



Cultural heritage and Traditional knowledge in the frame of the Carpathian Convention

A proposal based on consultations carried out in the region by ANPED

The Convention recognises the need for secure and sustainable development within the Carpathian region. The Convention makes reference to preserving and promoting the Cultural Heritage and Traditional Knowledge of the local communities of the Carpathians. If this is to happen those plans and activities will need to build on, and work with, social and cultural heritage issues, as well as economic and environmental ones.

1. Traditional links between nature and culture.

The cultural traditions of the Carpathian people were formed over centuries, determined by many factors including natural conditions and location. Even the features of ethnic groups were formed by nature and the possibilities to live in those conditions. Natural resources always mean that – life resources. People respect their strong nature, their calendar is more connected with nature than general calendars in other regions. Traditional celebrations are connected with traditional activities, developed in different places and seasons. Traditional agricultural patterns and handicrafts were determined by people's needs, and connected with nature. So, nature is the main reason for local peoples lifestyle.

But a lot of those deep connections with nature are weakened during modern times. A wide-range of old cultural traditions are dying out, as modern circumstances encourage people to try to change their lifestyle and thereby pay a huge price in ignoring fundamental traditions of living in harmony with nature. In our modern society environmental structures which take responsibility of nature conservation act separately from other structures. We see in all our countries a big gap between the environmental movement and those structures which try to preserve cultural traditions or develop new arts. The meaning of culture moved from a whole lifestyle to arts. An old connection, a harmony between nature and man is often disappearing from everyday life. Those links need to be reconstructed on a new, modern level, with using new tools. We believe this is possible under the aims of the Carpathian Convention.

2. Links between environmental and cultural legislation.

There is a need to recognise and develop links between environmental and cultural legislation and form of protection; there is currently a lack of co-operation: the environmental sector use environmental legislation and are not specialists in cultural laws; laws in the cultural sector do not include environmental approaches. Official structures on environment and culture are separated from each other and usually do not communicate. The Carpathian Convention gives a good possibility for them to co-operate on legal basis. One possible approach, recognised in all the seven countries is the development sustainable tourism, in a way to make a connection between environmental and cultural structures and legal instruments, as tourism may apply to different spheres of the Carpathian life.

3. A summary of the key issues arising from the ANPED project consultations :

a. Carpathian countries are at present still rich in genuine cultural and heritage diversity, with many traditional forms of agriculture, land-use management and long-standing crafts and skills. Also the cultural heritage is still a real part of local community life, and not just a performance put on for visiting tourists. Local people are still very proud of their local traditions and ethnic heritage.

b. However, the centralized model of industrial development in the communist period and the economic turbulence afterwards in the harsh transition to market economy and has brought many changes, particularly in the field of agricultural systems and tourism development. The on-going economic transition, and trends towards ever-growing consumerism and the development of mass tourism infrastructure brings dramatic and detrimental change to the region. Under threat is the loss of many elements of traditional culture : in different countries the loss of local products such as cheese, wine, and fruit-growing (and the variety of species), as well as traditional services and farming practices, some old handicrafts, folklore and cultural ceremonies etc.

c. Many ethnic minorities have been repressed and / or forcibly relocated as a result of wars and social upheavals. There is now a flourishing of expression of ethnic identity, heritage and traditions. However this window of cultural expression maybe very short-lived before it is swamped a more mass and dominant western and EU culture.

d. There is a need for support to enable existing cultures to survive and flourish. Local communities are active in restoring and promoting their own traditional cultures, but some practical assistance is needed to create space for local and traditional cultures to exist and develop.

e. The need for a strategic approach to the promotion and preservation of traditional, cultural and other relevant activities, and to show the benefits to local economies, that would result from such an approach.

f. The need for improved co-operation between different structures - the Carpathian Convention includes only environmental structures, but applies to many others which need to be included in the process of working out concrete documents. such as protocols, and in their implementation plans.

4. Main problems recognized during the ANPED project consultations:

- a. loss of cultural values because of globalisation and unsustainable development tendencies.
- b. loss of many elements of traditional culture.
- c. loss of local production and traditional services.
- d. loss of recognition of importance of local culture.
- e. past repressions and relocation of ethnic minorities leaving them in currently unstable position to cultivate and promote their ethnic heritage.

5. Priorities for the Carpathian region, worked out during the ANPED project consultations:

- a. Sustainably develop the region and improve its quality of life.
- b. Create local strategies for sustainable development of the regions, with the local communities, and develop resourced implementation programmes for these strategies.
- c. Create local/regional institutions for co-ordinating and supervising the implementation of the Carpathian Convention, including capacity building in the regions.
- d. Preserve and promote local traditions, through practical demonstration of their benefits to the local economies and as part of strengthening local community life.
- e. Stimulate and educate local communities in the establishment of traditional culture businesses.
- f. Support to enable existing cultures to grow and develop.
- g. Information exchange between countries and regions for learning from each other in different parts of the whole Carpathians.

6. What should be done:

- a. Investigation into the current status of cultural and ethnic heritage in each region,
- b. Recording natural, ethnic and cultural traditions, practices and monuments, and monitoring their effective protection;
- c. Working with local communities to improve the awareness of residents of the regions wider value and significance,
- d. Co-ordination of cultural heritage promotion in cooperation with all Carpathian countries (creation of common tourist products, exhibitions, expositions and common promotion),
- e. Working with regional authorities to investigate and secure funding for support of ethnic and cultural heritage,
- f. Development of common activities and strategies to protect and promote of cultural and ethnic heritage in the Carpathian Countries;
- g. Facilitation of cross-border co-operation as regarding ethnic and cultural heritage.
- h. Develop mechanism for promotion of products and services including regional „trade marks“ to promote local traditional crafts,
- i. Encourage ways that study of local culture and traditions can be more incorporated the education system within the Carpathian region;

- j. Promotion of schemes to support traditional Carpathian agricultural activities, conserving the biological diversity of domestic plants and animals;
- k. Support for the process of education and promotion of sustainable tourism for local communities, as well as registration of services,
- l. Training for local communities on new data communication technologies and modern techniques.

7. Recommendations to the Carpathian Convention secretariat:

- To involve the public and civil society organisations in the creation of protocols (and other relevant legal instruments) for the promotion of cultural heritage.
- To build working links with ministries and regional authorities of heritage and culture, tourism and rural development.
- To ensure that protocols and instruments apply to and are implemented by governmental and private sector tourism structures.
- To develop closer co-operation with international forums, primarily UNESCO.
- To create an internationally recognised Carpathian Heritage list:
 - (i) Using principles of UNESCO's World Heritage Convention (some World Heritage sites are located in the Carpathians).
 - (ii) Establish a mechanism for list creation, including guidance for inclusion and mechanisms for promotion.
 - (iii) Establish a special fund for Carpathian Heritage to support sites and activities, with clear rules of procedure and stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process
- To collect and organise the available materials on the cultural and ethnic heritage of the Carpathian region, with strong and direct input from stakeholders. Use the resulting materials for promotion across the region and beyond, eg at EU level.
- To promote innovative forms of managing culture and monuments.
- To instigate all governments to develop as soon as possible action plans on local levels which will include concrete activities, according the Carpathian Convention and priorities recognized, involving local relevant stakeholders.

This paper draws upon the stakeholder consultations and events held in the seven Carpathian countries, co-ordinated by ANPED and delivered by a team of ANPED members and partners including :

Institute for Environmental Policy, Czech Republic

CEEWEB, Hungary

Polish Green Net and League of Nature Protection, Poland

UNESCO Pro-Natura and Pro Conventia Carpatica Association, Romania

Young Researchers of Serbia, Serbia

SOSNA, Slovakia

'Our Home' Association and Green Dossier, Ukraine

September, 2006