

Project Name: “Linking biodiversity, pastoralism and cultural heritage through ESD in the Carpathian Region”

Duration: (preliminary dates; subject to change) Nov 2024 – Jan 2027

This proposed project directly builds on the recommendations and findings of the recently completed project [“Carpathian ESD: Strengthening the ESD network in the Carpathian Convention via science-policy-practice interface”](#) (project number 154791), as well as its preceding project [“Integrating nature protection and sustainable tourism development into the Carpathian region via science-policy-practice interface”](#) (project number 112045).

Brief Summary:

Pastoralism is a long-standing agricultural tradition in Carpathians, playing a vital role in preserving biodiversity-rich grasslands while supporting local economies and cultural identities. However, pastoralism is under threat due to socioeconomic shifts, a lack of formal education, and misinformation, leading to the gradual disappearance of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK).

The project aims to further the Carpathian Convention’s goals by linking activities in biodiversity conservation, pastoralism, and cultural heritage through education for sustainable development (ESD). Through these initiatives, the project seeks to enhance these linkages through (1) enhanced institutional alignment within and between the Carpathian Convention and national and European frameworks for linking biodiversity and pastoralism; (2) strengthened transnational, multi-sectoral cooperation on pastoralism and biodiversity protection in the Carpathians; (3) enhanced environmental and agricultural awareness, with a focus on safeguarding pastoralist practices and TEK; (4) improved knowledge of educational and training structures for Carpathian herders and educators.

These objectives will support implementation of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework (CBF) and COP7 decisions, and help ensure pastoralist practices and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) are integrated into policy recommendations for the Carpathian Convention COP8.

The project will utilize existing regional networks of experts and protected areas (S4C, Carpathian ESD Expert Network, and CNPA) to focus on the intersection of pastoralism, biodiversity, and ESD. It also focuses on bringing cross-sectoral collaboration into Carpathian Convention Working Groups and connecting relevant stakeholders with these fora. This collaboration aims to address knowledge gaps, improve awareness, and support civil society organizations, NGOs, and marginalized groups involved in biodiversity-pastoral activities. Some tangible initiatives include supporting the inscription of Carpathian transhumance to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) list, facilitating partnerships and knowledge exchange among young researchers and pastoralists, and translating existing pastoralism resources into Carpathian national languages; all aimed to promote sustainable local livelihoods and cultural heritage.

Goals:

1. Biodiversity conservation and pastoral promotion at the Carpathian-level are better aligned with national and European-level frameworks.

Some key activities include:

- Integrate recommendations on pastoralism, ESD and biodiversity into Working Group meetings, CCIC meetings, COP8, and other Convention mechanisms
- Contribute to transhumance safeguarding plans, necessary for the UNESCO ICH List expanded file on Transhumance, and their follow-up activities in the Carpathian region
- Facilitate the integration and dissemination of project results into COP8 decisions, CCIC meetings and respective recommendations and WG meetings
- Represent the Carpathian Convention in the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD

2. Transnational multi-sectoral and transdisciplinary cooperation in the Carpathian region on protecting and enhancing pastoralism and biodiversity is fostered.

Some key activities include:

- Strengthen collaboration between Carpathian Convention Working Groups SARD, Biodiversity, and Cultural Heritage and with IYRP 2026 Working Groups and other international expert groups working at the intersection of pastoralism, biodiversity and ESD.
- Build up inter-and transdisciplinary scientific exchange on pastoralism within the S4C network, ESD network and Working Groups SARD, Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage
 - Invite relevant researchers and experts to meetings
 - Create a regional group of academic, practice and policy experts working at the intersection of pastoralism, biodiversity and ESD
- Create scientific recommendations and science-policy-practice briefs based on relevant research and implementation gaps and aims for institutionalizing pastoralism and biodiversity networks into the Convention
- Establish or strengthen communication with organizations already working or may be interested in working at the intersection of entrepreneurship, biodiversity and pastoralism, including the Carpathian Foundation, Carpathian Civil Society Platform and Euromontana
- Provide Carpathian contributions to the “knowledge-sharing platform” (which is currently under development as part of the LIFE ShepForBio project) and the European network of pastoral schools and training centres developed by the LIFE ShepForBio project

3. Environmental and sustainable agricultural awareness is improved, including communicating a better understanding of how to safeguard pastoralist practices and TEK in the Carpathian region.

Some key activities include:

- Support Carpathian Day activities, with a focus on raising awareness of Carpathian pastoralism in celebration of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026
 - Develop and translate Carpathian Day materials into Carpathian national languages

4. Knowledge of the state of existing (vocational) educational and training structures and material is increased, and activities to improve the knowledge base have been started.

Some key activities include:

- Update the S4C Research Agenda with a chapter on pastoralism
- Create a stock-take of existing resources for Carpathian herders, conservation managers and educators linking pastoralism and biodiversity and existing shepherd/herder schools in the Carpathian countries
- Create an initial overview of public school and university curricula and how pastoralism and traditional ecological knowledge is portrayed in the Carpathian region, including a list of challenges for overcoming misrepresentation and a list of advantages that can be leveraged for further promotion
- Utilise the ESD expert network to provide recommendations to the formal and informal educational materials related to pastoralism
- Support formal training events or workshops for Carpathian herders and identify materials to be translated into Carpathian national languages and support this process

Partners:

Science for the Carpathians: The Carpathian Convention Secretariat will work closely with the S4C network, including in organizing the Forum Carpaticum and considering scientific inputs and recommendations to the Convention. It is important to continue working closely with university lecturers, researchers and young scientists working in the field of ESD or related fields and their respective universities.

Carpathian Network of Protected Areas: Because the CNPA supports and develops necessary activities for the implementation of the Carpathian Convention, especially its Biodiversity Protocol, the CNPA and

their respective institutions will be critical implementing partners as some nature parks allow for traditional pastoralism and many parks engage in environmental education.

Dr. Ioana Baskerville (Romanian Academy, Iasi Branch; National Focal Point of the Ministry of Culture of Romania for the 2003 UNESCO Convention and associate professor of cultural anthropology at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi): Dr. Baskerville is leading the process of opening the Transhumance file under the UNESCO ICH List on behalf of Romania. Thus, it is critical to work closely with Dr. Baskerville and her institution to successfully enlist more Carpathian countries to the Transhumance file and learn from her expertise in working on various projects on Carpathian pastoralism and cultural heritage.

Information Center “Green Dossier”, Ukraine: this is a long-standing partner of the Carpathian Convention Secretariat, engaged in projects on education, awareness-raising and training, sustainable rural development, cultural heritage and traditional knowledge in Ukraine.

Boglárka Kurka Ivanegová (Chair of Špirála - Network of Environmental Education Providers in Slovakia): Collaboration between the Carpathian Convention and Špirála intensified in 2023 to support elaboration of the vision and objectives of the Carpathian ESD Expert Network (CESDEN). We envision collaboration with Špirála in the frame of the given project particularly with respect to the Carpathian ESD Seminar, as well as with integrating ESD-related expertise and networks from Slovakia and Czech Republic into the project, as relevant.

Euromontana: this multi-sectoral network facilitates cooperation and sustainable development of European mountain areas. In 2023, the Carpathian Convention Secretariat established a formal partnership with Euromontana to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development in the Carpathians. Within the project, the Secretariat will liaise with Euromontana to ensure synergies with relevant work of Euromontana, such as its active participation in the LIFE ShepForBio project.