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PRESS RELEASE

Joint Carpathian actions to improve biodiversity protection and socio-economic development

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Centralparks project comes to an end

The Centralparks project, launched to support nature protection and local sustainable development, to improve integrated environmental management capacities and policies, as well as to mitigate current threats and pressures to biodiversity in the Carpathians brings its curtains down on 31st March 2022. Project partners will present the results of the project at a closing conference held in Wieliczka, Poland and online on 23-24th March 2022.

The Carpathians form a natural bridge between Western and Eastern Europe, stretching across eight European countries and holding tremendous ecological value. They contain a variety of valuable ecosystems and landscapes and are home to many native and endemic species. Carpathian protected areas harbour valuable forest, mountain, grass- and wetland habitats, as well as unique geological and geomorphological features. They also provide many services local communities benefit from and are important areas for local sustainable development.

In the 21st century effective management of protected areas poses a key challenge for biodiversity conservation in Europe and globally. Despite varying conditions, protected areas face similar threats, many of which can only efficiently be tackled through transnational cooperation. Global environmental processes, such as climate change, invasive species, and various anthropogenic threats strongly pressure the Carpathian ecoregion.

The Centralparks project (Building management capacities of Carpathian protected areas for the integration and harmonization of biodiversity protection and local socio-economic development) started on 1 April 2019 and will run until 31th March 2022. The project is supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme (CE), and is implemented by 8 partners and 8 associated strategic partners across six countries (Austria, Czechia, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania and Slovakia). The main objective of the project to harmonize biodiversity conservation with sustainable local socio-economic development and to build capacities for effective protected area management in the Carpathians.

After three successful years, the project now comes to an end and will present its conclusive outcomes to the wider public at the Centralparks final conference, titled *‘Transnational cooperation for the sustainable future of the Carpathian region’* and discuss together the sustainable future of the Carpathian region. The event will take place on the 23-24th March 2022 in hybrid form, in-person in Wieliczka, Poland as well as online. The organisers will be delighted to welcome all interested participants at the event!

Registration for the international hybrid conference *‘Transnational cooperation for the sustainable future of the Carpathian region’*:

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/Centralparks/Register-now-for-our-Final-Conference.html>

More about Centralparks



Within Centralparks, four Thematic Transnational Task Forces were set up, involving national experts and protected area managers from the Carpathian region. Their task was to develop strategic policy documents and tools that support the Carpathian region in the long term. Finally, several pilot trainings and workshops were carried out in the Carpathian region to illustrate the practical relevance of the Centralparks outputs, and to make them accessible and useful for the Carpathian stakeholders. As a result of project implementation for the last three years, local pilot actions and Carpathian-wide strategies delivered and still deliver important findings to support long-term sustainable development in the Carpathians and beyond.

Centralparks closely worked together with the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention as well as the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas. The project was endorsed in the Decisions of the 6th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention, linked to the conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity as well as sustainable tourism, and encouraged to further contribute to natural and cultural heritage protection in the Carpathians.

As next step, using the results of the project, further collaborations with key Carpathian stakeholders are needed to proceed with implementing the developed documents and tools. So much has been achieved through the delivery of this innovative project, that has not only benefited the project participants, but the wider community as well. Projects like this have a key role to play in fostering good relations with local communities, which is essential to create a sustainable future for the Carpathians. Working together, within and between communities, to transform society and helping to build a shared future for all - this is the Centralparks way forward!

The Centralparks project has developed the following results:

- Carpathian strategy for enhancing biodiversity and landscape conservation outside and inside protected areas, and its pilot implementation
- Strategy for local sustainable tourism development based on natural heritage of the Carpathians and its pilot implementation
- Guidelines on communication between protected areas and local communities in the Carpathians and its pilot implementation
- Innovative habitat evaluation tools
- Joint strategic document on raising good protected areas' management capacities
- Guidelines for proper integrated nature conservation planning
- Integrated Nature Conservation Management Plan for the Börzsöny Mountains
- Carpathian Ecosystem Services Toolkit

The results of the project are available on the project's website: <https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/Centralparks.html>

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