

Report
of the Carpathian Wetland Initiative Workshop
Brezovica, Oravsky dvor, Slovakia
28-30 April 2004

Alpine-Carpathian Exchange Meeting about Ecological Networks

The French presidency and the former German presidency of the Alpine Convention proposed an exchange meeting in order to reinforce cooperation in the field of ecological connectivity between the Alps and the Carpathians. The meeting was held from 20th to 23rd September 2010 at Mikulov, Czech Republic.

The topic discussed was ecological networks, connectivity and landscape planning with regards to practical experience gained from landscape ecostabilisation components planning and effective ecological network creation in order to enable sustainable land use while being barrier-free to allow for plant and animal migration.

There is a huge emphasis on landscape connectivity, ecological networks, and ecological continuum in the Alps. Cross-border cooperation is needed in order to keep it that way and develop the same approach in the Carpathians.

The participants gained an overview of ongoing projects in Alpine and Carpathian countries and an incentive was given to create a similar platform for ecological networks in the Carpathians.

Further cooperation between the Alps and the Carpathians will be also developed through a common project based on priorities that were outlined.

For more information, please visit www.alparc.org.

The **purpose** of the workshop was to present and discuss promotion of the implementation of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands and the Framework Convention on Protection and Sustainable Development of Carpathians in the Carpathian Region. Specifically the workshop was intended to provide overview of existing regional initiatives on wetland conservation and wise use on different levels and specifically in the Carpathian region, to identify possible ways of collaboration, suggestions, gaps, interests, needs, priorities and ideas in this field and settle on further steps to develop the initiative and propose possible sources of funding for future activities.

Fourteen representatives of ministries, governmental organizations responsible for implementation of the Ramsar and/or Carpathian conventions in the Carpathian countries, the MedWet Coordination Unit, the Ramsar Convention International Organization Partners and the Daphne – Institute of Applied Ecology participated.

The Workshop was opened with a welcome by **Mr. Jan Kadlecik**, Director of the Velka Fatra National Park Administration (State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic), chair of the Slovak Ramsar Committee and coordinator of the project.

Mr. Jan Kadlecik presented the Carpathian Wetland Initiative and its links to Carpathian Convention (Articles 4 and 6) and the Ramsar Convention (Article 5, Resolutions of the last COP8, Ramsar Strategic Plan, Ramsar Work Plan for 2004). He also introduced the project on

networking of Carpathian protected areas and Ramsar sites, launched in September 2003 and funded by the Norwegian and Slovak Governments. This project aims *inter alia* at improving the representation of Carpathian wetlands in the Ramsar sites database, as well as assisting in the creation of the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA).

Mr. Zbigniew Niewiadomski (CNPA Steering Committee member, Poland) made an introduction to the Carpathian Convention and its relevance for wetland and river basin management, and to the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA). He explained the history and development of the Carpathian Convention, relevant articles on Conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity (Article 4) and on Sustainable and integrated water/river basin management (Article 6) and explained the structure and role of the CNPA, using examples and activities of the Alpine Network of Protected Areas. He also underlined the importance of the EU Water Framework Directive.

Mr. Spyros Kouvelis (MedWet Coordinator) presented the Ramsar Convention and its Resolution VIII.30 on Regional initiatives for the further implementation of the Convention. Regional initiatives should take into consideration the *Guidance* endorsed within this Resolution when launching and developing a regional initiative. He also informed the meeting about the history and experience of regional cooperation for wetlands – the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative which is of help to other regional initiatives. Its activities, tools and structure are inspiring also for the Carpathian initiative.

The **Ramsar International Organization Partners** and other stakeholders were asked to refer on regional and transborder cooperation on wetlands and river basin management and wise use within Carpathians, but only few of them could participate in the workshop:

IUCN Programme Office for Central Europe (**Ms. Tamara Kutonova**) spoke about their activities and regional programmes, especially Sustainable management of freshwater fisheries and nature conservation in Central and Eastern European countries.

WWF International, Danube-Carpathian Programme (**Ms. Suzanne Lieberman**) expressed their support to the new initiative as continuation of their previous activities within Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative.

Mr. Jan Seffer (DAPHNE) distributed among participants the information CD-ROM “The Status of the Carpathians 2001“ developed as a part of this Initiative (1999-2001).

BirdLife International (apologies for absence, Dave Pritchard, e-mail message of 28 April) – will do some consultations among colleagues in BirdLife organisations in the relevant Carpathian countries to decide the view on the Carpathian Convention and on the wetland initiative.

Wetlands International (apologies for absence, Chris Baker, e-mail message of 28 April) – is interested in this initiative and very keen to engage. WI is implementing a Dutch funded project on *Transboundary cooperation on Ramsar site designation and management on the Upper Tisza/Tisa River*, they are also involved in at least two other initiatives of relevance to the Carpathian region. There is the opportunity for cooperation with water management authorities in the Tisza/Tisa sub-catchment of the Carpathians via the Tisza/Tisa Water Forum on Flood Control. They will keenly await the results of the meeting and to hear of the possibilities for engagement in the future.

Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (apologies for absence, Harald Egerer, UNEP/ROE, e-mail message of 28 April) – the Interim Secretariat included already the option of signing a Memorandum of Understanding between the Carpathian and the Ramsar Conventions in its workplan and is interested in results of the meeting.

The Ramsar Convention Secretariat (apologies for absence, Tobias Salathé, Senior Adviser for Europe, e-mail message of 30 March) considers this a very important initiative with a great potential and will provide all possible support. Sub-regional cooperation and transboundary collaboration for shared wetland sites, aquatic ecosystems and catchment basins is a high priority in many parts of Europe, a way forward that can bring added value and efficiency to the wise use and conservation of natural resources.

Mr. Jan Seffer (DAPHNE) formulated possible attitudes to identification of important wetlands in mountain region and used example from Slovakia. There are possibilities to use existing information from Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative project, CORINE Land Cover, database of habitats (alliances), etc. Other sources can include lists (and “shadow” lists) of wetlands in the countries, and proposed was a simple information sheet on important wetland sites of Carpathians (using selected fields from Ramsar Information Sheet) – see annex 1.

Each **country representative** made the presentation on its information sources on wetlands in the territory of the country and in the Carpathians:

Mr. Zdenek Postulka (Czech Republic) proposed to consider including of the existing Ramsar sites out of the Carpathian Region, but dependent on its waters, to the initiative activities (Dyje Floodplain forest, Poodri). An example of the site of international importance in the Carpathians is a proposed SCI Skalicka Moravka floodplain. Attention was paid to the importance of stream ecosystems within Carpathians and to the large woody debris in the framework of integrated river basin management.

Mr. Andras Bohm (Hungary) informed about situation of wetlands and rivers network, designated Ramsar sites within Carpathians (Ipoly valley, Baradla – both of transboundary character shared with the Slovak Republic), and about nature conservation priorities. The national inventory of all Hungarian wetlands is to be finished by June 2004 and wetlands restoration is an important part of the national policy.

Mr. Zbigniew Niewiadomski (Poland) informed about collection of data for Natura 2000 network and potential for designation of other sites of international importance.

Other invited representatives sent some information by e-mail:

Romania (apologies for absence, **Mr. Iulian Nichersu**) – considers this event a very important initiative with a great potential and is interested in to develop the sub-regional cooperation and transboundary collaboration for shared wetland sites, aquatic ecosystems and catchment basins as a high priority as it is also in Green Corridor of the Lower Danube initiative.

Serbia (apologies for absence, **Mr. Milutin Pantovic, Mr. Aleksandar Hegedis**) – can take appropriate standpoints and contribute to further development of Carpathian Wetland Initiative.

Ukraine (apologies for absence, **Mr. Grigoriy Parchuk**) – has already 22 wetlands of international importance, but no one in the Carpathians. Last year Ukraine submitted to the Ramsar Bureau 11 potential Ramsar sites among which there is one in the Carpathians – Synevyr Lake (29 ha) in the NP Synevyr. There are other potential sites of international importance (transboundary wetland on the Tisza River, lakes of glacial origin in the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve, some mires).

Participants **discussed** future steps and cooperation in wetlands conservation and wise use in the Carpathians. These include **activities** perceived as the most important in the **questionnaire** distributed to the Ramsar Convention Administrative Authorities and relevant agencies, such as: wetland inventory, even if in their national reports for COP8 all Carpathian countries reported that they have a kind of national wetland inventory; identification and designation of wetlands of international importance; publishing common informational materials on Carpathian wetlands, their conservation and wise use; facilitating electronic communication and information exchange; coordinating and facilitating working group on wetlands; development and implementation of joint management plans; capacity building; organising professional training; staff exchange; wetland and river based strategies; establishing the Wetland Centre; fundraising etc.

The **needs** identified include: GIS on wetlands; funding for management plans implementation; visitor facilities; environmental education programmes; monitoring etc. Countries identified also their **potential contribution** to the common goals using their experience and designated contact persons for future communication and cooperation (see annex 2).

It was recommended to use the database of contact persons of the questionnaire or to identify two-three main partners from political and scientific bodies in each country, who will cooperate in future development of the initiative. The activities should be connected with EU Water Framework Directive and the stream ecosystems which play important role in the Carpathians. Future heading of the initiative should be specified in a **conference** with wider representation of governmental and non-governmental organisations, intergovernmental organisations and other international partners with a topic on the **status, inventory and conservation of wetlands in the Carpathians** (possibly in 2005).

Possible **other future partners** include e.g. the Danube Convention/Commission, Danube Environmental Forum, Tisza/Tisa Water Forum, UNECE Helsinki Convention on Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, River Basin Initiative, Alpine Convention and Alpine Network of Protected Areas, Council of Europe (PEBLDS, Emerald Network, Bern Convention), MaB Programme, International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions (Mountain Partnership / UN FAO), EUROPARC, EUROSITE, Environmental Partnership for Central Europe, ECNC, REC, etc. These should be identified by all participants contacted and referred to the project coordinator.

This initiative can be included in future protocols of the framework Carpathian Convention and such achieve its legitimisation and formalisation.

The initiative should be developed under the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas and the activities within this initiative should be based on the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2003-2008 with its **three “pillars” of action**:

- a) working towards the wise use of wetlands through a wide range of actions and processes contributing to human well-being through sustainable wetlands, water allocation, and river basin management, including establishing national wetland policies and plans; reviewing and harmonising the framework of laws and financial instruments affecting wetlands; undertaking inventory and assessment; integrating wetlands into the sustainable development process; ensuring public participation in wetland management and the maintenance of cultural values by local communities and indigenous people; promoting communication, education and public awareness; increasing private sector involvement; and harmonising implementation of the Ramsar Convention with other multilateral environmental agreements;
- b) devoting particular attention to the further identification, designation and management of a coherent and comprehensive suite of sites to complete the List of Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar List) as a contribution to the establishment of a global ecological network, and to ensure the effective monitoring and management of those sites included in the List; and
- c) cooperating internationally in the delivery of wetland conservation and wise use, through the management of transboundary water resources and wetlands, and shared wetland species, collaboration with other conventions and international organisations, sharing of information and experience, and increasing the flow of financial resources and relevant technologies to developing countries and countries in transition.

The **initial map** and **database** based on existing knowledge on wetland distribution should be developed as a basis for assessment and comparing of their status in future. The map and first database of wetlands of national and international importance can include sites identified in national inventories, using Natura 2000 and Emerald Network and national network of protected areas of wetland character (or with prevailing wetland character).

Recommendations

Participants of the Workshop on Carpathian Wetland Initiative welcome this Initiative and recommend:

- to Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention to work on Memorandum of Understanding between Ramsar and Carpathian Conventions to be presented as a draft to the Intergovernmental Committee in June 2004;
- to governments of Carpathian countries to provide existing database information, connected to GIS, of identified wetlands of national and international importance and wetland protected areas as an initial background for future development of the wetlands network, while the initial map can be developed under the project on Network of Carpathian Protected Areas and Ramsar Sites in the Slovak State Nature Conservancy and DAPHNE. The information should be sent to coordinator of the project (Jan Kadlecik, kadlecik@sopsr.sk);
- to governments to identify relevant stakeholders with an interest in and directly or indirectly responsible for wetland issues and to support their participation in the Initiative; such stakeholders should include intergovernmental bodies, international organisations

operating in the region, NGOs, academia, and economic actors. The contacts should be announced to coordinator of the project;

- to CNPA Steering Committee and Carpathian Convention Interim Secretariat to establish a Working Group on Wetland issues and to prepare terms of reference for such a Group in a framework of CNPA;
- to governments and all other stakeholders to identify funding sources for launching of the initiative, for preparation of the Conference on Carpathian Wetlands, and for long term financing of this initiative.

Annex 1: Proposed Information Sheet on important wetlands

Annex 2: Questionnaire outcomes

Annex 3: List of participants