



MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CARPATHIAN CONVENTION AND THE EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY FOR DANUBE REGION – PRIORITY AREA 1b

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1. Preamble

The report from the European Commission (EC) concerning the governance of macro-regional strategies¹ as well as the EC report on the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)², have identified among various issues the need for strengthening synergies with existing bodies and initiatives.

The opportunity for cooperation and for mutual support of EUSDR and the Carpathian Convention in relevant fields has not been fully utilised yet. This comes despite the obvious potential for synergies between the objectives and the processes of the EUSDR on one hand, and the mandate, tasks and activities implementing the Carpathian Convention and its Protocols³ on the other hand.

It is agreed that an enhanced/strengthened cooperation will have a positive impact on the implementation of the objectives set up by the Carpathian Convention and the EUSDR. More specifically:

- Collaboration is needed to address the interdependency that characterizes the issues and challenges affecting the macro-region. Challenges originating in the Carpathian area impact strongly the Danube region, and vice versa.

¹ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic And Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Concerning the Governance of Macro-Regional Strategies COM (2014) 284 final

² Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic And Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Concerning the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region COM(2013) 181 final

³ Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity, Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management, Protocol on Sustainable Tourism, Protocol on Sustainable Transport

- Collaboration is in particular needed to face the challenges faced by the Carpathians and other mountain areas within the Danube River basin such as demographic trends, characterised particularly by the combined effects of ageing, low population density in the mountain areas and new migration models; and the high vulnerability to climate change and its foreseeable effects on the environment, biodiversity and the living conditions of its inhabitants. Challenges which have also an impact on the entire area.
- The character of the region is based on this interconnection between mountains and rivers. Among others, mountains delimitate the region, provide water to the river basin and host a special part of the macroregion's natural diversity. The role of the Carpathians is highly beneficial for the state of the environment and particularly for positive impact on biodiversity, water regime, and water and air quality of the Eastern part of the Danube River Basin. Collaboration shall aim at enhanced integration of the mountain issues into the EUSDR both from a conceptual and from an operational perspective.
- Collaboration may help to offer an adequate platform to enhance the participation of relevant stakeholder in the development of the strategic projects. In particular, it is also crucial to maximize the possibilities for inclusive transboundary cooperation of stakeholders from all the Carpathians, taking into consideration the already existing and long-time established networks in the area.
- Collaboration may strengthen the synergies with other EU Macro-regional Strategies like the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) or the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), seen the already existing exchange of knowledge and good practices among these areas and the invitation of the Council to ensure that adequate coordination is established among macro-regional strategies, in particular to ensure that projects and partnerships can be developed across macro-regional strategies as appropriate and where relevant.

2. Mechanisms for Collaboration

To ensure the coordination of all relevant activities of the EUSDR and the Carpathian Convention, this Memorandum builds upon already existing approaches and proposes some new practical mechanisms for collaboration:

- **Strengthening networks:** Carpathian countries shall strive to strengthen the network at national and relevant sub-national level through both the National Coordinators, Priority Area Steering Group members and the National Focal Points of the Carpathian Convention, relevant Working Group members and key stakeholders from private, academic and non-governmental sector. This would allow for a creation of a mutually supportive network of governmental, regional, local but also private, academic and non-governmental sector and stakeholders.
- **Closer coordination:** The regular information exchange, where not yet in place, between the EUSDR PA Coordinators and the Carpathian Convention and its National Focal Points, Working Group members and stakeholders will enhance the EUSDR implementation. The Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention shall be informed of and invited to the relevant EUSDR PA meetings and EUSDR PA Coordinators shall be informed of and invited to relevant Carpathian Convention meetings (Meetings of Working Groups, Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee, Conference of the Parties). Key documents (e.g. workplans, draft strategies or guidelines) shall be exchanged.
- **Contribution to the alignment of funding:** The EUSDR can support measures and actions of joint interest inter alia through taking into account the Carpathian priorities in the facilitation of alignment of funding through Operational Programmes.

Danube – Carpathian projects: The enlargement of the Danube – Carpathian stakeholder and institutional network will enhance and stimulate the project ideas development and set up of different project consortia. In order to contribute to the creation of administrative and financial pre-conditions for development of projects covering the entire Carpathians, partners from regions neighbouring the Danube region (e.g. from Poland and relevant parts of Ukraine) should be included. The use by the competent authorities and organisations of the so-called "20% rule" into specific programmes such as the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme should be encouraged.



- **Cross-sectoral cooperation:** The Carpathian Convention offers an important opportunity for strengthened facilitation of cross-sectoral cooperation between different PAs for implementation of EUSDR activities in the Carpathian area.

Signatures:

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Place, Date: *Ljubljana, 2 June 2016*

Place, Date: *VIENNA, 07/06/2016*

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