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PRESS RELEASE

Local community workshops in Pieniny National Park

A series of 4 workshops under the common title “Strategy for the protection of biological and landscape diversity outside and inside Pieniny National Park”, organized by the Ekopsychology Society*, was held in Łapsze Niżne (6 September 2021), Czorsztyn (20 September 2021), Szczawnica (21 September 2021) and Krościenko nad Dunajcem (29 September 2021).

What is behind these workshops?

This event marked the next phase of implementation of the Centralparks pilot action in Pieniny National Park, which aimed at testing the efficiency of the draft Carpathian strategy for enhancing biodiversity and landscape conservation outside and inside protected areas. It was elaborated in 2019-2020 under the Centralparks project by the relevant multinational expert group (Thematic Transnational Task Force) established under the Centralparks WPT1, in support for the implementation of the Protocol on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity (Bucharest, 2008) to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Kyiv, 2003) at the local and regional level, accordingly to one of the priorities of the current Polish Presidency of the Convention.

The above draft strategy was submitted on 7 July 2021 for the endorsement by the Carpathian Convention. It targets local municipalities, protected area administrations, local and regional level nature conservation and landscape protection agencies, bodies and authorities.

Pieniny National Park

Pieniny National Park, designated in 1932, forms the Polish part of the first European and world’s second transboundary protected area (established only a month later than the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park between Canada and the USA). The intention to designate such a crossborder nature park was inscribed into the Polish-Czechoslovak bilateral agreement, the 1924 ‘Krakow Protocol’. It stipulated “concluding, as soon as possible, a tourist convention” to facilitate the development of tourism in border areas of both above countries, and “a convention on a nature park” establishing areas restricted for the protection of cultural heritage, nature and landscape. Both ideas materialized decades later, with the adoption of the ‘Carpathian Convention’ in 2003, and its thematic Protocol on Sustainable Tourism (Bratislava, 2011).

Another objective of this Centralparks pilot action is to facilitate and support dialogue between the Pieniny National Park administration and the authorities of the 4 local communities located in its buffer zone. This would ensure the integrity of natural habitats and maintain the fragile ecological connectivity between this relatively small protected area (2,371.75 ha) and neighbouring larger natural complexes in the Carpathians. They are increasingly threatened by the rapid residential and recreational housing development in the national park buffer zone (2,653.8 ha). It requires a joint solution of potential land-use conflicts in several ‘problem areas’, successfully identified during the June workshop.



Identifying problems and solutions

54 participants attended the Centralparks 4 workshops in September, including:

- village heads
- municipality mayors
- municipal councilors
- village leaders
- school directors
- employees of municipalities and the Pieniny National Park
- representatives of local entrepreneurs and NGOs.

The purpose of the workshops was to identify possible solutions for mitigating and preventing conflicts between biological/landscape diversity protection and local development. The following problems were identified among the most typical problem situations:

- scattered housing development pattern interfering with wildlife migration corridors
- lack of legal tools for effective construction law enforcement
- still-increasing tourist pressure on fragile mountain ecosystems
- pristine mountain landscapes spoiled by redundant and poorly designed roadside advertisements, as well as newly built settlements
- pressure by large investors and developers on influencing the local spatial and land use planning process.



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.

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