



Sustainable Agriculture
and Rural Development
MOUNTAIN POLICY PROJECT



SARD-M Policy Assessments in the Carpathians

The Carpathians are one of Europe's largest mountain ranges, a unique natural treasure of great beauty and ecological value, and home of the headwaters of major rivers. They also constitute a major ecological, economic, cultural, recreational and living environment in the heart of Europe, shared by numerous peoples and countries.

The Carpathian region contains Europe's greatest reserve of pristine forest and is a refuge for brown bears, wolves, bison, lynx, eagles and some 200 unique plant species found nowhere else in the world.

"While the region is blessed with rich and bountiful natural 'capital', it also faces many threats including poverty, unemployment, unplanned development, over-exploitation of natural resources, pollution, deforestation and excessive hunting," Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The Carpathians are shared by seven Central and Eastern European Countries (i.e. Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovak Republic and Ukraine), four of which have already joined the European Union (EU). This increases the possibilities of sustainable development based on the rich natural, environmental, cultural and human resources of the region.

The Carpathian Convention Entered into Force on 4 January 2006

On 4 January 2006, the Carpathian Convention entered into force as a new international treaty to conserve the rich wildlife, wondrous landscapes and cultural heritage of the Carpathian mountainous region.

The development of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians began in 2002, the United Nations International Year of the Mountains and mirrors the development of the Alpine Convention which predates it. On 22 May 2003 in Kyiv, Ukraine, the seven concerned Ministers of the Environment signed the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians.

The Carpathian Convention provides the framework for cooperation and multi-sectoral policy coordination, a platform for joint strategies for sustainable development, and a forum for dialogue between all stakeholders involved.

"The entry into force offers a beacon of hope for the people and wildlife of this region faced with the pressures of a rapidly changing world..." Klaus Toepfer.



Performing SARD-M Policy Assessments in the Carpathians

The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians provides an integrative platform for multi-sectoral policy coordination, including sustainable agriculture within the scope of **Article 7 of the Carpathian Convention** aiming at promoting sustainable agriculture and forestry.

In 2005, as a contribution to Article 7, the FAO SARD-M Project and the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (ISCC) of UNEP Vienna agreed on performing assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of mountain policies, including social, economic, environmental, legal and institutional aspects, in relation to SARD principles, **in Slovakia** (a new EU member State), **Romania** (an EU accession country), and **Ukraine** (a country neighbouring the EU).

Based on these assessments an expert workshop titled **Strengthening SARD-M Policies for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (October 24 2005 in Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovak Republic)** was organized by UNEP-ISCC together with the SARD-M Project and Euromontana, in conjunction with the Euromontana Conference on "Integrated Rural Development in the Mountain Areas of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans" (25-26 October 2005).

It aimed at identifying common policy issues to work on at the regional level in the framework of the Carpathian Convention, including recommendations for a possible future Protocol on sustainable agriculture and rural development in the Carpathians.

The workshop was attended by 35 experts (i.e. representatives of government and civil society) from countries involved in the Carpathian Convention and from other European countries or institutions. The participants demonstrated a high level of interest in the findings of country and regional assessments, validated them and contributed to reviewing and enriching the SARD-M assessments recommendations, and identifying possible follow-up activities in the Carpathians.

Results and findings are not considered to be the final. They should be regularly discussed with diverse stakeholders in the Carpathians at the national and decentralised levels, in order to be utilized, incorporated into actions on the ground, used for further projects, supplemented and improved in a participatory manner.

22 Recommendations from the Workshop Participants

At the global level

1. To **use EU policy development** and accession process in order to create important opportunities for biodiversity conservation through the various EU programmes including the funding and promotion of agri-environmental schemes of the Special Assistance Program for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD)/Rural Development Plan (RDP).
2. Strongly recommended is **international co-ordination regarding border regions**, including cross-border protected areas, in order to assure sustainable development.
3. Development of **Protocol of the Carpathian Convention on sustainable rural development including agriculture and forestry**.
4. Designing of **National Development Plans** (NDP) should be followed by **including specific mountain issues** in accordance with the principles of the Carpathian Convention. Stakeholders should monitor and control the development and implementation of the NDP's in the Carpathians according to the Carpathian Convention and its future Protocols.
5. Promote **integrated cross-sectoral rural planning** and implementation of plans.
6. Strengthen the importance of **coordination between ministries** at national and decentralized levels.
7. **Capacity building of Carpathian institutions and stakeholders** should be promoted and developed. It should include an inventory of national institutions which specialize in mountain issues to increase regional networking and information sharing.

8. **Public participation** should be a prerequisite for many such planning processes and this offers (and indeed often demands) the proper involvement of stakeholders. **Awareness-raising** on policy and decision making processes **for civil society** should be promoted and realized.
9. **Divergences in development (EU vs. Non EU countries)** have **to be solved** through appropriate international frameworks – Carpathian Convention, Agenda 21, Bern Convention etc.
10. Promote and maintain **Carpathian cultural identity and diversity**.

Biodiversity conservation

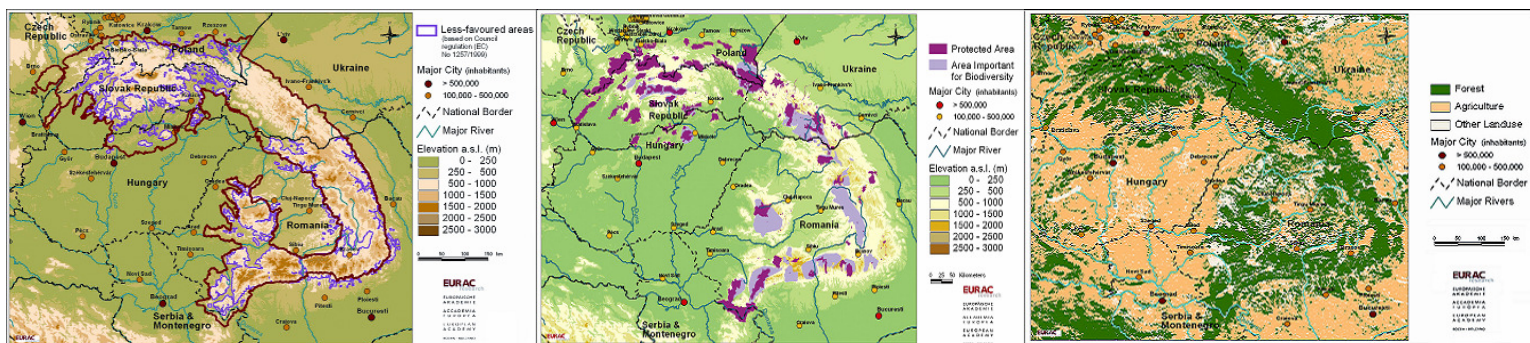
11. The **Natura 2000 process** and **integrated river basin planning** (Water Framework Directive) should provide the framework for a truly cross-sectoral rural land use planning and management in order to improve biodiversity conservation, water management and water quality.
12. **Payment for environmental services** should be developed and implemented (when they exist). Improve the financing of biodiversity conservation through rural development.
13. **Restitution holdings** (farmland and woodland) should provide an opportunity. Privatization is often seen as a threat but, in connection with woodlands, it could create a basis for greater community interest in woodland biodiversity conservation if owners can be rewarded financially for following good management practices.
14. Include **conservation of traditional breeds and species** into rural development plans.
15. **Prevent** introduction of **GMO's** into the Carpathians.

Sustainable land-use

16. Challenge is to **integrate the different processes and instruments** now determining land-use in the region. This means ensuring that the adoption and especially implementation of policies such as Natura 2000, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Water Framework Directive, forestry policies and social policies proceed in a way that they reinforce rather than contradict each other.

Income generation and diversification of rural activities

17. Incorporate opportunities for greater and more flexible support to local projects along the lines of the **LEADER programmes** of the EU, including promotion of provision of information and rural networks.
18. **Rural policies** should aim at sustainable farming, food security, biomass utilization, expansion of sustainable tourism and small businesses; sustainable initiatives in energy often with special programmes for high unemployment.
19. The Carpathian Convention and integrated sustainable development policies should stimulate **rural diversification activities** through the realistic marketing of rural services such as eco-tourism, traditional products in order to **produce "quality more than quantity"**.
20. **Small business development** is often linked to rural tourism which offers a route to eco-farming and conservation because a high quality environment is a precondition for the successful development of quality products businesses.
21. Greater emphasis needs to be placed upon **supporting small farmers** and removing the current favouritism towards large-scale, commercial interests by securing matching funding from other domestic or international sources of finance.



Workshop Proposals for Follow-up Activities

- **Contribute** officially to the **first Conference of the Parties** of the Carpathian Convention through the outputs of the SARD-M policy assessments.
- **Promote the outputs of the workshop** at the national level, at the Regional FAO Conference in June 2006 and at the European Commission level.
- **Expand the policy assessments** to the rest of the Carpathian countries.
- Support the **exchange of experience** and **dissemination** of information in various forums at regional, global and cross-border levels; set up information networks for consolidating the regional data and knowledge.
- Conduct a **needs assessment of the local institutions** in the Carpathian Region.
- Design Technical Cooperation projects providing Technical Assistance for **strengthening the cooperation between decision makers** at international, national and local levels in the Carpathian Region.
- Support **regional thematic task forces to develop cooperation** in alternative economic activities in the Carpathian Region – organic farming, geographic labelling, etc.
- Support **capacity building** through the training of **stakeholders** at **local, community and regional levels**.

Some proposals will be implemented through the comprehensive **Interreg IIIb CADSES Carpathian Project**, specifically its Work Package 3 regarding the promotion of SARD in the Carpathian mountain regions. In April 2006 the European Commission (i.e. DG Regio) approved the "Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians in the Transnational Framework" Project which builds on the existing structure of the Carpathian Convention, providing a transnational framework for the application of European Union policies throughout the Carpathian region. The project constitutes a partnership of 19 institutions from the 10 countries under the lead of UNEP-ISCC. The SARD-M Project will collaborate with UNEP-ISCC and notably support the expansion of the policy assessments to the rest of the Carpathian countries.

A Possible Source of Inspiration for Other Regions

"This legally living treaty is aimed at balancing the economic needs of the people with the need to conserve the environment. In doing so it can play a critical part in delivering sustainable development and offers a blueprint for other mountain regions in the world," said Mr Toepfer.

UNEP has recently received requests from the **South East European (Balkan) and Caucasus** mountain regions to support transboundary initiatives and cooperation inspired by its work on the Carpathians.

Within the **framework of the global Mountain Partnership**, UNEP is also sharing its experience on the Carpathian Convention with other mountain regions such as the Andes, Central Asia and Hindu Kush-Karakoram-Himalaya.

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