Minutes for Sustainable Tourism Working Group Meeting
“Next Steps after the Adoption of Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians”

Venue: Kék Duna Wellness Hotel, 2300 Ráckeve, Dömsödi út 1-3 (near Budapest), Hungary
Dates: 8-9 of October, 2014

Communication strategy of STWG

The discussion focused on how to promote the Carpathian Tourism Strategy to investors and decision makers. After the discussions in the group, a role play was done: an interview with a journalist at a TV programme was improvised.

Kristina Vilimaite suggested that the current members attract new active members to the STWG.

Celebration of achievements in 2014 and lessons learned

- Update on adoption of the Strategy on Sustainable Tourism Development in the Carpathians

Kristina Vilimaite summarized: ETE and CEEweb developed the strategy with the involvement of stakeholders, the strategy was adopted in September 2014 by the Parties to the Convention at the Fourth Conference of the Parties of the Carpathian Convention (COP4).

- Information about the collected Good Practices on Sustainable Tourism in the Carpathians

Kristina Vilimaite summarized: 14 case studies were collected and presented at the COP4 in the form of posters and brochure.

The case studies are available on the website of CEEweb and will again be available in printed version in November to STWG members. Therefore, if a STWG member would like to present the Strategy or the Case studies to the decision makers, experts, etc. they can receive the materials by post. Kristina asked that for internal use only electronic files are to be used.

- Other results and outcomes of the 2014 Work Programme

  - Initial dissemination of Methodology of Assessments of national Tourism Development Strategies took place, e.g. in Serbia where it was delivered to the experts at the relevant ministry by Ivan Svetozarevic and consulted when developing the new tourism strategy for Serbia.
10 case studies on invasive tourism activities were collected.

**Kristina will send the links to all the materials and information that is available online about the 2014 activities, so STWG members have it in one email.**

- Introduction of remaining activities and plans for 2014  

The Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism will be organised in Belgrade on November 24-26, 2014 with support of CEEweb and ETE. NGOs from the Carpathian countries and beyond will be able to join as observers. The meeting will focus on discussing the implementation of the strategy and coordination of activities amongst countries and different sectors in particular, also communication about the Strategy to stakeholders.

**Planning future activities of STWG in the Carpathians and beyond**

*Michael Meyer, ETE, the chair of the STWG, joined the meeting via Skype.*

- Planning of the Work Programme for 2015  

Assessments of the National Tourism Development Plans: it would be useful to put the further development of the methodology into the hands of scientists and possibly strategy writers, e.g. EURAC, XELLUM. Till now the methodology was submitted to the World Tourism Organisation, they said that the methodology is ok, no comments from their side. **Michael Meyer and Kristina Vilimaite will discuss how to get scientists involved.**

The area of EU Strategy for Danube Region and the area covered by the Carpathian Convention overlap almost fully (except of Poland). STWG was looking for synergies and submitted a letter to both the Carpathian Convention and EU Strategy for Danube Region, has not received any answer. It can be that we should go into more specific details, give concrete proposals to both institutions. **Michael Meyer will follow up.**

There is no dedicated funding scheme from EU neither to the Danube nor Carpathian region. We should combine efforts and work on actions for Danube and Carpathian territories at the same time. When reviewing the methodology and making the new assessments we should aim to fill gaps - to assess the plans in those countries, that are still not assessed and covered by the Danube Strategy.

We should collect information when the updates of tourism related strategies are planned in the countries for which we have the assessments prepared, STWG members can do that. **Kristina Vilimaite will send a request via email.**

STWG members can also contribute to communication about the adoption of the Strategy in the countries (not only Carpathian). The target group for STWG members are NGOs (that focus on climate, infrastructure, social issues, education, biodiversity on local, regional and
national levels). The goal of communication is to inform about the existence of the Strategy and receive feedback how those NGOs can contribute to its implementation.

**ETE will prepare communication plan and material within 2 weeks, comments can be provided, then it can be presented to the Carpathian Convention WG on Sustainable Tourism and used by STWG members.**

ETE would like to map all the projects related to tourism in the Carpathians, so we have overview about the projects implemented and under the implementation and see the gaps.

A project application is submitted to the International Visegrad Fund for assessing and improving situation of trails for disabled people in natural areas in Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. The answer comes in December 2014.

The Core Funding from CEEweb is limited (if the application is successful), mainly available for a couple of assessments, other activities can be a contribution of the group members or funded by other sources.

- Sharing ideas on cooperation and fundraising

Michael Meyer proposes that STWG members search for funding to support the implementation of the Strategy (both action plans outlined in the strategy – the national level plan and for all countries), e.g. Structural Funds - European Social Fund (especially for the capacity building and education) as well as other funders, also for non-EU countries. CEEweb office and ETE can help with writing the proposals.

There are attempts to include the work on sustainable tourism to the Black Sea Convention, discussions between the governments around the Black Sea and UNEP are ongoing. A meeting is planned in Batumi next year. The success to large degree will depend on developments in Ukraine and Russia.

Also plans exist to focus on other mountain ranges, in particular on Balkan Mountains, possibly with the support from EU.

German funds

- available mainly for Ukraine – protected area management, connectivity, sustainable tourism master plans, product development, criteria, indicators, some 2-3 year long projects. Maybe it will be possible to connect the activities with actions in Slovakia, Romania, Poland;
- another project idea: put together experts on tourism laws in a workshop and discuss how to integrate the protocol to the national legislation.

Via Carpatica idea is again revived with Slovakia on the lead and other 6 countries joining to develop cycling paths across the Carpathians.

Wallachian project idea was presented by Constantin Serban, the participants discussed how it would be possible to support the implementation of the idea or make it an international project. If other STWG members decide to join the project, it can become a STWG project.
Next year Pro Carpatica with other 6 associations from Slovakia and Poland will start the implementation of crossborder project focusing on transhumance in the Carpathians. 1.5 mil. EUR received from the Polish-Slovakian crossborder cooperation fund.

**Finalization of the STWG work programme 2015, and discussion on tourism issues in CEEweb’s Strategy 2015-2020**

STWG participated in the CEEweb Annual Meeting and supported the inclusion of sustainable tourism into the core section of CEEweb’s Strategy 2015-2020.

**Participant list**

1. Andriy-Taras Bashta, Animal Research and Protection Association “Fauna”, Ukraine
2. Małgorzata Draganik, Association “Pro Carpatica”, Poland
3. Marina Ilic, Geocological Center, Serbia
4. Vera Kiss, CEEweb for Biodiversity, Hungary
5. Ewelina Nycz, Association “Pro Carpatica”, Poland
6. Aneliya Pavlova, Green Balkans Federation of Nature Conservation NGOs, Bulgaria
7. Viorica Sandu, Ecological Counseling Center Cahul, Moldova
8. Constantin Serban, Green Tourism Ecological Association, Romania
9. Emil Vaklinov, Rhodope Mountains without Borders
10. Kristina Vilimaite, CEEweb for Biodiversity, Hungary
11. Martina Voskárová, Ecological Tourism in Europe, Germany
12. Joanna Wylon, PTTK, Poland
13. Gjoko Zoroski, Ecologists’ Movement of Macedonia, Macedonia
15. Mirjana Jocic, Danube – the River of Cooperation, Serbia