

BioREGIO Carpathians

BioREGIO Carpathians was a transnational cooperation EU project co-financed under the 2nd call of the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme, priority area "Protection and Improvement of the Environment". It had a total budget of 2,202,888.77 € of which the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) contribution was 1,872,455.45 €. In addition to this, the partnership benefited from the contribution of a partner from Serbia whose budget was 200,000.00 € granted by the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia. The project duration went from January 2011 till June 2014.

The project was aimed at enhancing the integrated management of the Carpathian protected areas and natural assets in a transnational context and thereby increasing the attractiveness of the region.

16 international, national, and local authorities, organizations and scientific institutions joined forces to contribute to the protection and development of the Carpathian mountain region. The seven Carpathian Ministries of the Environment were observers to the project. BioREGIO Carpathians was a flagship project in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and it worked in close cooperation with the Carpathian Convention, with the aim to ensure an adequate follow-up of the project outcomes at the political level.

The main outcomes of the project include:

- *The Carpathian Red List of Species, Habitats and A List of Invasive Alien Species of the Carpathians.* The elaboration of these following internationally recognized principles and criteria (e. g. IUCN Red List Criteria), was the task agreed by the Carpathian countries in the Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Biodiversity to the Carpathian Convention. The development of a red list of threatened habitats was a new challenge as the IUCN Ecosystems Categories and Criteria's still is a draft document.
- *Common Integrated Management Measures,* concrete strategic approaches and actions that can be implemented by one or more target groups, directly contributing to the long-term favourable conservation status of biodiversity asset. Within this project the following assets were assessed: forests, high nature value grasslands, wetlands and large mammals.
- *Ecological connectivity and continuity study.* Connectivity was discussed from physical, socio-economic and legal point of view. The analysis of connectivity was based on a GIS model completed by site visits in pilot areas. The visits aimed to validate the identified corridors and barriers blocking movements crucial for ecological processes (the species used for this analysis were included grey wolf, brown bear, Eurasian lynx, European otter, Western capercaillie, Chamois, European hare).
- *CIBIS Carpathian Integrated Biodiversity Information System.* A Memorandum of Understanding among important players have been signed which represents the willingness of the partners to share and exchange data developed or gathered across the Carpathians in spring 2014. Therefore, the existing Clearing House Mechanism developed between 2009 and 2012, has been extended and transformed into the Carpathian Integrated Biodiversity Information System and is being addressed by the project through a Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) set up for the protected areas in the region.
- *Transboundary management plan and pilot actions in three pilot areas: Duna Ipoly/Poiple NP, Iron Gates/Djerdap NP, Maramures/Carpathian Biosphere NP.* Common management measures and harmonized strategies are of high importance in case of transboundary ecosystems, where adjacent habitat types and nature values have to be preserved under different legal, social and economic circumstances. The Carpathian Region has several locations where bilateral nature management is crucial.

Recommendations for the future were grouped into three themes:

- *Measures for Ecosystems*: improvement of the efficiency of the ecosystem management for the Carpathian region; including of the concept of ecological connectivity also in local spatial planning; achieving appropriate hunting activity as a tool to preserve a near-natural forest and create the ideal conditions for the propagation of the widest possible spectrum of species.
- *Legal and Governance measures*: involvement of stakeholders to policy development and decision making processes; resolving incompatibilities between the national regulations of the Carpathian countries that have negative impacts on nature protection and biodiversity protection; improve the transparency and promotion of compensation mechanisms; adapt legislation to enhance the promotion of sustainable practices in agriculture or forestry, etc.
- *Economic measures*: adapt European funding mechanisms more specifically to the conservation needs of the Carpathians; implement the financial mechanisms for PAs;
- *Research and monitoring*: develop basic common monitoring indicators and systems that are compatible for the entire region; establish a network for long-term monitoring for ecosystems in the Carpathians, which will help to improve the access to data; set up a demand driven research approach, etc.
- *Cooperation and communication measures*: enhance cooperation between the different stakeholders of the Carpathian countries, for example by establishing networks (CNPA – Carpathian Network for Protected Areas).
- *Capacity development measures*: improve the access to learning opportunities in the region for different stakeholders; safeguard an increase in the ecological awareness;
- *Measures for agricultural management and infrastructure management*: infrastructures should be well integrated into existing ecological structures like stepping stones and linear corridors; adaptation of forest management measures in silviculture and harvesting practices can improve the habitat quality;

The following publications were developed within this project:

- Carpathian Red List of Habitats and Species
- Common Integrated Management Measures in the Carpathians
- Regional development opportunities for protected areas and natural assets
- Study on financial mechanisms and innovative economic tools for protected areas and natural assets
- Transferability of the BioREGIO results to the Dinaric Arc study

To find out more about the BioREGIO Carpathians project please visit the project website:

<http://www.bioregiocarpathians.eu/>

