



Alpine-Carpathian Cooperation - action plan

I. Background

The external cooperation was presented as one of the strategic activities of ALPARC and was reinforced by the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Alpine and Carpathian Convention in 2006. The contribution to the establishment of the CNPA (Carpathian Network of Protected Areas) by ALPARC started already in 2003 and issued, with the support of several other partners, by the official creation of the CNPA during the ministerial conference in December 2006 in Kiev, Ukraine. We can suppose this external cooperation more and more active with the plausible creation of the CNPA coordination unit in the near future.

For this reason we estimate necessary to fix the priorities of cooperation between both mountain ranges concerning protected areas. Some of these priorities have been defined since 2003 as the issue of a questionnaire for the Carpathians protected areas managers about their expectations towards the future CNPA and they have been more developed during some already organized meetings (i.e. Workshop "Integrated management of the protected areas" in Slovakia or "Tourism management and sustainable development of the protected areas" in Romania, both in 2006). However, they were concerning exclusively the Carpathian protected areas. Other priorities have been defined during the meetings of the Steering Committee for the CNPA or by Carpathian protected areas managers and/or representatives within the discussions on the events.

II. Proposals of priorities for the Alpine-Carpathian cooperation

The proposed cooperation themes are focused on the principal aims and challenges of the protected areas in the Alps and in the Carpathians. Different backgrounds and historical developments caused various approaches to the protected areas management. There is not any good management model and the only way to ensure an effective nature protection is to compare several of them and to adapt them to the local conditions. For this, an intensive exchange between both massifs' protected areas about various topics is needed. These fields of cooperation are especially:



1. Integrated management, management plan, indicators of management

Each park has its own approach on the management and these visions vary from one country to other. Different backgrounds caused much diversity in both mountain ranges and influenced also the protected areas management. For this reason, a possibility of skills and experiences exchanges is needed in order to adapt the nature protection to various threats. Generally, the alpine parks have longer experiences with the integrated management planning and can offer a support for the establishment of new management plans in the Carpathians' protected areas.

2. Wildlife management, large carnivores management

The diversities of wildlife management in both mountain ranges are important. Especially the differences on the approach on the large carnivores management is enormous. The Alpine parks can use the large carnivores management plans from their Carpathians colleagues as basis for their own plans in order to improve the viability of the bear, wolf and lynx populations in the Alps.

3. Forest management

The Carpathians are one of the biggest European natural forest region. The historical and political evolution, especially in the XXth century, has its impacts on today's forest management. Grazing activities, mountain agriculture, forest exploitation, but also tourism activities shaped the mountain forests since several decades and their impacts vary from one mountain massif to other. Different cultures and exploitation techniques in various countries of both ranges can be shared in order to develop good forest management methods.

4. Tourism management

The governments of each country decide about the nature protection policy, but also about the tourism priorities. In some countries the creation of ski resorts within national parks is permitted, in others it is forbidden. Therefore, tourist activities play an important role in the mountain areas economy and the tourism management can have many impacts in other issues. The sharing of the management methods and know-how is necessary to find a good compromise between the nature conservation and tourist exploitation.



5. Local communities, mountain population and economy - agriculture and grazing activities

Mountain areas are not only closed conserved zones. An important mountain population lives there and this population has its needs and activities. Mountain economy, linked especially with the tourism, but also with “traditional” activities such as agriculture and grazing, represents an increasing interest for the protected areas managements. The principal aim is to ensure an effective nature protection by maintaining the local communities and mountain population. Many cases of development in each region can be found and their sharing would be interesting to find a good basis of best practices.

6. Water management

Water is our most important natural resource shared by everybody therefore its protection on local, regional, national as well as international level is necessary. Moreover, the mountain regions represent the biggest water reservoir and many approaches of its protection are represented. The cooperation between both mountain ranges on this topic shall result in harmonization of management methods of natural resources.

7. Public awareness, education and communication

An important part of nature protection is also the environmental education of the large public. Numerous visitors are frequently in the parks and the protected areas' impact on environmental education of them is very important. Many kinds and means of these activities are developed and by sharing the experiences of their application, a good basis of best practices can be found.

Since several years, the increase of communication capacities of the administrations of protected areas is necessary. The publications towards the large public, exhibits, communication tools for the cooperation between the parks as well as for the contact with the ministries, partners and sponsors are developed. The optimization of impacts of these tools can be reached by sharing the experience between the parks of both massifs.



8. NATURA 2000 areas

Six of Carpathians and five of Alpine countries are members of European Union and have to apply the European directives. The most important in the matter of nature protection is the network of NATURA 2000 areas establishment. Many approaches of the implementation of this directive exist and the protected areas play a crucial role in this process. Exchange of experience in this topic seems important especially for the creation of a real spatial network of NATURA 2000 sites between the member states.

9. Ecological continuum establishment - within the massifs as well as between both of them

This ecological network, linking mainly protected areas as the hotspots of biodiversity, will allow the introduction of a more dynamic nature protection concept, which makes easier migration movements of numerous species and a more efficient conservation of biodiversity. The connection of both mountain ranges seems necessary to maintain the biological diversity on European level.

10. Global climate changes observation and special measures promoted by protected areas

The roles of the protected areas within this important issue are various and as its impacts will be different from one region to other, the exchange of information, monitoring methodology and results is necessary to face this big threat. Many measures for limitation of impacts of the climate changes exist and by sharing their results, the parks can reduce the negative consequences on the ecosystems.

Some topics are transversal as the intervention within these themes has the impacts on others. Especially “Ecological continuum establishment” and “Wildlife and large carnivores management” are very closely linked. The theme “Global climate changes impacts observation and adaptation” has also a special position, as its impacts will influence several other issues. The principal aim is to propose a very dynamic nature protection model, which would allow an effective global protection and conservation of nature.



III. Specific actions proposition

The proposed actions will be principally colloquiums, workshops, study travels and staff exchanges, depending on the issue. This thematic networking could be integrated in the budgets of ALPARC (by its Task Force Protected Areas and direct contribution of protected areas or contracting parties of the Alpine convention) and CNPA (Carpathian protected areas, sponsors, contracting parties of the Carpathian convention). The first proposition of a specific action of cooperation between Alpine and Carpathian protected areas could be the organization of a conference about the large carnivores management, especially the exchanges of very different experiences from both mountain ranges in 2009.

IV. Conclusion

By sharing the very different methods, know-how and experiences in these two mountain ranges, an improvement of the nature protection efficiency can be reached in the protected areas. Many different means of cooperation exist and the realization of specific actions will depend essentially on the will of parks' administrations and managers.

In order to ensure a continuous active cooperation and coherence of the projects in the Alps and in the Carpathians, the presidents of Steering Committees of both networks will be regularly invited to the SC meetings of the neighbouring mountain range.