the remaining part of the Carpathian arc.

### **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 activities under this contract contribute to the first objective – “Design a coherent transboundary ecological network”. The team finalized collection of the data on occurrences of the selected conservation features (= plants, animals and habitats) according to the list. Overall project GIS expert processed the data, identified shortcomings, collected additional feedback from country experts to fill the gaps and incorporated it into the overall information system. The Carpathian Biodiversity Information System already at this stage is a useful tool which CERI, another beneficiary of the project, has in its hands to strengthen its capacities to support further implementation of the Carpathian Convention.

## **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.

GIS and database techniques are closely linked with the development of ecological network. They were identified among priority topics for the trainings during the assessment of training needs in the initial phase of the project. The working group on Carpathian Biodiversity Information System prepared a second GIS/database training, according to the plans. The preparation phase included the same steps as the one in 2007: preparation of a questionnaire on the skills, announcement of the training, identification of the participants, assessment of the expertise of the participants and tailoring the scope and contents of the training. The location of the training is Banská Štiavnica, Slovakia, allocated period 30 September – 2 October 2008.

### **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

1. Assess existing data bases in the Carpathian countries
2. Assess availability and reliability of biodiversity and geographical data in the Carpathian countries with focus on the three target countries.
3. Assess capacities and capabilities of the focal CERI members in the three target countries to set up and manage databases and geographical information systems
4. 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)
5. Set up and agree on the criteria for compatible and harmonised data bases and information systems
6. Decide on the information (priority habitats, key species) to be processed into the data bases.
7. Agree on a structure for the biodiversity information system including the priority habitat types and species
8. Agree on a joint methodology for collecting, analyzing and processing data on habitats types and species.
9. Improve the existing GIS by adding land use information where lacking.
10. Advice on the gathering of field data to be processed into the data base in the target countries harmonised with N-2000 development

The working group met on the third common meeting in March 2008. The aim of the meeting was to link the process of design the Carpathian Ecological Network in the BBI-Matra project countries (Ukraine, Romania and Serbia), with an emphasis on the building of Carpathian Biodiversity Information System, with the remaining Carpathian countries. Then the task for the national teams from Ukraine, Romania and Serbia was to present generated data, raise questions and clarify pending expert issues. The outputs of the work of the national teams was revised.

During the reporting period the working group delivered inputs to several pending issues. These were:

- make sure that the understanding of agreed habitats is common and clear based on short habitat description, final consensus will be agreed on November meeting
- prepare occurrences of agreed Romanian habitats
- complete the database on the occurrences of habitats and species
- add to the existing national databases extra fields for references, synonyms, description of habitats, for habitats which are partially endemic, names of endemic associations, which will increase reliability of the data and will give clear reference to the origin of the data (for both occurrences in orographical units as well as GIS layers)

Overall GIS/database expert improved existing GIS system and occurrences of the species and habitats in orographical units by adding improved land use information for lacking part of the Ukrainian Carpathians. He also prepared the grounds for the GIS/database training in September 2008. More information in the section *5.1 Training to increase increase the understanding of the NGOs on the principles and techniques of ecological network development and implementation (Natura 2000, Emerald, PEEN)*.

## **6 Communication**

- Web-site

The information on the activities under this contract are available on the CERI web site. Short information with a reference to the CERI website is places also on the Daphne's website ([www.daphne.sk](http://www.daphne.sk)). The CERI web site ([www.carpates.org](http://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](http://www.carpates.org/matra_index.html)).

➤ Leaflet

CERI published a leaflet “Development of a Carpathian Ecological Network”. It mediates information on the approach to the development of an ecological network, with a special focus on methods and concrete steps. It also brings a list of cooperating experts from the project countries.

The leaflet was introduced to the Carpathian parties and stakeholders during the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention in Bucharest. It is being distributed in the seven Carpathian countries, Alpine partners within Alpine-Carpathian cooperation as well as in the rest of Europe during international meetings, workshops and conferences. PDF version will be accessible on CERI web site.