



Young Researchers of Serbia

Report from Stakeholder Meeting in Serbia and Montenegro For 'Strengthening Public Participation in the Implementation of the Carpathian Convention'

Background

The Young Researchers of Serbia joined the ANPED project 'Strengthening Public Participation in the Implementation of the Carpathian Convention' in September 2005. As soon as the contract was signed between Young Researchers of Serbia and ANPED, in October 2005, Young Researchers of Serbia started to plan the organization of the stakeholder meeting.

Contacts with the REC Country Office Serbia and Montenegro were established and several meetings were held in order to consider combining some efforts with the REC Head Office coordinated assessment project in the Carpathian countries, and to organize a stakeholder meeting for Serbia together. The Carpathian region of Serbia is rather small, just 0,35% of country's territory and therefore having two meetings organized at approximately same time, with mostly the same stakeholders (and in some cases, the same individuals) involved, was according to the REC, Young Researchers of Serbia and ANPED too much of an overlap. The Co-ordinator of the overall ANPED project also supported the hosting of a joint meeting. So, after the discussion with the REC Country Office and Head Office it was decided to organise the meeting organized together, and share the costs of the organization.

The first date date for the stakeholder meeting was set for November 2005, and the Young Researchers of Serbia started with the identification of key stakeholders and key themes for the region. A number of stakeholders was identified, and these included representatives of authorities, both local and regional, as well as from a national park in the region, industry and business and various civil society organisations from the area. The REC Country Office has also added some of the contacts to the list. As Serbia has never officially appointed National Government Focal Point for the Convention, contact was established with the Head of the Nature Protection Department of the Directorate for Environment Protection Ministry of Science and Environment Protection.

An agenda for the meeting was agreed upon by the Young Researchers of Serbia and the REC. After some considerations within the Ministry, it turned out that the Ministry wanted to be more involved in the organization of the roundtable event, and also make some new addition as to the agenda. Therefore a new date for the meeting was scheduled.

Summary of Stakeholder Meeting :

"Implementation of the Carpathian Convention in Serbia and Montenegro"

**Directorate for Environment Protection, Omladinskih brigada 1.,
New Belgrade, Hall of Protocols, I floor, Tuesday March 7th 2006.**

Meeting agenda

10:00 – 10:20 Opening of the Meeting - Welcoming Words

Dr Miroslav Nikcevic, Director of the Directorate for Environment Protection
Mr. Harald Egerer, Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention
Milan Dacic, Director of REC Country Office in SCG
Dana Carmen Romanescu, Manager of the Project, REC
Pier Carlo Sandei, EURAC

10:20 – 10:50 Agenda Item 1: Presentation of the Project and Review of Present Status of the Convention at the International Level - Dana Carmen Romanescu, Manager of the Project, REC, and Pier Carlo Sandei, EURAC

10:50 – 11:20 Agenda Item 2 : Information on the Implementation of the Carpathian Convention in Serbia and Montenegro - Snežana Prokic, Ministry of Science and Environment Protection, Directorate for Environment Protection

11.20 – 11.50 Coffee Break

11.50 – 12.35 Agenda Item 3 : Presentation of the Assessment of Political, Legal and Institutional Framework for Implementation of the Convention in SCG, presentation of the draft version of the Assessment Report - Jelka Isailovic Crnobrnja, PhD, and Rada Matic, PhD, Institute for Biological Research, Belgrade

12:35 – 14:05 Discussion

14:05 – 15:05 Lunch Break

15:05 -15:25 Agenda Item 4: Carpathian Region in Serbia and Montenegro, Identification and Presentation - Milan Bursac, PhD, Institute for Geography, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

15:25 – 15:55 Agenda Item 5: "Implementation of the Carpathian Convention in Serbia", Presentation of the Project for developing GIS - Nenad Robajac, EKOLIBRI Bionet (CERI FP for Serbia)

15:55 – 16:25 Coffee Break

16:25 – 16:40 Agenda Item 6 : Presentation of the Project: "Public participation towards the implementation of Carpathian Convention" and introduction to the discussion - Jelena Beronja, Young Researches of Serbia, (ANPED Northern Alliance for Sustainability)

16:40 – 17:30 Agenda Item 7 : Key Priorities for the Carpathian Region in SCG, Suggestions and Recommendations of the Participants - Discussion

17:30 Wrap-up and Closing of the Meeting

Summary of Discussion :

The meeting started with the opening words from the high-level attendees. The presence of Mr. Harald Egerer, Head of the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention and Mr. Miroslav Nikcevic, Director of the Directorate for Environment Protection, as well as Mr. Milan Dacic, Director of REC Country Office, Serbia and Montenegro, and Mr. Pier Carlo Sandei of EURAC, gave the whole event an additional dimension. The above mentioned persons gave introductory remarks, and joined the first part of the meeting. Their participation and the fact that the meeting was well attended showed that the government as well as other stakeholders, show a significant interest in the region of Carpathian Serbia.

Ms. Dana Romanescu, from REC Head Office and Mr. Pier Carlo Sandei from EURAC gave an overview of the REC implemented project, and the status of the implementation of the Carpathian Convention at the International level. Ms. Snezana Prokic, Ministry of Science and Environment Protection, Directorate for Environment Protection, informed the attendees on the status of implementation of the Convention at the country level.

After the introduction, the stakeholders were informed of the REC Political, Legal and Institutional Framework for the Implementation of the Convention in Serbia, as the authors of the Assessment Report presented its draft version. This in-depth presentation was very informative and was, along with the introductory presentations, necessary for the majority of the stakeholders – as one of the conclusions of the meeting was that there is a rather low level of knowledge of the existence of the Carpathian Convention.

The next presentation, given by Dr. Milan Bursac, from the Institute for Geography, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, re-opened some long-standing questions related to geographical scope of the Carpathian Convention in Serbia. It was rather significant that the representatives of the Ministry asked for this presentation : it seems that the attitude of the Ministry, with regard to the size of the Carpathian Serbia, has changed. It was stated that the geographical area of the Carpathians in Serbia, differs from that which was regarded as the Carpathians, when the Serbian Minister of the Environment signed the Carpathian Convention in Kiev. Geographically, the Carpathians are a much larger territory, and they also include some of the heaviest industries of Serbia. It would indeed be hard to expect that the regional development of a broader Carpathian area of Serbia, in the current economic situation of the country, could involve closing the mines, for example. Therefore, according to the Convention, most of the territory of the Carpathian Serbia is already protected – as it is a National Park Djerdap. However, during the discussion, the other geographers from the Institute also raised the question of the geographical boundaries of the Carpathian Serbia.

The representatives of the municipality of the town Majdanpek, pointed out that even in such a situation, that the Carpathian region is protected, there are still a lot of problems in the area. The territory of Majdanpek municipality is partly under the National Park administration, as it includes the Danube and Djerdap gorge areas. The other large part is forest, governed by the state owned public forestry company "Srbijasume". The municipality representatives maintained that they do not have real authority over rather large areas of the municipality area, and that they therefore are not able to solve many existing problems in the region.

The region is one of the poorest in the country, with high depopulation and unemployment rates. There is a potential for tourism development, but this requires some investment. Nevertheless, the municipality has started already to promote some of the most significant historical and cultural assets of the region, with some attractively designed promotional material.

The local authority representatives expressed their hope that the Carpathian Convention would help them solve some of the local problems and would bring some concrete changes. An example

problem from the whole region of the Majdanpek Municipality, including the National park Djerdap, is the disposal of communal solid waste.

The representative of the local NGO, Young Researchers of Bor, Mr. Dragan Randjelovic, presented some of the activities his organisation. They are working with CERI on a GIS project in the region, and are also active in the development of LEAP of their municipality (Bor), and are working on the project related to Aarhus convention in Serbia. He also pointed out that the area of Carpathians in Serbia belonged to the Green Belt region. The Serbian focal point for CERI, and their project in Serbia, ECOLIBRI, was invited as well to give an account of their work.

Mr. Randjelovic described one of the problems, the fact that from the three municipalities, the territory of which belongs to Carpathian region, the number and level of activities of environmental non-governmental NGOs is rather small. The existing organisations are less than five in the whole region, and they are all small grassroots organisations. He also expressed the hope that the Ministry would use more often channels such as the distribution list of the electronic network of environmental NGOs of Serbia and Montenegro, to inform the public of their projects in the area.

Ms. Tanja Nikolic-Petrovic of the Young Researchers of Serbia was even more explicit and asked the representatives of the Ministry if they would engage with civil society more in their activities. The Young Researchers of Serbia representatives asked about the official translation of the Carpathian Convention text into Serbian – as it can not be found on the Ministry's website. This, as well as the fact that this meeting was the first involvement of stakeholders since the Convention was signed, was felt could account for the low level of knowledge of the Convention, in the area in question.

Ms. Snezana Prokic of the Ministry, acting focal point for Carpathian Convention, pointed out that the Directorate are aware of the necessity to include the stakeholders more into the planning, implementation or all other phases of their work in the Carpathians. Public participation is still rather low in Serbia – so that is the case in the Carpathian region as well. However, as a representative of the Ministry, she pointed out that she considered the meeting as a stepping stone in the process of the Convention's implementation : she announced that the Directorate was very much looking forward to a similar meeting in the Carpathian region, to continue discussion and momentum experienced. She also expressed her belief that by the end of 2006, the Serbian parliament would ratify the Carpathian Convention – but in order for it to be ratified, it would be necessary to prepare an action plan for its implementation.

Priorities and recommendations heard from the participants:

- Increase the level of knowledge of the Convention in the Carpathian region in Serbia;
- Ratify the Carpathian Convention in Serbia;
- Publish the translation of the Convention on the website as well as prepare some other more accessible information on the Convention;
- Prepare an action plan to address some of the most urgent problems in the region and implement the Convention; immediately start with some concrete actions in the region to address problems such as solid waste;
- Increase the level of stakeholder involvement and public participation;
- Organise another stakeholder meeting in the Carpathian region with more stakeholder involvement

List of participants:

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