

Development of a Carpathian Ecological Network

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

3rd progress report

September 2007

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 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.

2. Introduction

Position of this report

This is the Third Progress Report prepared per 1 September 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 1 March – 31 August 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.

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, being the 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 contributing to the design of ecological network included gathering and processing the information on boundaries of the planning units, land use data, habitat types and species into the Carpathian Biodiversity Information System, including the knowledge of Natura 2000 where relevant and pilot work on identification of flagship species and key habitats. The lists of conservation features were finalized, also the boundaries of the planning units were refined. The shortlist of the first priority and second priority socio-economic data was prepared, the data from Romania were collected and recently being processed (digitized). The process of gathering socio-economic data was initiated in Ukraine. A contact with the team from Humboldt University Remote Sensing Centre, Berlin was established to explore the possibilities to cooperate and use the outputs of the study on land cover change for Ukrainian Carpathians.

The activities contributing to the strengthening the organisational structure and capacities of the CERI included finalization of the document presenting the results of identification of threats and obstacles for sustainable development of the Carpathians, elaboration of the draft of CERI Development Strategy and work on CERI communication tools (CERI website, leaflet and draft of the poster). CERI actively participates as an observer in 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 project enables CERI to contribute to elaboration of the expert part (Annexes) to the Protocol, which supports implementation of the Carpathian Convention.

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

3. Project management

Project management issues (meetings, contacts, etc)

A plan for the reported period was partly outlined on already reported Project Management Team meeting held 8 February 2007 in Bratislava. It was updated on the Planning Meeting of International Project Manager Henk Zingstra and Local Project Manager Anna Guttova on 15 May 2007 held in Bratislava too. The objective of the meeting was to update on the activities, tune the workplan for 2007 and outline the framework for 2008, tune the budget (indications for reallocations), plan the next Steering Committee Meeting and presentation of the project at Belgrade Conference within “Environment for Europe” process. Main arrangements address the scopes of the four project work packages. The Minutes of the meeting are enclosed in Annex 3.1. Further project management issues were discussed via e-mails (Project Management Team) and teleconferences (Working Groups).

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 groups hold meetings or they discuss important issues on teleconferences.

Overall judgement of the project implementation process

The project is now at its implementation phase. In the past period, the implementation plan was created. To meet the immediate objectives – “Design a coherent transboundary ecological network” and “Strengthen the capacities of CERI to support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention”, the approach was outlined, resource experts and contacts needed were determined. Within this phase of data collection for ecological network design, the possible problems were analyzed and solutions how to overcome them proposed. To strengthen CERI’s capacities and position, the drafts of the most important documents were prepared. The implementation process is in line with the Project Implementation Plan.

Related projects and contacts

1. With its scope the project is supporting several international and regional treaties (e.g. Convention on Biological Diversity, PEBLDS, Natura 2000, Pan-European Ecological Network,

Ramsar Convention, Carpathian Convention, Carpathian Network of Protected Areas, Carpathian Wetland Initiative) as well as processes. One of them is „Environment for Europe“ series of Ministerial Conference, which brings together ministers, NGOs and other stakeholders to discuss environmental issues and adopt commitments for future cooperation and implementation. CERI participated at the International NGOs strategy meeting for the Belgrade Conference, held 1-3 March 2007 in Brussels to explore the possibilities for cooperation and at the same time to share the experience with the activities in the Carpathian region linked to the development of a Carpathian ecological network. The meeting was organized by EcoForum. More information enclosed in Annex 3.2.

2. To explore all the range of possibilities where CERI could contribute to the Biodiversity agenda of the Belgrade conference, The Ministry of Environment (Miroslav Tadic), Serbia, was contacted and subsequently provided by overview of international initiatives preparing their events (IUCN, 2010 countdown, ECNC). The event was discussed also with ECNC and Interim Secretariat of Carpathian Convention.

3. 1st Meeting of the Working Group on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity, 26-27 March 2007, Vienna.

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 agenda of the meeting included also the inputs from the BBI Matra Project which were presented by Project Director Jan Seffer and head of the Work Group on Ecological Network Design Mike Baltzer. Jan Seffer introduced the components of the project and explained the work on the Carpathian Biodiversity Information System. The Meeting agreed that the outputs of the project could potentially become a part of the annexes of the draft “Biodiversity Protocol”. Mike Baltzer focused on details linked to the concept and approaches to develop the Carpathian Ecological Network, being an interactive map with zonation and management recommendations, a comprehensive management tool for the governments. More information enclosed in Annex 3.3.

4. Within the project component on the strengthening of the CERIs operational capacities a CERI Board meeting (Board members of the seven Carpathian countries and International member WWF DCP Vienna) was held 17-18 May 2007 in Bratislava. The main purpose of the meeting was to work on the draft of the CERI’s Development Strategy, being the essential strategic document for the organisation. More information and documents in Annex 3.4.

5. Central and Eastern Europe sub-regional workshop on the review of, and capacity building for, the implementation of the CBD PoWPA, 17-21 June 2007, Isle of Vilm, Germany.

CERI was invited to participate in and contribute to the workshop with the Carpathian experience on the ecological gap analysis based on the on-going BBI/Matra project „Development of a Carpathian Ecological Network“. The main objectives of the workshop included review the progress in implementing the CBD PoWPA, increase in the capacity of government officials to implement the PoWPA and demonstration of the relevance of national Master Plans. The workshop contained

lectures, case studies, discussions and group work. New contacts with experts from the project countries (Ukraine, Serbia and Romania) as well as from the other countries in the region (Czech Republic, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Croatia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Macedonia) were established. For more information see Annex 3.5.

6. First meeting of the Clearing House Mechanism Work Group under the 2012 PAP project, 27 June 2007, Bratislava..

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 role of the Steering Group is instrumental and twofold – the group serves as an advisory to the Carpathian Project Management Team and ensures favourable conditions for the effective implementation of the programme in the Carpathians by engaging key partners and stakeholders in the project, e.g. national governments, national and international NGOs, intergovernmental institutions and bi- and multilateral aid agencies in the Carpathian countries. The Group meets twice a year to discuss progress made, comments on the annual work plan and specific activities and identifies challenges and opportunities.

The main elements of the meeting agenda were to define the structure of the Carpathian Clearing House Mechanism – main themes, to draft the structure of the CHM and discuss the issues of languages, hosting and administration etc. The meeting was also an opportunity to discuss the issues of the Matra BBI project and meet further potential co-workers from the Carpathian region (Romania, Serbia, Poland, Hungary, and Ukraine). More information enclosed in Annex 3.6.

7. Meeting of the CERI Management Planning Work Group, 1 June 2007, Brasov, Romania

To increase the capacity of CERI members on the issues where weaknesses and obstacles were identified, the Management Planning WG held the meeting on the preparation of pilot training curriculum on "*Participatory knowledge-exchange training in nature management in Carpathians*". More information enclosed in Annex 3.7.

8. A contact to the team of Humboldt University Remote Sensing Centre, Berlin, contact person Prof. Patrick Hostert, was established with the aim to search possibilities for cooperation in acquiring the data essential for the development of the Carpathian Ecological Network. Prof. Hostert's team currently works on the study of making landcover change for Ukrainian Carpathians. Since so far the CORINE land cover data are not available for Ukraine, the collaboration would be more than welcome.

9. Through the activities of the project on the Carpathian Ecological Network, CERI is an observer to the Steering Committee of the Carpathian Network of the Protected Areas (CNPA), a thematic network of mountain protected areas in the Carpathian region, established by the decision of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention 1/14. The objective of the CNPA is to

contribute to the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians, and in particular goals listed in Article 4 of the Carpathian Convention. CERI participated at the Meeting of the Working Group on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity, 26-27 March 2007, Vienna (more information in point 3 above), the agenda of which was also the Draft Terms of Reference for the CNPA. The draft was submitted for consideration and approval of COP1 Bureau/Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee. During the reporting period CERI supported also the activities linked to creation of CNPA identity and network of Protected Area managers and supporters.

CERI's ongoing work on the Carpathian Ecological Network supports the Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWI), which aims to operate as a Regional Initiative within the framework of the Ramsar Convention. The CWI facilitates collaboration between the Ramsar Convention and the Carpathian Convention after the Memorandum of Cooperation between the two Conventions was signed on 13 December 2006 in Kyiv. The Draft Terms of Reference for the Carpathian Wetland Initiative was also discussed during the already mentioned meeting of the Working Group on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity, 26-27 March 2007, Vienna.

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*

Further steps were done to proceed with the work on the design of the ecological network. These include:

- refinement of the geographical boundaries of the orographical units (= planning units), thus the project area is delimited
- finalization of the conservation features lists (lists of plants, habitats and animals), thus the biodiversity components are defined
- collection of the data on distribution of the conservation features in the three project countries initiated, 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
- shortlist of priority, socio-economic data to be collected, processed into layers and then used in the analysis to create the ecological network were finalized
- socio-economic data from Romania were collected and processed
- collection of socio-economic data from Ukraine was initiated

Also, to strengthen the capacities of CERI, further activities, according to the Project Implementation Plan, were carried out (threats and obstacles for sustainable development in the Carpathians, CERI Development Strategy, and communication tools).

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 within the contract. The teams working on the activities linked to establishment of Carpathian Biodiversity Information System and Ecological Network Design support the Work Group I leader with the feedback when necessary. During the reporting period, a preparatory work on the training on Natura 2000 issues for Ukrainian experts from the research institutes and NGOs was done. The CERI member The State Museum of Natural History, Lviv, explored the logistic possibilities in Lviv and surroundings as well as the participants. The aim is to gather and train broad range of Ukrainian experts, to bring together also new NGOs which are not yet CERI members. The training is planned for week 43, 2007.

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.

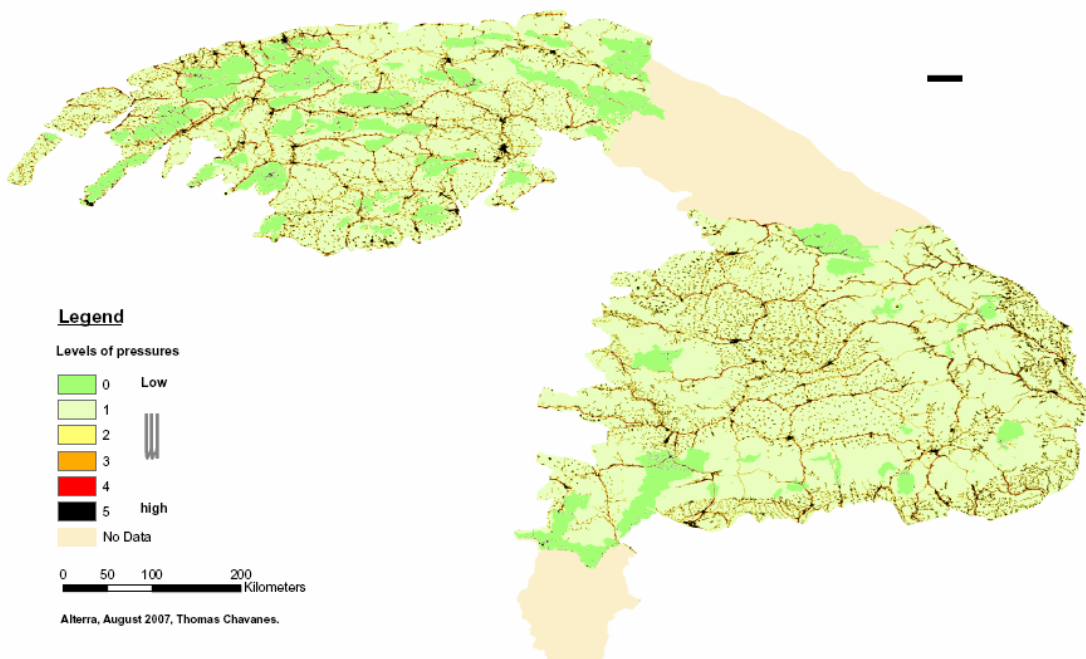
GIS experts in the project countries delivered refined boundaries of mapping units (orographical units). Based on that, the project area is delimited now.

Based on the teleconference of the experts of Work Group on ecological network and Project Management Team, a refined list of socio-economic data was prepared, where also the data collection were prioritized. The list of conservation features (the main targets and therefore criteria for the design of the network) was finalized and delivered to the team working on the design of the ecological network.

The collection socio-economic data to ascertain feasibility and risk of different ecological network designs is now fully underway and linked to the collection of the ecological data. Activities include:

1. Ukrainian experts were contacted to assist with the collection of socio-economic data from the project area in Ukraine.
2. Land use data were gathered for Serbia and Romania. Since complementary data on land-use in Ukraine does not exist, a creative solution was found. Ukrainian GIS experts established a link to the team from the Humboldt University Remote Sensing Centre headed by Prof. Patrick Hostert. The Humboldt University team expressed willingness to co-operate and share the data. This team are together now in the process of making a landcover change study for the Ukrainian Carpathians.
3. In addition a layer of the Carpathian protected areas was prepared.
4. All data from Romania has been collected now and they are being digitalized.
5. First draft of a "feasibility map" (Pressure map of Urbanisation on Biodiversity) which will be used in the analyses with Marxan is prepared. The collected data will be verified on CERI General Assembly, which will be held during the week 49 in Brasov, Romania.

Pressure map of Urbanisation on Biodiversity



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.)

The work on identification of threats and obstacles for sustainable development of the Carpathians was concluded. The outputs are summarized in the document "*Threats and obstacles for sustainable development of the Carpathians – a draft*" (Annex 4). The results are based on the expert feedback from the members of the CERI Work Groups – Management planning WG, Tourism WG and Biodiversity WG, a panel of biodiversity experts from the seven Carpathian countries – Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine, Romania and Serbia, who met 7-9 February 2007 in Bratislava, and the Third national report to CBD implementation. The topic is introduced by Environmental and socio-economic context, followed by the list of obstacles for management planning, threats being brought/expected by tourism activities (general threats, threats on social level, environment and land use, political and administrative and economic) and threats from the viewpoint of biodiversity experts, including problems and obstacles for biodiversity protection and gaps in the knowledge on biodiversity components in the Carpathian countries.

The document provides a source for development of further communication materials (e.g. leaflets, brochures, web) for CERI to disseminate its views and experience from the Carpathian region, contributing to strengthening CERI's regional position. The document complements CERI's work on exploring and promotion of unique regional biodiversity values. It is a tool to spread CERI's voice towards fair environmental policy in the region. It will also serve as a reference for further work on CERI's Development Strategy

Draft CERI's Development Strategy was prepared. Prior to elaboration of the document CERI's mission, vision, objective and organisational and operational structure, as defined in CERI Statutes, were revisited by CERI Board. Next, the members of CERI Board evaluated strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the CERI (SWOT analysis). Further, the Board members outlined CERI's responses to the results of the analysis (main areas of work, how to inspire members etc.) (Annex 5). The draft of CERI's Development Strategy (Annex 6) is undergoing a second round of comments by Board members and will be discussed in CERI national networks. The

Strategy addresses long term objectives and strategies of the CERI, takes into consideration identified threats and obstacles for sustainable development of the Carpathians. The Strategy aims to increase the effectiveness of CERI's performance in the region. Next important step towards the final document of the strategy will be to discuss the draft commented by the CERI Board in the National CERI networks in the Carpathian countries. The meeting of the Ukrainian national CERI network is foreseen for October 2007, week 43 in Lviv. Meetings of the other national networks are foreseen for the period of the CERI General Assembly in Brasov, Romania, foreseen for November 2007, week 48.

CERI Management Planning WG was very active in preparation of background information for the document "*Threats and obstacles for sustainable development of the Carpathians – a draft*". To address the areas where weaknesses and obstacles were identified and also to increase the capacity of CERI members, the Work Group held the meeting with the aim to prepare the pilot training curriculum on "*Participatory knowledge-exchange training in nature management in Carpathians*". External funds will be raised to conduct the training. More information about the meeting and training agenda is in Annex 3.7.

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 core activities including the collection of socio-economic data to ascertain feasibility and risk of different ecological network designs is now fully underway and linked to the collection of the ecological data. They are in line with the 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.

Good progress has been done so far in achieving this output. The activities are in line with the Project Implementation Plan. CERI already has the document "Threats and obstacles for

sustainable development of the Carpathians – a draft”. CERI also drafted the Development Strategy, being a plan for CERI to address the identified threats and obstacles and to support sustainable development in the region. Also the Communication Strategy is developed. CERI’s capacity were also increased through the communication activities reported in the point 7.

7 Communication

➤ Web-site

New CERI web site was finalized in June 2007, commented by CERI Board members July-August 2007 and launched in August 2007. It is available on www.carpates.org.

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.

➤ Leaflet

CERI’s leaflet was published a leaflet (Annex 7) promoting the BBI/Matra project, being a key CERI’s project in 2007. So far the leaflet has been spread to the CERI’s national focal points in the seven Carpathian countries, Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, National Focal Points of the Carpathian Convention and NGOs operating in Austria and Germany and the Yearbook of International Organisations, Bruxelles.

➤ Poster and hand-outs

A poster presenting the method which is used for the development of a Carpathian Ecological Network is being prepared. Currently the draft is commented by the work group leaders. Specific purpose of the poster is to promote the project activities on the 6th Ministerial Conference within the “Environment for Europe” process, which will be held 10-12 October 2007 in Belgrade. Along with the poster also hand-outs will be printed for the participants.

➤ Brochures

The brochure is foreseen for the final phase of the project, promoting the outcomes and outputs of the project.