

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) 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 Third Progress Report prepared per 1 September 2007 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 – 31 August 2007. The report covers all the activities which were carried out during the reporting period according to the Terms of Reference Daphne of August 2006.

Summary of main activities and progress in reporting period

The main activities falling within the reporting period include:

- Assessment of availability and reliability of databases storing biodiversity data
- Assessment of availability and reliability of data on biological aspects
- Refine the boundaries of the orographical units
- Preparation of the list of habitats
- Preparation of the list of plant species
- Preparation of the list of animal species
- Preparation of databases
- Start-up of gathering the data on the occurrence of the species and habitats

The activities 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. Further project management issues were discussed via

e-mails (Project Management Team) and teleconferences (Working Groups). The work on the activities falling directly under the contract was updated and tuned on the two expert meetings of the working group (February 2007 – Bratislava, May 2007 – Brasov) and via e-mails and teleconferences.

Working groups (overall conclusions on progress)

The working group consists of three national teams of experts. The national teams started to work according to the contracts in 2007. So far the teams held two meetings – initial meeting in February 2007 and interim meeting at the end of May 2007. Meanwhile, the national teams cooperate via teleconferences and e-mails. The third meeting is foreseen for the end of 2007 or the beginning of 2008.

Overall judgement of the project implementation process

The implementation process of the activities under this contract are in line with the project implementation plan. The national expert teams actively participated on the preparation of the agenda of the expert meetings, delivered the interim data to the date and actively search for further possible ways how to improve the implementation process and involve other potential collaborators.

Related projects and contacts

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

The project supports the Decisions of the COP 1 to the Carpathian Convention (11-13 December 2006, Kiev) on 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”.

2. 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.

The activities of the project contributed to the workshop with the Carpathian experience on the ecological gap analysis. 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, Macedonia) were established.

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

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 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, Ukraine).

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 the Carpathian Biodiversity Information System were clearly set at the end of the year 2006. The project teams are working according to the terms of reference and contracts, which are based on the Project Implementation Plans. 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 work under this contract (gathering and analyses of biodiversity data) enable the beneficiary 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 activities under this contract contribute to the first objective – “Design a coherent transboundary ecological network”. So far the team prepared the list of conservation features (= plants, animals and habitats) – the main targets and therefore criteria for the design of the network. The team delivered them to the team working on the design of the ecological network. The team started the second phase of the work – gathering the data on the occurrence of these conservation features in the three project countries, which will be a great input to the Carpathian Biodiversity Information System.

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 fall within a separate contract and they are reported separately.

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

In the initial phase of the reporting period the experts gathered basic data covering:
existing databases, maps and other geodata

recent literature on:

- vegetation
- plants
- animals
- water
- abiota

This information served as the background for the next phase – preparation of the national lists of habitats and plant and animal species. The results are enclosed in Annex 3.

In the next step the biodiversity experts were provided with the working lists of plant species, animal species and habitats. The list of plants included 515 endemic plants and 450 Annex II species. The list of animals included 51 focal animal species and 21 additional “focal” species plus 300 Annex II animal species (Habitat Directive only). The experts checked the presence of the species and habitats in the three project countries. The first country draft lists contained:

	inRO	inSB	inUA
vegetation	23	20	17
plants	42	12	0
animals	7	52	54
water	0	28	9
abiota	0	8	14
maps + geodata	22	8	10
TOTAL	94	128	104

	inRO	inSB	inUA
existing databases	0	7	1

	inRO	inSB	inUA
alliances	92	49	114
alliancesnatura	72+(3nodata)	26	79
alliances proposed	20	0	9

	inRO	inSB	inUA
plants	311 (incl. 61 Hieracium and 33 Rubus sps)	48	124
plantsnatura	37	7	9
plantsproposed	5	0	24 (1 existing + 5 new Annex II)

	inRO	inSB	inUA
animals	156	80+(3 need to be checked)	112+(27 ?)+(1 not in the Carpathians)
animalsnatura	104	52	89
animalsfocal 2007	62	40	62
animalsproposed	0	17	47

Further, the experts held common meeting in Brasov (Annex2), the purpose of which was to assess the first phase of biodiversity data collection, finalize the lists of plants, animals and habitats, clarify problematic/dubious/questionable entries, make an understanding of the next phase of data gathering (occurrence of the species and habitats in the orographical units and precise GIS localisation for priority species and habitats).

Meanwhile the GIS experts from the project countries delivered the refined layers of orographical units (being the mapping units) (Annex 7).

The final versions of lists of plants (Annex 4), animals (Annex 5) and habitats (Annex 6) and the refined layers of the orographical units were the building bricks for the country databases, which

were consequently prepared for the national experts. They are used for gathering the information on the distribution of the species or habitats in the orographical units. The databases and the manuals as well as the lists of species are also accessible on CERI website (<http://www.carpates.org/ongoing.html>).

An overview of the contents of the final lists of habitats (alliances) and species is as follows:

150 alliances (including 115 alliances within AnnexI habitats/45 priority alliances)

Country	num. all alliances	num. annexI habitats	num. priority habitats
Romania	89	74	33
Serbia	43	32	11
Ukraine	114	86	34

216 plant species (including 42 AnnexII species/5 priority species)

Country	num. all species	num. annexII species	num. priority species
Romania	180	39	5
Serbia	10	5	0
Ukraine	107	17	1

205 animal species (including 93 focal species, 126 AnnexII species/15 priority species)

Country	all species			focal species		
	total	annexII species	priority species	total	annexII species	priority species
Romania	172	110	12	75	13	5
Serbia	98	52	8	55	9	4
Ukraine	131	73	10	71	13	5

Summary of the activities done so far: the existing databases in the project countries were assessed, as well as the availability and reliability of biodiversity and geographical data in the Carpathian countries with focus on the three target countries (Annex 3). The criteria for compatible and harmonised data bases and information systems were set up and agreed, the information (priority habitats, key species) to be processed into the data bases were decided (Annex 4, 5, 6). The structure for the biodiversity information system including the priority habitat types and species was agreed as well as the a joint methodology for collecting, analyzing and processing data on habitats types and species. The capacities and capabilities of the focal CERI members in the target countries to set up and manage the data base was assessed. Based on that a training system was prepared. The first training was already prepared and will take place 27-28 September 2007 in Herľany (E Slovakia). The draft agenda and the questionnaire for the participants is included in the Annexes (Annex 8).

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.

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

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

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 planned results for this period are in accordance with what has been reached. The results include:

- Collected data on databases storing biodiversity data
- Collected data on biological aspects
- Refined the boundaries of the orographical units
- List of habitats
- List of plant species
- List of animal species
- Prepared databases for national teams for further work

The activities are in line with the Project Implementation Plan.

- 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 progress is evaluated in the separate report.

- 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 progress is evaluated in the separate report.

7 Communication

- Web-site

The information on the progress of the project is placed at the CERI web site. Also the interim outputs of the work on Carpathian Biodiversity Information System (i. e. final lists of the species

and habitats as well as databases) are available there. The new web site was finalized in June 2007 and launched in August 2007. It is available on www.carpates.org.

Other 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

A leaflet was published promoting the BBI/Matra project. 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.