



Sustainable Agriculture
and Rural Development
MOUNTAIN POLICY PROJECT



SARD-M Policy Assessments in the Carpathians: continuation and figures

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, European bison, lynx, eagles and some 200 unique plant species found nowhere else in the world.

On 4th January 2006, the Carpathian Convention entered into force as a new international treaty, it 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.

According to the National Proposals of this Convention, 17.41 millions people are living in the area which has been recently ratified, or is currently in the process of ratification (161,805 km²) by the signatory states (*Resp (CR) Czech Republic, (H) Hungary, (PL) Poland, (RO) Romania, (RS) Republic of Serbia, (SR) Slovak Republic, (UA) Ukraina*); five 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.

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, speculation, corruption or thievery.

The present synthesis follows and completes a previous one (last edition: may 2008), whose recommendations and proposals are always relevant.

Background Information on the Carpathian Countries

Land use: **Forested areas** (49.2%) and **agricultural areas** (39.8%) are the dominant land use types in the Carpathian regions. About 82,000 km² of the Carpathian area is forested, according to SARD-M reports, which is on average more than twice as prevalent as in the national territories.

Employment: Generally, the employment rates of the Carpathian countries are comparable with those of western European countries, but these national numbers do not reveal the existing regional differences. There are large discrepancies in the proportion of employees per sector between the northern and western on the one hand and the southern part on the other hand. While in Poland, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Hungary and the Republic of Serbia, the service sector plays the major economic role, **in Romania and Ukraine Agriculture remains the important employer** (almost 50% in some districts of Romania).



Country	Total national inhabitants (Eurostat, 2006)		Carp. Country (National Proposals of Carpathian Convention territory)	
	millions	inh/km ²	millions	inh/km ²
CR	10.269	130	1.460	205
HU	10.071	108	1.770	184
PL	38.141	122	3.470	201
RO	21.587	94	4.870	70
RS	7.411	84	0.060	79
SR	5.391	110	3.800	109
UA	46.607	77	1.980	90
Sum	139.480		17.410	

Population: Wide areas of the Carpathians are **predominantly rural areas**. In Eastern Europe, they have shown an economic decrease and a strong underdevelopment over the last 2 decades. Generally, the South-eastern Carpathians are less densely populated than the Western and Northern Carpathians. Population concentrations can be seen in the wider valleys, the plains and in the densely inhabited northern area. The Carpathian Mountains of the Czech Republic and of Poland are the most densely populated (more than 200 inh/km²). But in general, the population density is lower in most rural areas, such as the mountain Romanian regions of Caras-Severin and Harghita, and in Serbia.

One entry point of policy assessments

Considering the scope of **Article 7 of the Carpathian Convention** aiming at **promoting sustainable agriculture and forestry**, 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.

Main findings

The political and economic changes in the Carpathian countries have had a significant impact on their administration as well as on the social development and agricultural structures in regional areas. All the Carpathian states are currently involved in a **restructuring process** that strongly influences legislative and political programmes and strategies. In the 1990s in particular, the agrarian sector was characterised by a **restitution process of private land** and the dependent interrelations between size structures, marketing opportunities, rationalisation, and the subsidy system.

With the **accession of five of the seven Carpathian countries into the EU**, the agricultural sector has been significantly influenced. The impact of the **European Policies (Leader +, SAPARD, CAP...)** is more crucial when compared to other sectors.

- Since entering into negotiations with the EU, the legislative instruments of the Carpathian countries have been continuously adapted to EU standards. At the present time, the **policy frameworks** regarding SARD-M are fairly based on: on Rural development, Agriculture, Forestry, Biodiversity, Nature Conservation and Environment.
- **Governance structures: Ministries of Agriculture** play an important role for SARD-M by designing and implementing the policies for sustainable development. They host various directorates, agencies and institutions responsible for operative implementation. The ministries dealing with Biodiversity, Environment and Nature Conservation play a major role.

However, due to a division of authority, **deep tensions** are preventing cross-sectoral cooperation. At present, inter-ministerial collaborations appear to be difficult. More generally, this lack of communication, of cohesion and coordination represents the most crucial issue with respect to the horizontal, vertical or inter-sectoral collaboration, from the ministerial to the local levels. A tense relationship is reported by all countries between the Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development and the Ministries of the Environment and/or Water Management. At-times, these tensions are partly caused by the division of closely-related or overlapping competencies of the ministries and authorities involved. Mainly, water management and water protection are thereby affected. Besides, different attitudes and sometimes even antagonistic priorities (e.g., high agriculture and wood production on the one hand and landscape and nature conservation on the other) may be a key factor for the discrepancies. In addition, an insufficient flow of information between the ministries is observable. This may be the reason for the late dissemination of information to farmers. Cooperation and transnational exchange of experiences are besides lacking too.

For the implementation and transfer of ideas coming from bottom-up activities, cooperation with local and governmental stakeholders is required. Thus the **establishment of trans-sectoral cooperation networks** could constitute a 'catalyst' to foster a free flow of information between national and regional stakeholders and agencies.

Permanent pan-Carpathian cooperation is missing between interdisciplinary networks or 'advisory bodies' either at national, regional or local authority level. In addition, a broader active participation with the main 'Carpathian' NGOs or representatives of universities and scientific institutes is absent.

Recommendations *(see also the first SARD-M assessment and its recommendations)*

1. Recommendations related to the Carpathian Convention:

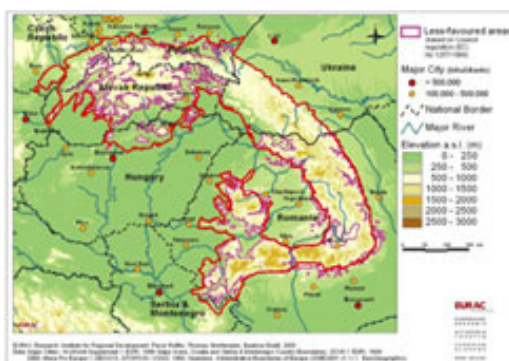
- 1.1 The creation of a Carpathian Research Initiative crucial aspects regarding the requirements of the Carpathian regions and their inhabitants.
- 1.2 Launching a Research Agenda, for a sustainable development focusing on innovations in the economic field.

2. EU related Recommendations:

- 2.1 The high level of effort and investments must be continued for the implementation of **quality and sanitary standards** in compliance with high European food safety standards.
- 2.2 The attractiveness of the Carpathian Region could be enhanced by installing **appropriate tourism structures** (accommodation facilities) that **respect sustainability**, and by
- 2.3 initiating **marketing strategies**. The focus must be put on the development opportunities of small and medium enterprises, agro tourism, protected areas/spas, so that Carpathians become one of Europe's most attractive destinations.

3. Policy and Process related Recommendations:

- 3.1 **Agricultural Advisory boards** should be founded for farmers, for administrative staff and other institutions in the mountain areas, and in line with sustainable agricultural practices.
- 3.2 Since the booming demand for sustainably-produced, high quality products exceeds supply: **farmers** should be motivated and **trained to farm organically**.
- 3.3 Maintaining **small-sized family farms** and companies could help prevent a decline in ancient and possibly **endangered agricultural species** as well as the loss of **traditional know-how** of production and management methods.
- 3.4 Supporting an economic diversification would contribute to new off-farm income possibilities.
- 3.5 The management skills and competence of **private forest owners** should be improved, with focus on a long-term forestry strategy, considering the sustainable, biological cycle-friendly and regionally-aware utilisation of forests.

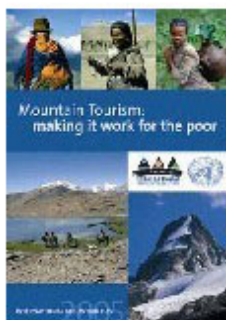


- 3.6 Instruments of forestry planning should be devised and harmonised at transnational level: this forested area of the Carpathians is both global and unique.
- 3.7 Maintaining and **improving infrastructure and public services** is one of the key factors behind economic development in rural areas.
- 3.8 It is necessary to upgrade the valuable **historical heritage** of the Carpathian regions.
- 3.9 **Stakeholders' participation:** the ownership and responsiveness of local citizens is a particular precondition; also the regional and local authorities should be given the ability to participate in the in the preparation and implementation process of policies. Research and training institutes, universities, agricultural and environmental organisations, and the media of all Carpathian countries, should be considered in this participative effort.

Proposals for Follow-up Activities at the Carpathian region level

- **A Carpathian-wide platform** would be useful for developing a suitable mountain-based approach that integrates policies, institutions and processes (PIP) relevant for SARD-M, as well as creating additional opportunities in terms of sharing information and learning. In addition, such a platform can serve as a body of credible information about good practices based on practical, real-life experiences. It would facilitate collaboration between research institutions, international organisations, NGOs and other groups of the Carpathians, and help to identify the requirements of a pan-European research approach. Also, and in line with Article 13 of the CC, the platform would be (partly) accessible to public information and public participation, and contribute to increased national awareness and action.
- This platform might be built in **cooperation with other mountain regions**, for example with **Alpine Convention** countries. This would enhance dialogue with international organisations and agencies engaged in fields related to SARD and forestry issues.

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