



Report from the Stakeholder Meeting in the Czech Republic

Public participation and the Carpathian Convention

Location: 6th April, 2006, Vsetin, Czech Republic
Organized by: Institute for Environmental Policy in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment of Czech Republic and the City of Vsetin

Agenda:

- 09:00 – 10:00 Registration of participants
10:00 – 10:10 Opening of the meeting
Zdenek Postulka (Ministry of the Environment Czech Republic, (Ministry of the Environment Czech Republic, Department of the Financial Tools on Environmental and Landscape Protection)
- 10:10 – 10:40 The Carpathian Convention and the Czech Republic – introduction, international aspects and process of implementation
Jana Brozova (Ministry of the Environment Czech Republic, Department of the International Conservation on Biodiversity, senior officer)
- 10:40 – 11:00 Public Participation towards the Implementation of the Carpathian Convention – ANPED project
Barbora Safarova (Institute for Environmental Policy, project co-ordinator)
- 11:00 – 11:30 Nature and Biological Diversity of Carpathians and their Protection
Jiri Trezner (City of Vsetin Department of the Environment, head), Jan Pavelka (Reginal governmen of the, Zlínský region, Department of the Environment and Agriculture - Environment and Landscape Protection)
- 11:30 – 12:00 Cultural and Historical Heritage of Carpathians
Vladimir Sacha (Education and Information Center Bílé Karpaty- White Carpathians, expert)
- Discussion*
- 12:00 – 12:30 Coffee break
- 12:30 – 13:00 What Has Happened in Czech Republic within the Framework of the Carpathian Convention? – activites and projects
Tomas Ruzicka (Partnership Foundation, project coordinator)
- 13:00 – 14:30 Priorities, recommendations and benefits of the Carpathian Convention for the region. *2 workshops on the selected topics*
- 14:30 – 15:00 Next steps and common recommendations for the implementation of the Carpathian Convention - summary
Discussion
- 15:15 Closing of the meeting

Presentations:

Jana Brožová – Ministry of the Environment of Czech Republic, Focal Point for the Carpathian Convention

General information on the Carpathian Convention, process of ratification, maps and specification of the Carpathian region, presentation of websites related to Carpathian Convention, aims and Articles of the Convention, Convention bodies and other institutes (COP, Secretariat, Protocols, financial mechanism), projects and seminars supporting the Convention, priorities from the ministerial perspective (identification of stakeholders in the region, dissemination of information, political discussions, involvement of experts in the projects, negotiations, expert groups)

Barbora Šafářová – Institute for Environmental Policy

Basic information on the ANPED network; ANPED project on the Carpathian Convention – its aims and mission, links between international, national, regional and local levels, conditions for the implementation of Carpathian Convention, benefits of public participation, strengthening the communication between the stakeholders within the region, creation of tools for cross-sector cooperation, presentation of good practice examples, access to information; presentation of some of the stakeholders roundtable discussion outputs from other Carpathian countries; possibilities of establishing a stakeholders' network in the region

Jiří Trezner – City of Vsetín, Jan Pavelka – Regional government, Zlínský region

Introduction to the history of the Carpathian region; periods of deforestation – grazing, agricultural production. The presentation consisted of a photo slide show that captured the regional nature and a commentary to it - flower meadows, that have been preserved till today (by method of targeted management, we can contribute to the preservation of precious orchid species and insects); extinction and re-appearance of three large carnivores – bear, wolf and lynx; folk architecture – storage for hay and sheds for cattle and pictures from everyday life; examples of organic farming (meadows, pastures – attempts to encourage local farmers in order to preserve the landscape character); aerial pictures – examples of deforestation, pesticide maintained meadows lacking native flower species; natural forest Razula – remaining natural fir-beech Carpathian forest that is 200-300 years old); examples of spruce monocultures (the reason for planting them was to produce more wood, manufacture of glass) and others.

Vladimír Šácha – Education and Information Center, White Carpathians

Presentation of 6 micro-regions that can be delimited within the Carpathian region in the Czech Republic; the history of human settlements, folk architecture, constructions, historical sights and significant places; tradition of pasture (unique sheep raising, production of milk and cheese) and farming, cultural heritage – folk costumes, dances and musical instruments (some are part of UNESCO world heritage), traditional knowledge and skills - herb, magic and legends; crafts – lace work, honey cakes, textiles, needlework and embroidery; local terminology (“Carpathian dictionary“ – similar terms occur across the whole region including Romania); preservation of Carpathian heritage – folklore companies, festivals, museums, production of regionally unique products, restoration of traditional crafts; the presentation was concluded with musical tunes

Tomáš Růžička – Partnership Foundation

Activities carried out up to date in the Carpathian region in Czech Republic: presentation of CERI - Carpathian EcoRegion Initiative (aims, members), management of mountain meadows in the Carpathians; regional labels („*Tradice Bílých Karpat*“ – *Tradition of White Carpathians*, „*Vyrobeno v Beskydech*“ – *Produced from Beskydy mountains*); REC (Regional environmental center) and EURAC (European academy) Project focused on the analysis of legislation and institutional background in relation to the Carpathian Convention – outputs from the research projects realized in Czech Republic (e.g. main impacts on biodiversity and landscape, sustainable land use, integrated water management, sustainable forestry and agriculture etc.)

Discussion:

The discussion was held in the afternoon session. The main work was carried out in groups – workshops on the topics according to the Articles of the Convention. Instead of the three workshops, two thematic workshops were held covering the field of interests of the participants – the first workshop dealt with the topics according to the Articles 4 – 7 of Carpathian C (Conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity, spatial planning, sustainable and integrated water/river basin management and sustainable agriculture and forestry) and the second one discussed the issues relating to the Articles 8 -13 (Sustainable transport and infrastructure, sustainable tourism, cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, environmental assessment/information system, monitoring and early warning, awareness raising, education and public participation). The topics of Article 12 (Environmental assessment/information system) and Article 10 (Industry and energy) were discussed marginally due to the lack of interest of the participants.

The aim of the workshops was to formulate priorities of the region as seen by the participants and recommendations and suggestions for the next steps to be taken in the implementation of the Carpathian Convention. The morning session was concluded by a short discussion concerning the role of man in the Carpathians. It was stressed, that people have been an integral part of the land for generations and this should be preserved – especially in the valleys and outskirts. One participant compared the region to the “Hobitland”. The Carpathians are closely connected to humans and their shaping of the landscape. Therefore, we should let people live there and discourage people from moving to the city/close to work. Nature protection does not mean “expelling” the people from the protected area. Some participants mentioned that since the Carpathian region in the Czech Republic is so small, it is not the main priority for the Czech Republic.

As concerns the issues discussed in the afternoon session, the participants consider as the most valuable species: large carnivores, orchids, birds, non-vertebrae animal species, diverse meadows, native tree species wood species - yew, juniper, natural meadow complexes, pasture land – the most endangered, important are wetlands and wetland species (this concerns areas without pesticides). As concerns the habitats, the biggest attention should be drawn to natural biotopes, nature forest reserves – fir and beech woods, oak and hornbeam woods, solitary trees, commercial forests with natural stands, spring areas, small water streams.

From the landscape perspective, today the most important is a diverse structure of commercial landscape, non-forest greenery, conservation of geomorphologic elements, tree species – fruit trees, scattered construction, indigenous houses – all of those constitute the unique landscape character of the Carpathians.

At the end of one workshop, the participants were given a task to evaluate and formulate four main recommendations concerning what is the most valuable thing in the Carpathians, what are the main struggles and what is a priority, what should be promoted/implemented within the Carpathian Convention.

- Agriculture – biologic/nature friendly management, also in the forests, diverse management systems, solving the issue of allocation of subsidies.
- Preservation of the landscape character, emphasis on the spatial planning that shall respect the unique Carpathian phenomena, knowledge and awareness of the local culture, keeping of traditional knowledge and skills, architecture.
- Protection of gene pool - biodiversity, conservation of native breeds and plant varieties together with the complex protection of species and ecosystems.
- Giving advantages to the local people, promoting them – inhabitants of the Carpathians – e.g. a more favorable tax policy, support of the local production etc.

List of Outcomes of the Workshops

1. List of Priorities

Biological and Landscape Diversity

- a) A diverse and varied means of landscape and spatial management are to be emphasized.
- b) A return to the original management might not be feasible with respect to the whole area, but it has to be adapted to the current conditions.
- c) Where possible and efficient, biodiversity is to be maintained by pasture, cutting, felling and prospectively by further utilization of the biomass.
- d) We have to avoid implementation of a unified management framework –but flexible management methods should be applied, funded from e.g. Operation Program: Agriculture or Rural Development Fund.
- e) One problem identified was poaching (illegal hunting for large carnivores): survival of large carnivores is closely connected with the food opportunities and also unsustainable tourism – unorganized/undisciplined tourists disturb the large carnivores
- f) To use the biomass originating at the grass meadows in ecologically and economically sustainable manner is one of the biggest challenges that can be either solved by raising of cattle or building biomass power plants/ using biomass as an energy source.

Spatial planning

- a) To consider the landscape character (a specific urban term) in spatial planning
- b) There is no unified urban plan with respect to the Carpathian Convention

- c) Various lobby groups pushed through new activities that had not been regarded as “public interest” before (e.g. ski resorts)
- d) The advantage/prerogative of the area is its uniqueness
- e) To give emphasis to the Carpathian phenomenon, to support and preserve its traditional values

Forestry

- a) Sources of genes for original wood species can be nowadays found in the forests with a special function (non-commercial forests).
- b) Level of forest management is dependent on its owners – the issue of illegal logging.
- c) Another problem lies in reforestation and its legal interpretation (misrepresentation) – for the reforestation of the area of less than 0,3 ha the affirmative opinion of the environmental protection authority is not required (some owners of a forest land that constitutes of small areas take advantage of that). On the other hand, the reforestation in mountain areas can be seen as a measure taken in order to adapt the land to the global climate change.
- d) To prevent the adverse effects of reforestation, the areas should be proclaimed as protected areas (of a certain degree of legal protection).

Landscape

- a) Natura 2000 is a very good instrument to preserve biodiversity and landscape diversity. However, we should also protect the surrounding countryside where the protected species do not have their habitat at present but might have in the future (it requires an objective survey).
- b) For some parts of the region – e.g. Vsetínsko – fragmentation of land is typical, due to a high number of various owners it is difficult to reach consensus or come to conclusion; the fields are split into small “noodles”.
- c) Landscape is “inhabited” by cottages and cabins, which hinder pasture: cottage owners are intolerant to the crossing of their land, therefore they are severely constraining access to the land

Water and river basin management

The major problems are: straightening of water streams, concreting of river banks, continuous construction in the flood area, unsolved ownership and siltation of river beds. (This question has been answered in a simplified way and it was agreed on by all the participants.)

Management taking place on the landscape, sustainable agriculture

- a) Agriculture management is related to agricultural subsidies that are not always granted effectively – nature conservation and landscape protection have to comply with agricultural policy (and vice versa), it should not favour certain plant or animal species.
- b) The landscape is distorted by city people that spend their weekends there (or stay there permanently). They bring all the necessary things with them, build luxurious

“rural” houses and park gardens with features that do not reflect the traditional ones (= houses for life to be inhabited by generations).

Sustainable tourism

- a) The need to join the support to tourism with specific interests of the protected areas.
- b) The European funds are ignoring the poor (as they require large sums to be provided by the contractor) – they should be used more broadly.
- c) Tourism as such is heavily promoted but insufficiently regulated.
- d) The region focuses on the tourism, on the other side it does not know how to manage it – it is not able to attract more tourists and offer high quality services.
- e) The natives do not understand how the tourism can make their lives better.
- f) Cultural tourism – the potential for cultural activities and projects is high and evident (does not have to be searched).
- g) Criticism of the current state – tourism is presented in its “harsh” form, most of the natives get used to keeping the traditions as a means of entertainment for the tourists (not for the sake of it); if the tourists lose interest in it, the tradition vanishes - if practiced, it lacks spontaneity, it is preformed for commercial purposes and adjusted to be more attractive the tourists (artificial elements) (e.g. Vlčnov – kings’ ride).
- h) Visitors to the Carpathian mountain range do not recognize the region naturally (as in the Alps); the promotion should be oriented towards the presentation of unique Carpathian features/habits (through Carpathian centres); on the other hand, massive promotion can transform the region into “Disneyland”; Euro-pattern is gradually affecting everything – it is dangerous.

Awareness raising, education and public participation

- a) Carpathian heritage has been nowadays artificially split into natural and cultural (development has to be perceived within the content), topics that are cross-resort are problematic in a long-run, although there are symbols of interconnection (e.g. embroidery ornaments that symbolize flowers – this can be taken as an example of how to explain the relationship to children)
- b) The term “Carpathians” is not well-known and understood; it is not being used. Czech people have low awareness of what it is. (They associate it either with “Small Carpathians” or “White Carpathians” but not with the region as a whole; they do not understand the context – the relationships and differences from other geomorphologic regions.)
- c) It is necessary to make people aware of how the Carpathian region is connected to the place where they live (they will be thrilled and fascinated).

Cultural heritage and traditional knowledge

- a) People who wish to keep the traditions do not have information or access to information on what is traditional and indigenous. Therefore, they adopt and distribute elements that are artificial without knowing it. It would be appropriate to create tools and instruments to make people aware of what is “of Carpathian origin” (e.g. a manual for craftsmen that would explain traditional regional ornaments on the houses). Ethnographic promotion is desperately low.

Transport and infrastructure

Heavy transit (through highways) is endangering corridors for migration of large carnivores.

2. List of recommendations

Conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity

- a) Development of rural areas and preservation of small municipalities, diverse and various ways of management, emphasis on the preservation of the landscape character
- b) Conservation of gene resources, indigenous plant varieties and breeds, that make up the Carpathian phenomena – it is closely related to the support of research.

Spatial planning

- a) Creation of a common methodology – setting of generally binding limits that would be incorporated in regional urban plans etc. especially at the level of municipalities
- b) To start using the urban plans as an effective instrument – they are changing into softer and softer instruments allowing for a number of exemptions

Water/river basin management

- a) Removal of obstacles and barriers from water streams – technical adjustments
- b) Water/river basin recovery (the term is understood in a different way by Ministry of the Environment than by Ministry of Agriculture), flora at river banks
- c) Solving the issue of expropriated or state purchased land (property ownership, where to carry out the recovery, the issue of compensation)
- d) Protection of wetlands
- e) Protection of river floodplains

Forestry

It is possible/legal to declare private specially protected areas - where to get money to buy such land?

Primary issue is to preserve the typical landscape character and the diverse management systems (pasture in the forests is neither a priority nor a necessity).

Sustainable tourism

- a) Should be developed in such a manner that would be beneficial to the natives (without disturbing their lives)
- b) Realize actions that would present prospective projects and assist people in fundraising (e.g. to raise money concerning the development of tourist services instead of building a roller coaster)
- c) It is desirable to support agro-tourism (“soft” tourism in rural areas) – there are no existing structures as i.e. in France and “small” agriculture that should be established - at the regional level (in case we found functioning structures in Hungary or Poland, Czech representatives should learn from them)

- d) Strengthening of landscape and agricultural feeling/perception
- e) Spontaneous and humorous projects are a well-evaluated trend (e.g. Valašsko kingdom, Bofetice republic) – they should be developed further in a cooperative approach

Cultural heritage and traditional knowledge

- a) It is better to support small and spontaneous projects or happenings (e.g. small feasts and exhibitions, nature walks, musicians, birthday celebrations etc), open them to the public and support them economically (entrance fee can be a discouraging factor), the support does not have to constitute of financial resources, it can be material (rent of a car, stands or a stage) – people do not have enough money to finance it and municipalities have different allocation priorities
- b) The happenings should serve as a means of raising awareness (both small and big ones) – e.g. people can learn traditional dances, try pottery or other crafts, the education should be focused on children; it is better to support activities that involve the public and require active participation (instead of passive watching) – such actions are a bridge between the stage and the audience – people come and participate in the event (and create something themselves).
- c) Also, a cultural program/strategy for the support of traditional culture should be elaborated – natural areas should be mapped and delimited (with respect to the vitality of the folk art – it is changing in time), support should be differentiated in form and ways – both options are inadvisable: either to support a few privileged activities or to subsidize the whole resort/field – some actions can be spoilt with financial inflow, some do not have ambitions to expand to the general public)
- d) Where the traditions are diminishing, they should be brought back to life and to the people.

Awareness raising, education and public participation

- a) It is necessary to preserve and build awareness of the cultural and traditional heritage and environmental awareness that are both connected together as a common heritage of our ancestors.
- b) From a landscape point of view, the aesthetic aspects and small details should be stressed, where its value lies.
- c) Information should be presented in a different form to the tourists than to the natives who can disseminate the knowledge among the visitors to the region.
- d) It is much more difficult to refer to the local people and get their attention and interest (to get “under their skin”) – individual approach adapted to various characters should be chosen – it is known to the local experts – all the activities should be subtle.
- e) There is a high potential seen at folklore festivals and companies – most of the participants are young (if we educate them and broaden their perspective, people will accept it) – e.g. a traveling exhibition of the folklore and the traditions can be presented at the festivals and folk events.

To present the idea of Carpathian Convention: We are global, because we have focused at something that is very local.

Management taking place on the landscape, sustainable agriculture

- a) To prefer sustainable methods of management, diverse management means, support of agro-environmental schemes, organic agriculture, support of local products and bio-products, preservation and restoration of traditional methods of management, conservation of traditional breeds and plant varieties
- b) It is necessary to set out and support in a long-term specific methods of landscape management - e.g. raising of cattle (the question is, whether it is competitive; in the opinion of the participants, cattle is a natural part of the landscape)
- c) The management should be profitable for the natives/local people.
- d) In the Carpathians, there is a high production of biomass that could be used as an energy source

Next steps identified by the group

- a) There is a call for institutions that would manage the flow of financial resources (there should be a Carpathian leader who would coordinate the project fundraising - whom to choose to be an expert guarantee of such projects?)
- b) The Carpathian Convention could improve the cross-boarder collaboration (it has been weak in both environmental and cultural fields up to date) and increase the financial inflow when compared to the current national resources; e.g. a project in collaboration with Slovak partners aimed at the improvement of comfort for migrating animals

Next steps for the project

The group of participants agreed to collaborate further on an informal basis. All the participants have an access to the list of all stakeholders and their email addresses. The list can be used for the distribution of information on the relevant projects, meetings, workshops, conferences, good practice examples etc.

There is an attempt to keep adding other organizations and institutions interested in Carpathian Convention to the list. Several suggestions concerning the organizations and institutions to be involved echoed at the meeting i.e. Czech association of nature conservationists, Veronica, National Network of Healthy Municipalities, Association of Towns and Cities of Czech Republic, Ministry for Regional Development, Forests of the Czech Republic and experts on ethnography). Other suggestions arrived after the meeting.

The participants welcomed the possibility to meet and exchange relevant information among themselves (representatives of various sectors) at the same time they proposed constitution of working groups that would focus on partial issues. It is assumed that they will be formed after the adoption of Protocol(s) to the Convention.

A concrete proposal for the near future is to initiate a meeting on the evaluation of implementation of the Carpathian Convention with representatives of the regions of the Czech Republic that shall be summoned by the Ministry of the Environment (ME). Participants of the meeting in Vsetín will be informed about it in due time.

Ms. Jana Brožová, (in charge of the National Focal Point) at the ME CR promised that she will endeavor within her competencies to raise money for the support and future work of the “*Carpathian group*”.