



Centralparks project and its approach

The draft strategy for local sustainable tourism development based on natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathians has been prepared under the thematic Work Package No 1 (WPT1) of the project CE1359 'Centralparks - Building management capacities of Carpathian protected areas for the integration and harmonization of biodiversity protection and local socio-economic development', supported by the Interreg Central Europe Programme, implemented in 2019–2022 by the consortium of 8 project partners from Italy (Lead Partner: Eurac Research), Austria and 5 'Carpathian' countries (CZ, HU, PL, SK, RO). For more information on the project consortium please visit the [Centralparks website](#).

The main WPT1 objective is to facilitate the implementation, at the local and regional levels, of the Carpathian Convention and its two thematic protocols:

- Protocol on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity (Bucharest, 2008)
- Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011)

in support of one of the priorities of the current Polish Presidency of the Carpathian Convention (concerning closer cooperation with the local and regional level).

WPT1 basic assumption and intervention logic was that the reconciliation, linking the conservation of biological and landscape diversity to sustainable local socio-economic development, and raising the support of local communities for protected area operations is possible

- if well protected natural and landscape values (→ related draft strategy)
- are properly used as the driver and asset for the local sustainable tourism development (→ related draft strategy)
- while conservation objectives, and benefits arising from the above synergy are effectively communicated to the local stakeholders (→ Guidelines on communication between protected areas and local communities)



How the draft strategy was prepared

Following the above concept, 3 multinational expert groups (Thematic Transnational Task Forces, TTTFs) were established under WPT1, each tasked with a development of 1 out of the 3 mutually reinforcing Outputs (→ synergy of outputs). Such transnational networking approach allowed to:

- pool and share knowledge and expertise from different countries, enhance transnational cooperation
- capitalize on the exchange of information, experience, and best practices identified in the Carpathians
- involve different target groups (protected areas, universities / research institutions, NGOs) in project activities.

WPT1 TTTFs met in person once (in 2019), later the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak made subsequent physical meetings impossible. The adopted emergency solution was to intensify electronic communication and organize many more online meetings (which allowed team work in shared screen live mode) than originally planned. However, each TTF tested a different approach and team work mode.

In this case the TTF involved 20 PPs' representatives and external experts from 7 countries (incl. UA volunteer), had 5 meetings (instead of 2 planned), and prepared 12 subsequent drafts, where all participants actively developed the strategy at all work stages, agreed with the scope, intervention logic, structure, contents, strategic and operations objectives, and suggested related recommended measures.

Target groups, intended use, and substantive focus of the draft strategy

The target audience of the draft strategy are the local and regional stakeholders, including managers of Carpathian protected areas, local communities and their authorities, and local entrepreneurs in the tourism sector. Hence, this draft Strategy should be perceived as complementary to the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians adopted at CC COP4 in 2014, addressed to the Parties, and their central Governments.

The strategy shall provide guidance for public authorities at the regional and local levels, preparing or updating protected area visitor management plans, local or regional planning documents related to tourism development, natural and cultural heritage conservation, and land-use.

The main substantive focus of the draft Strategy:

- enhancing the contribution of tourism to the sustainable development of the local economy in the Carpathians, to allow more equal sharing of benefits and revenues from the tourist services sector by Carpathian municipalities (ST Protocol, Article 11.4)
- mitigating the impacts of tourism on fragile mountain ecosystems of the Carpathians, by dispersing, redirecting, and channeling part of the tourist traffic out of the most sensitive sites (such as PAs) to less ecologically sensitive areas (ST Protocol, Article 12.2)
- involving the Carpathian local communities in the identification of the specific local competitive advantages for sustainable tourism development and strengthening the existing unique selling propositions of the local tourism offer (ST Protocol, Article 11.3)
- enhancing the use of local products and skills as well as employment opportunities for the local labour force (ST Protocol, Article 11.3)
- promoting innovation and diversity in tourism, and the creation of new local and regional tourism products (ST Protocol, Article 11.3).



Strategic and operational objectives of the draft strategy:

The three strategic objectives (SOs) of the draft strategy correspond to the three dimensions (environmental, economic, and social) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Each strategic objective is further divided into three more detailed operational objectives (OOs), as follows:

SO1 - Environmental dimension objective

- OO 1.1. Well maintained and protected natural, landscape and cultural heritage assets for sustainable tourism development
- OO 1.2. Raising awareness and appreciation of the local natural and cultural heritage
- OO 1.3. Managing tourism impact on the fragile mountain ecosystems of the Carpathians

SO2 - Economic dimension objective:

- OO 2.1. Territorial brand of the tourism destination built on local resources
- OO 2.2. Ensuring economic stability of the local tourist services sector
- OO 2.3. Cooperation for the local sustainable tourism development

SO3 - Social dimension objective:

- OO 3.1. Local identity as the social integration and activation factor
- OO 3.2. Enhancing the potential of the local inhabitants for sustainable tourism development
- OO 3.3. Participation in sustainable tourism development planning

Structure of the document:

The draft strategy document begins with the list of acronyms used in the text, and the preface (containing welcome addresses by the Presidency and the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, Centralparks Lead Partner, and WPT1 Leader), followed by 7 chapters:

1. Introduction
2. Correspondence with international legal acts in force, strategic documents, and adopted standards
3. Mission, goal, and the intervention logic of the Strategy (strategic and operational objectives)
4. Recommended measures and activities (under all strategic and operational objectives)
5. Checklist for planning the implementation
6. Potential partners and important stakeholders for the implementation
7. Monitoring of effectiveness

How to use the strategy

The draft Strategy recommends solely the measures and activities which are feasible for implementation by the local stakeholders, are specific for, and remain within the scope of competencies and responsibilities of the regional and local authority levels.

Measures and activities recommended in Chapter 4 are neither prioritized, nor numbered as the local stakeholders as the 'end-users' and 'end beneficiaries' shall select the most proper and feasible measures and activities, accordingly to their local priorities, most urgent needs and management challenges, as well as their financial and operational capacities.



The draft Strategy indicates some specific measures and activities which:

- can simultaneously serve for the achievement of several objectives
- are most relevant for application inside protected areas
- can successfully be implemented also at the transboundary scale, in cooperation between the local and regional authorities, and other stakeholders from the two or more bordering countries (in line with ST Protocol, Article 20.3)

Next steps

Test implementation of the draft LSTD strategy is planned under 3 separate pilot actions (to be launched in spring 2021 in the Czech Republic, Poland, and the Slovak Republic), each involving Carpathian protected areas and local communities. One of the above pilot actions includes a ‘transboundary component’.

The reports on lessons learned from the test implementation will be submitted in early 2022 to the Carpathian Convention.

Simultaneously, the Parties are kindly requested to consult the draft strategy internally, and provide comments.

The proposed draft, elaborated under the Centralparks project, is expected to be formally endorsed by the Parties (no earlier than at the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to be held in 2023 in the Republic of Serbia).

Once endorsed under the Carpathian Convention, the strategy for local sustainable tourism development based on natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathians shall be made available for the relevant stakeholders.