

Deliverable D.T1.2.3

(draft) **Strategy**

for local sustainable tourism development

based on natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathians

Final version
01 2021

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List of acronyms used

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio de Janeiro, 1992)
CC	Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Kyiv, 2003), “Carpathian Convention”
CE	Central Europe
CNPA	Carpathian Network of Protected Areas
COP4	Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019 (SARS-CoV-2)
CSR	corporate social responsibility
DMO	Destination Management Organisation
EC	European Commission
ECEAT	European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism
EU	European Union
EURAC	Eurac Research / European Academy Bozen/Bolzano
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
ICT	information and communication technology
LAC	Limits of Acceptable Change
LAG	Local Action Group
LSTD	local sustainable tourism development
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OO	operational objective
PA	protected area
QR	Quick Response
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal/s
SO	strategic objective
STD	sustainable tourism development
TCC	tourism carrying capacity
TTTF	thematic transnational task force
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USP	unique selling proposition
VERP	Visitor Experience and Resource Protection
WTP1	Centralparks project thematic work package No 1



Preface

Address by the Presidency in the Carpathian Convention

The Carpathians are a mountain range of unique beauty, with rich biological and landscape diversity and cultural heritage and with huge potential for sustainable development of local communities. They occupy a prominent place on the map of Europe and constitute an ecological, economic, cultural, recreational and living environment in the heart of Europe, shared by numerous people and countries. As a result the Carpathians play a very important role in the natural, social and economic situation of the region.

Framework Convention on the protection and sustainable use of the Carpathians, also known as the Carpathian Convention, was adopted in 2003 with the general objective to work together for the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians with a view to improve quality of life, strengthen local economies and communities and conserve natural values and cultural heritage. Those objectives have guided work of the Convention under consecutive Presidencies, each of them carried by different Party and lasting three years.

During several years that have passed since the Carpathian Convention entered into force, the Parties defined main areas of interest that require immediate action on the transnational, national and local level. *Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians* from 2008 and *Protocol on Sustainable Tourism to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians* from 2011 are among first sectoral protocols adopted by the Parties. Their successful implementation depends among others on the ability to communicate their objectives to the entities that should be involved in their implementation, especially at the regional and local level.

Polish Presidency in the Carpathian Convention shares the assumption on which the Centralparks project is based: that it is possible to reconcile and link the conservation of biological and landscape diversity with sustainable development of local communities and to raise their support for protected areas, and that in order to achieve this, protected areas should be properly used as the drivers and assets for the local economic development (including sustainable tourism), and benefits arising from this should be effectively communicated to the local stakeholders.

One of the priorities of the Polish Presidency in the Carpathian Convention is supporting implementation of the convention at regional and local levels. It is at those levels that the activities necessary to protect natural values of the Carpathians must be undertaken and the actions aiming at sustainable development of local communities should be designed and implemented.

Similar approach is a distinctive feature of the Centralparks project - the Strategies that we have been presented are addressed to the local level, not to the central one.



We are thankful for the efforts of the partners involved in the project that resulted in development of the *Strategy for enhancing biodiversity and landscape conservation outside and inside protected areas*, the *Strategy for local sustainable tourism development based on natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathians* and *Guidelines on communication between protected areas and local communities in the Carpathians*.

Polish Presidency would also like to thank the Interreg Central Europe Programme for supporting the Centralparks project, including its work package on “Integration of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the Carpathian region”. It is a very valuable contribution to the implementation of the Carpathian Convention and its core elements.

Polish Presidency hopes that the results of this project will help to achieve the objectives of the sustainable development of the Carpathians.

Address by the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention

The Carpathians are one of the most important biodiversity reservoir and a recreational and living ecosystem of Europe. The Carpathian region is widely considered as an area of outstanding natural and cultural heritage with many traditions, cultural practices and historical monuments having survived to this day, constituting great assets for sustainable tourism development and determining the unique tourist attractiveness of the whole region.

Considering its uniqueness, countries sharing the Carpathian region decided to join forces under an umbrella of international treaty - Carpathian Convention - with a vision to cooperate on addressing environmental challenges, improving the quality of life and strengthening the local economies and communities with consideration of well-being of current and future generations. Signed in 2003, the Carpathian Convention aims at conserving fragile and precious ecosystems and promoting sustainable development in the Carpathian region by providing a legal framework to pursue comprehensive policy and cooperation at various levels, including international, governmental, regional and local.

Being a cooperation and governance framework tackling with a vast number of topics relevant for sustainability in the region, the Convention is equipped with thematic Protocols which shall strengthen the implementation of the Convention objectives in relevant sectors, including sustainable tourism.

With its great assets of natural and cultural heritage, tourism is undoubtedly one of the main and most dynamically developing economic sectors greatly contributing to the regional development of the Carpathians. Furthermore, according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) the Carpathians are expected to become one of the three most attractive European destinations, in particular for ‘ecotourism’, nature-based tourism, and culture tourism.



Therefore and in order to guarantee that the tourism in the Carpathians is developed in harmony with the environmental consideration while providing benefits to the local communities, in 2011 the Parties to the Convention adopted the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism, a the only legal framework in the Carpathians that commits the Parties to promote transboundary cooperation facilitating sustainable tourism development.

The implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism is guided by the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Tourism, that consists of national experts working in the field of tourism and other representatives from different partner organisations and NGOs contribute with their expertise to the activities of the Working Group as well.

The work of the Working Group on Sustainable is facilitated by the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, hosted by UNEP Vienna Programme Office, that also supports implementation of various programmes and projects.

Fostering the implementation of the Carpathian Convention and its objectives requires establishing adequate instruments and mechanisms, including information, involvement and capacity building of all relevant stakeholders and civil society. Furthermore, the Carpathian Convention COP6 specifically referred to promoting and supporting implementation of the Carpathian Convention across the sectors at the regional and local level, in order to foster greater consideration of and contribution to the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathian region for the wellbeing of the current and future generations living in the Carpathian region.

In this respect, the Centralparks project with its activities provides grate contribution to achieving of the Carpathian Convention objectives and priorities, among other by giving necessary tools for local stakeholders directly involved in the implementation on the ground - close to the citizen implementation.

We appreciate the work of the Centralparks partners for supporting capacity building of crucial stakeholders allowing for integration and harmonizing biodiversity protection and local socio - economic development in the Carpathians. Thanks to the Interreg Central Europe Programme supporting the Centralparks project, we have taken sever steps further in the implementation of the Convention, especially regarding fostering sustainable tourism development with the consideration of natural and cultural heritage that we all depend on and need to protect for those to come.



Address by EURAC Research

Eurac Research, as Centralparks project lead partner, would like to take this opportunity to thank all the institutions and experts for their constructive cooperation in the preparation of the present “*Strategy for local sustainable tourism development based on natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathians*”. We wish to extend our deep appreciation to the Interreg Central Europe Programme for its important support to the project in general, and to the implementation of Centralparks WPT1 “*Integration of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the Carpathian region*” as well as the work of its multinational expert group, the Thematic Transnational Task Force (TTTF) on local sustainable tourism development, specifically. Our research at Eurac addresses the greatest challenges facing us in the future: people need health, energy, well-functioning political and social systems, and an intact environment. Our work embraces three major themes: ensure the livelihood of regions, the richness of diversity, both social and linguistic, and a healthy society. The promotion of sustainable tourism is consistent with this direction and allows to link the conservation of biological and landscape diversity with sustainable development of local communities¹.

According to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians², this strategy aims to support, facilitate, and enhance the implementation of the thematic Protocol on sustainable tourism³, boost the contribution of tourism to the sustainable development of the local economy in the Carpathians, and manage tourism flows in the Carpathians for the benefit of the environment and sustainable local economic development.

This strategy is a commitment to take the necessary measures to promote and support the development of sustainable tourism in less sensitive and developed areas, to foster the sustainable economic development of these regions, to mitigate the impacts of tourism on fragile mountain ecosystems of the Carpathians, to redirect and channel part of the tourism flows towards less ecologically sensitive areas with sufficient potential to absorb and accommodate part of the main tourist traffic. The problems of sustainable tourism appear more complex when it involves development opportunities that require participatory approaches connected to the support of the local community and the management of natural and cultural resources which generally belong to everyone. The pursuit of sustainable tourism can be an effective management tool for natural resources in the Carpathians. It guarantees benefits not only for the current generation but preserving the resources also for the future ones, and at the same time ensures high levels of landscape diversity which is one of the main assets of tourism attractiveness. Tourism, if sustainable, can be an essential driver for competitiveness and economic recovery of the territory.

¹ Eurac Research has been involved in several EU projects regarding sustainable tourism (like SILViAlp COSME project and InRuTou Life Long Learning project) and is supporting several initiatives regarding sustainable tourism in mountain areas

² <https://www.ecolex.org/details/treaty/framework-convention-on-the-protection-and-sustainable-development-of-the-carpathians-tre-001374/>

³ http://www.carpathianconvention.org/protocol_on_sustainable_tourism.html



To be able to pursue the objectives set out in the EU Agenda for sustainable and competitive European tourism⁴, like the delivery of economic prosperity, social equity, and cohesion, as well as environmental and cultural protection, a number of the current challenges inherent in the tourism sector will have to be addressed. These include finding the sustainable balance between utilization and conservation of natural and cultural resources, reducing the seasonality of demand and its impacts, as well as designing truly inclusive tourism experiences capable of removing any type of barrier.

To address the abovementioned challenges, a supportive framework with the involvement of all regional and local stakeholders and an efficient (management) structure within which partnership and effective leadership are facilitated, is essential.

The expected results of the implementation of this strategy, targeting local stakeholders and communities, following the goals set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁵, are (1) the promotion of sustainable tourism capable of creating jobs and supporting local culture and products, through increased integration and participation of local communities in the frame of local development activities and (2) the strengthening of efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage, through an enhanced conservation and sustainable use of natural landscape and cultural heritage values in the Carpathians.

Address by the Ekopsychology Society

The Ekopsychology Society is based in the Polish part of the Carpathian region, which includes parts of the three provinces characterized by the highest population density in rural areas (in two - over twice the average for the country), while protected areas of different categories encompass almost 70% of this territory (e.g. 6 national and 13 landscape parks cover around one third, hence thrice the country average). Under such circumstances, nature and landscape conservation cannot be effective without the support and involvement of the local communities.

However, in addition to their role for biodiversity and landscape conservation, protected areas can also become drivers and assets for the sustainable local economic development, which is one of the basic assumptions and main objectives of the Centralparks project, being already the 20th project implemented by the Ekopsychology Society in support of the Carpathian Convention since 2003.

We highly value the fact that under the Centralparks project we could simultaneously pursue our several statutory objectives, related to the protection of natural and cultural heritage, support for local sustainable development, and fostering the involvement of the local communities in the implementation of the Carpathian Convention and its thematic Protocols.

⁴ Communication from the Commission - Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism * COM/2007/0621 final * <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52007DC0621>

⁵ United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Targets: 8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products; 11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage; 15.9 By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>



The Centralparks project allowed us to pool, use and share the experience and expertise acquired in the course of many projects to which the Ekopsychology Society previously contributed, including “Supporting the sustainable development of the Carpathians through environmentally friendly tourism” (co-financed by the EEA and Norway Grants), “INRUTOU - Innovation in Rural Tourism” (EU), “Carpathian University of Participation” (EEA and Norway Grants), “Carpathian Space - Spatial planning as a tool for nature protection in the Carpathians” (EU), and “Carpathians Unite - mechanism of consultation and cooperation for implementation of the Carpathian Convention” (Swiss Contribution).

We would like to thank the Interreg Central Europe Programme for supporting the Centralparks project, including its work package “Integration of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the Carpathian region”, for which the Ekopsychology Society is responsible. This project was another great opportunity for us to contribute to the implementation of the Convention in a constructive manner, allowing to identify common transnational approaches and innovative solutions to challenges vital for our shared Carpathian region.

We would like to thank all project partners and experts who contributed to the work of the Centralparks Thematic Transnational Task Force, whose involvement and constant dedication allowed to draft the strategy for local sustainable tourism development based on natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathians.

We sincerely hope that this strategy will become a useful tool for its target audience, and facilitate building strong partnerships between protected area administrations, regional and local community authorities, and other relevant stakeholders (in line with the EU Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism), for the implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism to the Framework Carpathian Convention, in particular its Articles 11.4 and 12.2, aimed at mitigating the impacts of tourism on fragile mountain ecosystems of the Carpathians, and allowing for more equal sharing of benefits and revenues from the tourist services sector by all municipalities of the Carpathian region.



1. Introduction

The Carpathian Mountains are the third longest (after the Ural Mts. and Scandinavian Mts.) European mountain range, stretching along some 1,500 km between the Czech Republic and Austria in the west, and eastern Serbia in the south. The Carpathian region encompasses approx. 209,000 km², covering considerable parts of the Slovak Republic and Romania, as well as vast border areas of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, and Serbia. Unique natural and cultural heritage values of this region, shared by seven Parties to the Carpathian Convention, are usually best preserved inside and around countless protected areas. As of January 2021, as many as 323 of protected areas in the Carpathian region exceeded 100 ha in size, including 43 national parks, 8 nature parks, 2 geoparks, 19 landscape parks, 38 protected landscape areas, 168 nature reserves, 38 nature monuments, and 7 other protected sites.

The exceptionally high values of nature and landscape are simultaneously the treasure and the curse of the Carpathians, in particular in protected areas (further as PAs). The higher and better preserved these values are - the higher is their attractiveness for different forms of tourism and recreation, and resulting tourist and development pressures. The higher and better preserved are the diversity of species and naturalness of landscapes - the more tourists will choose the PA as their holiday destination.

This is why several most popular mountain tourism destinations and most scenic protected areas in the Carpathians are already flooded by mass tourism well over any acceptable, much less sustainable limits. Needless to say, the quality of visitor experience in such overcrowded destinations declines, some tourists tend to avoid such places, at least during the main tourist high season/s.

Simultaneously, hundreds of other municipalities in the Carpathian region (some of them rich in natural and cultural heritage) are either neglected, or at least not yet discovered as potential tourist destinations. In result, their local economies are in decline, additionally affected by the adverse effects of the current demographic trends, such as the depopulation of rural areas (in particular mountain regions) and ageing of the society.

The Strategy for local sustainable tourism development based on natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathians (further as “the Strategy”) aims to support, facilitate, and enhance the implementation of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Kyiv, 2003), its thematic Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011), and Protocol on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity (Bucharest, 2008) at the **local and regional level**.

The target audience of the Strategy are:

- administrations of protected areas, nature conservation and landscape protection agencies and other nature and landscape conservation authorities
- local communities, including municipal and regional authorities
- other local stakeholders relevant for the planning and development of tourism (e.g. Destination Management Organisations, DMOs)

in the Carpathian region.

Accordingly to the Interreg Central Europe Programme, the main result of activities under the Programme priority specific objective 3.1 shall be *“Improved integrated environmental management capacities of the public sector and related entities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources in central Europe achieved through transnational cooperation”*.

The aim of the Centralparks project is to build management capacities of Carpathian protected areas. Hence, the most obvious target audience, users and end beneficiaries of the Strategy shall be the public nature/landscape conservation authorities, in particular the administrations of protected areas (PAs) in the Carpathian region.

However, the term ‘public sector’ relates also to the local and regional community authorities, which, depending on the national legislation of a country concerned, can either be directly responsible for the development and management of tourism, or have the decisive powers on planning the land-use and development inside and outside PAs.

The reason for taking into account the situation both inside and outside PAs is that the Carpathian PAs are most often surrounded by densely populated municipalities, therefore are not the “isolated Islands”, and the situation outside the PA territory (e.g. in the PA external buffer zone, or other areas neighbouring or surrounding PAs) largely influences their efficiency. The economic activities and land development outside PAs (including those aimed at the tourism development) often have direct impacts and adverse effects on e.g. the ecological connectivity issues, conservation status of ecosystems, habitats, and species inside PA, conditions for implementing PA operations, and the efficiency of protective measures undertaken inside the PA.

The Strategy, once effectively disseminated to our target audiences, shall provide **guidance** for:

- administrations of protected areas and other nature and landscape conservation authorities, preparing or updating PA visitor management plans (most often part of their PA management or conservation plans)
- local communities, municipal and regional authorities preparing or updating their relevant local or regional planning documents related to e.g. tourism development, cultural heritage conservation, and land-use, in particular their local and regional strategies for sustainable tourism development.

The implementation of the Strategy by the local stakeholders will bring the following **expected results**:

- nature protection and the local socio-economic development in the Carpathian region reconciliated and integrated
- improved quality of life, local economies and communities in the Carpathian region strengthened through the local sustainable tourism development
- enhanced conservation, maintenance, restoration and sustainable use of the natural, landscape and cultural heritage values of the Carpathians
- increased support of the local communities and other stakeholders for the conservation and restoration of biological and landscape diversity
- inhabitants activated and integrated in the frame of the local development activities, strengthened local identity and a sense of the common responsibility for the region



- enhanced implementation of the Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Kyiv, 2003).

Taking into account that the Strategy can be applied by all local communities, including municipal and regional authorities - it can influence either the whole, or at least a considerable part of the Carpathian region.

The distinctive feature and an obvious advantage for the implementation of the Strategy is that, compared to the strategic documents previously adopted under the Convention, it is **addressed to the local stakeholders, not the central Governments**. The above results from the intervention logic of the Centralparks project, translating the motto "think globally, act locally" into the Carpathian context.

It should also be emphasized, that due to the above "local action focus", this Strategy is a kind of a compendium of recommended measures and activities that proved to be efficient inside and/or outside PAs. The local stakeholders as the 'end-users' and beneficiaries of this Strategy shall select the most proper and feasible measures and activities, accordingly to the local priorities, needs, and management challenges, as well as the capacities of the local partners implementing the Strategy, and the specific local socio-economic context.

The **intervention logic** of the Centralparks thematic Work Package No 1 "Integration of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the Carpathian region" was the synergy of the three compatible project outputs, simultaneously prepared by the three Centralparks multinational expert groups (Thematic Transnational Task Forces, TTTFs).

The basic WTP1 assumption was that the reconciliation, linking the conservation of biological and landscape diversity to sustainable local socio-economic development, and raising the support of local communities for protected area operations is possible, if well protected natural and landscape values are properly used as the drivers and assets for the local economic development (including sustainable tourism development), while the conservation objectives, and benefits arising from the above synergy are effectively communicated to the local stakeholders.

Therefore, the **two other compatible outputs** of the Centralparks project also contain recommendations and solutions supporting the local sustainable tourism development.

The strategy for enhancing biodiversity and landscape conservation contains a set of measures aimed at the preservation of the natural and landscape values (also among the objectives of this Strategy), which are important assets for the local sustainable tourism development, to a large extent determining the tourist attractiveness of a destination.

The Centralparks Guidelines on communication between protected areas and local communities include issues related to raising the ecological awareness of tourists coming to the Carpathian protected areas, building the local identity, as well as the sense of the common ownership and responsibility for the region among the local residents.



Due to the above, it is recommended that the local stakeholders enhance the implementation of this Strategy by applying the two other mutually reinforcing Centralparks tools:

- the Strategy for enhancing biodiversity and landscape conservation outside and inside protected areas, and
- the Guidelines on communication between protected areas and local communities in the Carpathians.

Prepared in the heart of the **COVID-19** pandemic lockdown times, this Strategy takes due account of the relevant provisions of the Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) containing adequate response and remediation tools, mitigating both the threat to human health and lives, and the negative influence of the COVID-19 outbreak on tourism sector and protected areas. In the coming years many people could be discouraged and reluctant to travel abroad (e.g. to the other continents, in particular to regions with inadequate hygienic standards and underdeveloped public health care systems), while the previously popular ‘city breaks’ tourism would be less attractive (due to temporary closures or imposed limits, e.g. the allowed maximum number of visitors to museums and other tourist attractions).

In result, a considerable part of tourists would choose spending their leisure time in their home countries in less crowded places (taking into account the ‘social distancing’ principle) than the previously bustling and most visited main holiday and tourist destinations, like the natural areas (COVID-19 related restrictions in open areas are usually less severe). Thus, the pandemic additionally amplified the recent trends in tourism, where outdoor tourism and recreation became the new mainstream, more and more people were seeking recreational opportunities in natural green areas.

The above, on one hand, can further increase the pressures on the most ecologically sensitive sites and areas (including protected areas of the Carpathian region), but on the other hand, it could enhance the local sustainable tourism development in the areas previously less explored by mass tourism, being less ecologically sensitive, but having sufficient potential to absorb and accommodate part of the tourist traffic, such as the communities and municipalities located in the external buffer zones of protected areas, and the larger surrounding region.

The Strategy aims at ensuring the viability, and long-term economic stability of the local tourism development by mitigating the adverse effects of tourism **seasonality**, through the facilitation and promotion of a multitude of tourist and recreational activities, and by creating new local tourism products and services, which can be performed regardless of the season of the year.

Furthermore, the implementation of this Strategy shall foster “**accessible tourism**”, allowing the people with disabilities and others who have specific access requirements or other special needs to exercise their right to enjoy leisure, sport and tourism under the same conditions as the other people. The above becomes increasingly important, taking into account the ageing of population in the European countries, and increasing rate of disability among people with the capacity to travel. Many elderly people, and people with disabilities or specific access requirements can afford, and are willing to travel throughout the year, which helps to reduce the seasonality of tourist demand, often experienced by numerous mountain holiday and tourist destinations.



2. Correspondence with international legal acts in force, strategic documents, and adopted standards

This Strategy aims to support, facilitate, and enhance the implementation of the **Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians** (Kyiv, 2003) and its two thematic protocols: the Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011), and the Protocol on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity (Bucharest, 2008) at the local and regional level.

The Strategy provides guidance on measures and activities towards the sustainable tourism development, based on the exceptional nature, landscapes and cultural heritage of the Carpathians, and providing benefits to the local people (pursuant to Article 9⁶ of the Convention), with the aim to improve the quality of life, strengthen local economies and communities, as well as the conservation of natural values and cultural heritage (in line with Article 2⁷ of the Convention). The Strategy integrates the objective of conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity into the tourism development policy (pursuant to Article 4⁸ of the Convention).

The effective implementation of the Strategy requires the involvement of the local stakeholders (following the general objectives and principles of the Convention, determined in its Article 2⁹). Last, but not least, the Strategy encourages transboundary cooperation towards the sustainable tourism development (pursuant to Article 2 as well as Article 9¹⁰ of the Convention).

The objectives of this Strategy correspond with the general objectives and principles of the **Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011)** to the to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, by aiming at the development of sustainable tourism in a way maximizing the benefits of tourism to the local communities, both the present and future generations of the inhabitants of the Carpathian region, while preventing and mitigating negative ecological and environmental impacts from tourism (pursuant to Article 1, paragraph 1.¹¹ of the above Protocol).

⁶ The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Kyiv, 2003), Article 9 Sustainable tourism, paragraph 1. The Parties shall take measures to promote sustainable tourism in the Carpathians, providing benefits to the local people, based on the exceptional nature, landscapes and cultural heritage of the Carpathians, and shall increase cooperation to this effect. <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/text-of-the-convention.html>

⁷ The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Kyiv, 2003), Article 2 General objectives and principles, paragraph 2. The Parties shall pursue a comprehensive policy and cooperate for the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians with a view to inter alia improving quality of life, strengthening local economies and communities, and conservation of natural values and cultural heritage.

⁸ The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Kyiv, 2003), Article 4 Conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity, paragraph 6. The Parties shall take appropriate measures to integrate the objective of conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity into sectoral policies, such as mountain agriculture, mountain forestry, river basin management, tourism, transport and energy, industry and mining activities.

⁹ The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, Article 2, paragraph 2. In order to achieve the objectives referred to in paragraph 1, the Parties shall take appropriate measures, in the areas covered by Articles 4 to 13 of this Convention by promoting (...) (c) public participation and stakeholder involvement, (d) transboundary cooperation.

¹⁰ The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, Article 9, paragraph 2. Parties shall pursue policies aiming at promoting transboundary cooperation in order to facilitate sustainable tourism development, such as coordinated or joint management plans for transboundary or bordering protected areas, and other sites of touristic interest.

¹¹ Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians. Article 1 General objectives and principles, paragraph 1. In accordance with Article 9 of the Carpathian Convention the objective of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism (hereinafter referred to as “the Protocol”) is to enhance and facilitate cooperation of the Parties for the development of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians for the benefit to present and future generations, with the objective to maximize the positive benefits of tourism to biodiversity, ecosystems, and economic and social development, and of biodiversity to tourism, while mitigating negative ecological, environmental and socio-economic impacts from tourism. http://www.carpathianconvention.org/protocol_on_sustainable_tourism.html

Simultaneously, the exceptional nature, landscapes and cultural heritage of the Carpathians are perceived in this Strategy as the main drivers and most precious assets for the local sustainable tourism development (Article 1, paragraph 2.a.¹²).

The Strategy promotes **transboundary cooperation** on sustainable tourism development, by indicating which of the recommended measures and activities can successfully be implemented by the local stakeholders also at the local transboundary scale, in two or more cooperating neighbouring countries (in line with Article 1, paragraph 2.b.¹³ as well as Article 20, paragraph 3.¹⁴). The Parties committed to encourage active cooperation, and facilitate such joint activities undertaken by the regional and local authorities at the international level in Article 7¹⁵ of the Protocol.

An indispensable pre-requisite for the effective implementation of the Strategy is the due involvement of the key local stakeholders in cooperation on planning and application of the recommended measures and activities, and the harmonization and coordination of their efforts (following Article 6¹⁶ of the Protocol).

It should be emphasized that, due to its **focus on activities feasible at the local scale**, the Strategy does not have the ambition to cover all provisions of the 2011 Protocol on Sustainable Tourism. Hence, it does not further elaborate the Articles that require either the cooperation between the central authority levels of the Parties, or undertaking activities required at the scale of the whole respective national parts of the Carpathian region.

The Strategy recommends solely the measures and activities which are feasible for implementation by the local stakeholders, are specific for, and remain within the scope of competencies and responsibilities of the regional and local authority levels.

In response to challenges related to the still increasing tourism development pressures on mountain environments in the most popular tourist destinations and most scenic PAs on one hand, as well as the decline of local economies and ongoing rural depopulation in the remaining areas of the Carpathian region (including those not yet discovered as potential tourist destinations) on the other hand, the main substantive focus of the Strategy is on:

¹² Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) Article 1 General objectives and principles, paragraph 2. To achieve the above objectives, the Parties shall a. harmonize and coordinate their efforts on promoting sustainable tourism in the Carpathians, providing benefits to the local communities, based on the exceptional nature, landscapes and cultural heritage of the Carpathians, and increase cooperation to this effect.

¹³ Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) Article 1 General objectives and principles, paragraph 2. b. pursue policies aiming at promoting transboundary cooperation in order to facilitate sustainable tourism development, such as coordinated or joint management plans for transboundary or bordering protected areas, and other sites of touristic interest.

¹⁴ Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) Article 20 Promoting transboundary cooperation on sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians, paragraph 3. The Parties, in accordance with Article 9 paragraph 2 of the Carpathian Convention, shall take measures with the objective to coordinate management planning related to sustainable tourism development or develop joint management plans for its border areas in the Carpathians with the neighboring Party or Parties, in particular for transboundary or bordering protected areas, and other sites of touristic interest.

¹⁵ Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) Article 7 International cooperation 1. The Parties shall encourage active cooperation among competent institutions and organizations at the international level with regard to sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians. 2. The Parties shall facilitate the cooperation on sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians between regional and local authorities at the international level, and seek solutions to shared problems at the most suitable level.

¹⁶ Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) Article 6 Participation of regional and local authorities, and other stakeholders 1. Each Party shall take measures, within its existing institutional framework, to involve relevant institutions, regional and local authorities, and other stakeholders concerned in preparing and implementing policies and the resulting measures for the development of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians. 2. Each Party shall take measures, within its existing institutional framework, to facilitate coordination and cooperation between institutions, authorities and other stakeholders mentioned under paragraph 1, with the objective to encourage shared responsibility and enhance synergies.

- enhancing the contribution of tourism to the sustainable development of the local economy in the Carpathians, in particular in the **less ecologically sensitive and less developed areas** of the region, with the objective to mitigate negative migration and rural depopulation trends, contribute to poverty alleviation and allow for more equal sharing of benefits and revenues from the tourist services sector by all municipalities of the Carpathian region (pursuant to **Article 11, paragraph 4¹⁷** of the Protocol)
- managing tourist traffic in the Carpathians for the benefit of the environment and sustainable local economic development, by **dispersing** the spatial concentration of visitors, **redirecting**, and **channelling** part of the tourist traffic out of the current main tourist destinations and sensitive sites such as PAs, to the areas being less ecologically sensitive, less developed and less explored by tourism, but having sufficient potential to absorb and accommodate at least part of the tourist traffic (in line with **Article 12, paragraph 2¹⁸** of the Protocol).

It should be noted that the above quoted provisions of Articles 11 and 12 of the Protocol have not yet been translated into the language of more detailed actions in any strategic document of the Convention. For instance, such issues are not dealt with in the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians¹⁹ adopted at CC COP4 in 2014. Due to the above, and the fact, that the target audience of this Strategy are not the Parties and their central Governments, but the local and regional stakeholders, this Strategy should be perceived as complementary to the previously adopted strategic document of the Convention.

Furthermore, the Strategy aims at:

- involving the Carpathian local communities in the identification of the **specific local competitive advantages** for sustainable tourism development, which could provide for the unique selling proposition of their local sustainable tourism products, services and packages (Article 9, paragraph 2²⁰)
- enhancing the use of **local products** and skills as well as employment opportunities for the local labour force
- ensuring the long-term sustainability of tourism operations, also **mitigating the adverse effects of tourism seasonality** for the local economy, by increasing the ability for generating sufficient demand for the local tourist services and local employment also in the off-seasons
- strengthening the existing **unique selling propositions** of the local tourism offer

¹⁷ Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) Article 11 Enhancing the contribution of tourism to the sustainable development of the local economy in the Carpathians, paragraph 4. Each Party shall take measures with the objective to promote and support the development of sustainable tourism in less sensitive and less developed areas, with the objective to foster the sustainable economic development of less developed local people, mitigate negative migration and rural depopulation trends, contribute to poverty alleviation and allow for more equal sharing of benefits and revenues from the tourist services sector by all municipalities of the Carpathian region.

¹⁸ Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) Article 12, Managing tourist traffic in the Carpathians for the benefit of the environment and sustainable local economic development, paragraph 2. With the objective to mitigate the impacts of tourism on fragile mountain ecosystems of the Carpathians and to provide for a more equal distribution of the tourist traffic in the Carpathian region, each Party shall take measures in its national territory with the objective to disperse, redirect and channel part of the tourist traffic out of the current main tourist destinations and sensitive sites such as protected areas, to the areas being less ecologically sensitive, less developed and less explored by tourism, but having sufficient potential to absorb and accommodate part of the tourist traffic.

¹⁹ Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians UNEP/CC/COP4/DOC14 of 24.09.2014
http://www.carpathianconvention.org/tl_files/carpathiancon/Downloads/03%20Meetings%20and%20Events/COP/2014_COP4_Mikulov/Follow%20Up/DOC14_Sustainable%20Tourism%20Strategy_FINAL.pdf

²⁰ Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) Article 9 Development, promotion and marketing the Carpathian regional sustainable tourism products, services and packages, paragraph 2. The Parties shall cooperate on the identification of the specific Carpathian competitive advantages for sustainable tourism development over the other European mountain regions, which could provide for the unique selling proposition of the Carpathian regional sustainable tourism products, services and packages in the European and global tourist markets.



- promoting **innovation and diversity** in tourism, and the creation of new local and regional tourism products (in line with Article 11, paragraph 3²¹ of the Protocol).

Moreover, the implementation of this Strategy shall enhance the contribution of tourism to the preservation and promotion of the **cultural heritage** and of traditional knowledge of the local communities in the Carpathians, by providing sound economic incentives (Article 17, paragraph 2²² of the Protocol).

This Strategy aims at preventing and managing impacts of tourism on the biological and landscape diversity of the Carpathians (in line with Article 21, paragraph 1²³ of the Protocol on sustainable tourism), as well as enhancing the long-term conservation, restoration and sustainable use of natural habitats, their continuity and connectivity, the conservation of species of flora and fauna native to the Carpathians, in particular endangered and endemic species (in line with Articles 8, 9, 11, and 12 of the 2008 **Protocol on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity**²⁴) and the conservation and sustainable management in the areas outside of PAs (pursuant to Article 15, paragraph 1²⁵ of the above Protocol).

Furthermore, this Strategy shall facilitate building strong partnerships between protected areas and local communities in the Carpathians, and undertaking joint actions for the benefit of nature and local inhabitants - the need for strengthening such cooperation has explicitly been emphasized in the **EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030**²⁶.

²¹ Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) Article 11 Enhancing the contribution of tourism to the sustainable development of the local economy in the Carpathians, paragraph 3. Each Party shall take measures in its national territory with the objective to support and promote initiatives and projects towards sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians which foster the development of local economy and base on the local potential by enhancing the use of local products and skills as well as employment opportunities for the local labour force. Priority should be given to initiatives and projects which: a. contribute to ensuring long-term sustainability of tourism economic operations; b. strengthen the existing unique selling proposition of a particular tourism destination; c. promote innovation and diversity in tourism, and bring the added value to the current local tourist offer of a particular tourist destination, also by creating new local and regional tourist products; d. contribute to the diversification of tourism offers with the objective to reduce the adverse effects of the tourism seasonality by generating sufficient demand for tourist services and local employment also in the off-seasons; e. contribute to the diversification of the local economic activities beyond tourism with the objective to reduce dependency of the local economy on tourism; f. enrich and supplement the current local tourism offers of a particular tourism destination rather than compete with already existing businesses.

²² Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) Article 17 Enhancing the contribution of tourism to the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage and of traditional knowledge of the local communities in the Carpathians, paragraph 2.: Each Party shall take measures with the objective to promote and support the development of sustainable tourism activities fostering preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage and traditional knowledge of the local communities in the Carpathians, in particular initiatives and projects towards sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians which provide sound economic incentives for the preservation of the traditional architecture objects, local breeds of domestic animals and cultivated plant varieties, as well as the continuation of traditional land-use patterns and practices, crafting and marketing of local goods, arts and handicrafts.

²³ Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011) Article 21 Managing impacts of tourism on the biological and landscape diversity of the Carpathians, paragraph 1. The Parties shall apply the precaution and prevention principles by assessing and taking into consideration possible direct or indirect, short- or long-term influence, including cumulative effects of tourism, recreational and sport infrastructure development projects, as well as tourist, recreational and sport activities, which are likely to have adverse impacts on the biological and landscape diversity of the Carpathians. In this regard, Parties shall proceed with appropriate assessment of potential adverse impact of projects, plans and activities related to tourism development in the Carpathians, including transboundary impacts.

²⁴ 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
<http://www.carpathianconvention.org/protocol-on-biodiversity.html>

²⁵ Protocol on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity (Bucharest, 2008), Article 15 Enhancing conservation and sustainable management in the areas outside of protected areas, paragraph 1. Each Party shall take measures in its national territory with the objective to enhance conservation and sustainable management in the areas outside of protected areas in the Carpathians.

²⁶ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 Bringing nature back into our lives COM/2020/380 final: "protecting and restoring nature will need more than regulation alone. It will require action by citizens, businesses, social partners and the research and knowledge community, as well as strong partnerships between local, regional, national and European level".
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590047327627&uri=COM:2020:380:FIN>



Building effective partnerships between public institutions, regional and local authorities, and other stakeholders is an indispensable precondition for successful achievement of the goals set by the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, and resulting SDG Targets, including the promotion of sustainable tourism (Target 8.9), safeguarding the cultural and natural heritage (Target 11.4), ensuring the conservation of mountain ecosystems (Target 15.4), reducing the degradation of natural habitats and halting the loss of biodiversity (Target 15.5), and integrating ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, and development processes (Target 15.9)²⁷.

The Strategy supports the implementation of the 2006 **renewed EU Tourism Policy**, which emphasizes that sustainable tourism plays a major role in the preservation and enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage, while the uncontrolled development of tourism can threaten such values²⁸.

The Strategy shall also facilitate the achievement of the objectives of the 2007 **EU Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism**²⁹ - it duly acknowledges the role of stakeholders, aims at delivering the economic prosperity, social equity and cohesion, environmental and cultural protection; and includes responses to challenges mentioned in the above Agenda (e.g. the need for sustainable conservation and management of natural and cultural resources, reducing the seasonality of demand, and making tourism experiences available to all without discrimination).

Furthermore, the Strategy addresses the challenge of ensuring the tourism accessibility for the ageing European society and the increasing number of specific needs tourists (e.g. with reduced mobility), emphasized in the 2010 **EU new political framework for tourism in Europe** communication³⁰, and supports its priority No 2 (promoting the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism). By enhancing the dispersal of the tourist traffic, this Strategy can minimize the health risks related to the Covid-19 pandemic, thus supporting measures recommended by the **EC Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond** communication of 13 May 2020³¹.

²⁷ United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Targets: 8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products; 11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage; 15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development; 15.5 Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species; 15.9 By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts.
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

²⁸ Communication from the Commission - A renewed EU Tourism Policy: Towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism COM/2006/134 final. "Biodiversity, ecosystem function, natural resources and nonrenewable cultural heritage or even the functioning of urban areas may be threatened by the uncontrolled development of tourism. Economic, social and environmental sustainability are key factors for the competitiveness of destinations and the welfare of their populations, as well as for the creation of employment and for the preservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural attractions."
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0134:FIN:EN:PDF>

²⁹ Communication from the Commission - Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism * COM/2007/0621 final *
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52007DC0621>

³⁰ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination - a new political framework for tourism in Europe * COM/2010/0352 final *

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0352>

³¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond COM/2020/550 final
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0550>

The Strategy promotes sustainable development in areas adjacent to protected areas, aims at minimizing possible adverse impacts of tourism on biological and landscape diversity (in particular inside PAs), strengthens economic incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity, in line with the provisions³² of the **Convention on Biological Diversity** (Rio de Janeiro, 1992).

The Strategy aims at reducing the negative impacts of tourism and outdoor activities on mountain ecosystems, strengthening the capacity of the local communities for sustainable tourism management, and preserving natural and cultural heritage values, in line with the **CBD Programme of Work on Mountain Biological Diversity**³³.

The Strategy incorporates the vision and main goals established by the **CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development**, e.g. sustainable tourism compatible with biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, prevention of damages to biological diversity and ecosystems; supporting the effective participation and involvement of local communities in the development, operation and monitoring of tourism activities; information and capacity-building³⁴.

The Strategy recommends numerous measures and activities resulting from the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe³⁵ (Granada, 1985) as well as globally adopted **international agreements**: the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage³⁶ (Paris, 1972), the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage³⁷ (Paris, 2003), and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities³⁸ (CRPD, 2007). In correspondence to the latter, the Strategy also takes into account the **UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All**³⁹, and the **UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Information in Tourism**⁴⁰.

³² Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) Article 8. In-situ Conservation: Each Contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate: (e) Promote environmentally sound and sustainable development in areas adjacent to protected areas with a view to furthering protection of these areas; (i) Endeavour to provide the conditions needed for compatibility between present uses and the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components; (l) Where a significant adverse effect on biological diversity has been determined pursuant to Article 7, regulate or manage the relevant processes and categories of activities. Article 10. Sustainable Use of Components of Biological Diversity: Each Contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate: (b) Adopt measures relating to the use of biological resources to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on biological diversity. Article 11. Incentive Measures: Each Contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate, adopt economically and socially sound measures that act as incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity.
<https://www.cbd.int/doc/legal/cbd-en.pdf>

³³ Programme of Work on Mountain Biological Diversity Action 1.3.6. Through appropriate environmental planning, reduce the negative impacts of tourism and outdoor activities on mountain ecosystems, as well as the development of associated human settlements and facilities. Action 1.3.7. Strengthen local capacity for sustainable tourism management, in order to ensure that benefits derived from tourism activities are shared by indigenous and local communities, while preserving natural and cultural heritage values.
<https://www.cbd.int/mountain/wopo.shtml>

³⁴ CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development, Goals <https://www.cbd.int/tourism/guidelines.shtml?page=2>

³⁵ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/121>

³⁶ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>

³⁷ http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=17716&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

³⁸ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html#Fulltext>

³⁹ <https://www.unwto.org/archive/global/publication/unwto-recommendations-accessible-tourism-all>

⁴⁰ <https://www.unwto.org/archive/global/publication/unwto-recommendations-accessible-information-tourism>



3. Mission, goal, and the intervention logic of the Strategy (strategic and operational objectives)

Mission:

Improving quality of life, and strengthening local economies and communities in the Carpathian region through the local sustainable tourism development, based on sustainable use of the natural, landscape and cultural heritage values of the Carpathians, enhancing the conservation and maintenance of these assets, perceived as an important location factor.

The **intervention logic** of the Strategy for local sustainable tourism development based on natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathians (further as LSTD Strategy): the hierarchy and relations between its overall goal, corresponding strategic objectives and resulting operational objectives, as well as recommended measures and activities.

The overall **goal** of the strategy is to enhance the contribution of sustainable tourism to the development of the local economy in the Carpathians, through the achievement of the three following **strategic objectives** (SOs):

SO1 - Environmental dimension objective, that will allow to:	SO2 - Economic dimension objective, that will allow to:	SO3 - Social dimension objective, that will allow to:
<p>Preserve and sustainably use the natural, landscape, and cultural values of the Carpathian region,</p> <p>perceived as important assets for the local sustainable tourism development</p>	<p>Strengthen the development of the local economy, revive and diversify the local labour market, increase the standard of living and well-being of the inhabitants, and enhance the employment opportunities in the region</p>	<p>Activate and integrate inhabitants in the frame of local tourism development activities,</p> <p>thus strengthening the local identity, and a sense of common responsibility for the region</p>



The above strategic objectives (SOs) will be achieved through the implementation of recommended measures and activities, grouped under nine **operational objectives (OOs)**:

<p>OO 1.1. - Well maintained and protected natural, landscape and cultural heritage assets for sustainable tourism development</p> <p>Identifying, maintaining, protecting, and building on the natural, landscape, and cultural heritage values,</p> <p>contributing to the tourist attractiveness and specific local competitive advantages</p>	<p>OO 2.1 - Territorial brand of the tourism destination built on local resources</p> <p>Strengthening the tourist attractiveness, competitive advantages, and unique selling proposition of the tourism destination</p> <p>by building a distinctive territorial brand</p> <p>based on the local sustainable tourist services, products, and packages</p> <p>created with the utilization of locally available resources, and locally specific natural, landscape and cultural heritage assets</p>	<p>OO 3.1. - Local identity as the social integration and activation factor</p> <p>Building the local identity and activating the inhabitants</p> <p>for the purposes of identification, maintenance and preservation of the locally specific natural, landscape, and cultural heritage values,</p> <p>which are important assets for the local sustainable tourism development</p>
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<p>OO 1.2. - Raising awareness and appreciation of the local natural and cultural heritage</p> <p>Raising the appreciation and awareness</p> <p>of the importance and values of the locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources,</p> <p>as well as on threats for their maintenance, among the local residents and tourists</p>	<p>OO 2.2. - Ensuring economic stability of the local tourist services sector</p> <p>Ensuring viable, long-term economic operations of the local tourist services sector, increasing the contribution of tourism to the local economy, enriching and supplementing the local tourism offer,</p> <p>allowing stable employment and income-earning opportunities, reducing the adverse effects of the tourism seasonality, and providing for more equal sharing of benefits and revenues from the tourist services sector</p>	<p>OO 3.2. - Enhancing the potential of the local inhabitants for sustainable tourism development</p> <p>Training and capacity building for the local inhabitants,</p> <p>increasing their professional skills</p> <p>and stimulating their activities for the development of local sustainable tourism products and packages</p>
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<p>OO 1.3. - Managing tourism impact on the fragile mountain ecosystems of the Carpathians</p>	<p>OO 2.3. - Cooperation for the local sustainable tourism development</p>	<p>OO 3.3. - Participation in sustainable tourism development planning</p>
<p>Dispersing, redirecting and channelling</p> <p>tourist traffic flows out of ecologically sensitive sites and areas,</p> <p>to the areas being less ecologically sensitive,</p> <p>having sufficient potential to absorb and accommodate part of the tourist traffic</p>	<p>Creating a cooperation platform for various local stakeholder groups,</p> <p>enhancing the consultation and harmonization of local and regional initiatives, and activities aimed at the local sustainable tourism development,</p> <p>for efficient planning, initiating and coordinating activities, and conducting destination marketing</p>	<p>Involving local residents in the process of planning and development of sustainable tourism,</p> <p>building upon their specific deep knowledge of local issues and problems,</p> <p>raising their awareness of the risks and benefits associated with tourism development,</p> <p>including them in decision-making,</p> <p>and strengthening a sense of common responsibility for their home community and the region</p>



4. Recommended measures and activities

This chapter contains measures and activities recommended for the local sustainable tourism development in the Carpathian region, grouped under strategic objectives (SOs) and operational objectives (OOs) of the Strategy.

These measures and activities are neither prioritized, nor put under any hierarchical order or numbered, only grouped under several different, but quite general headings under the operational objectives (OOs), which shall help to navigate through the contents.

It is the local stakeholders as the ‘end-users’ and ‘end beneficiaries’ of this Strategy who shall select the most proper and feasible measures and activities on their own, in consultation between all partners involved in the development or revision (and later the implementation) of the local strategies and plans for sustainable tourism development, accordingly to the local priorities, most urgent needs and management challenges, as well as the financial and operational capacities of the local partners implementing the Strategy, and the specific local socio-economic context.

Several recommended measures or activities can serve for the achievement of several SOs and OOs, and are therefore repeated (marked 📄).

Some recommended measures and activities (marked 📍) are most relevant for their application within the territory of legally designated protected areas, while the remaining other measures and activities can be applied regardless the legal protective status of the area, thus also in the external buffer zone of protected areas, and the larger surrounding region.

Moreover, some recommended measures and activities (marked 🌐) can successfully be implemented also at the transboundary scale, in cooperation between the local and regional authorities, and other stakeholders from the two or more bordering countries, in line with Article 20 paragraph 3 of the Protocol on sustainable tourism (Bratislava, 2011), where the Parties committed to coordinate management planning related to sustainable tourism development in their border areas in the Carpathians.



S01 - Environmental dimension objective

S01 - Environmental dimension objective, that will allow to:

Preserve and sustainably use the natural, landscape, and cultural values of the Carpathian region, perceived as important assets for the local sustainable tourism development

OO 1.1. - Well maintained and protected natural, landscape and cultural heritage assets for sustainable tourism development

OO 1.1. - Well maintained and protected natural, landscape and cultural heritage assets for sustainable tourism development

Identifying, maintaining, protecting, and building on the natural, landscape, and cultural heritage values, contributing to the tourist attractiveness and specific local competitive advantages

Identification and promotion of the local assets for sustainable tourism development

- identification of the cultural and historical heritage sites in the external PA buffer zone and larger surrounding region, which could be attractive for tourists, and allow the development of cultural heritage-based tourism products and packages ☛
- identification of locally specific unique natural and landscape values (in particular those occurring in the external PA buffer zone and larger surrounding region), which could be attractive for tourists, and allow the development of nature-based tourism products and packages ☛
- development of programmes aimed at the proper presentation, interpretation, and promotion of the locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources; as well as educational exhibitions, and ecological awareness raising programmes, tailored for different target audiences ☛ 📄

Protection of the local assets for sustainable tourism development

- support for the maintenance or revival of the traditional local activities that contribute to the preservation of the characteristic and unique image of the Carpathian region, as well as enable the development of the local tourist products and services based on such distinctive natural, landscape and cultural heritage assets, specific for the Carpathian region ☛ 📄
- promotion of traditional architectural design patterns typical for particular subregions of the Carpathian region, and the use of traditional skills and traditional materials for the construction of tourist infrastructure objects ☛
- celebration, protection, proper presentation and interpretation of the local living culture and intangible cultural heritage (including local traditions, handicraft skills, arts, music, language, and other aspects of the local identity and distinctiveness) ☛

- implementation of the Carpathian strategy for enhancing biodiversity and landscape conservation outside and inside protected areas (*Centralparks WPT1 output O.T1.1*) 🌐
- facilitation and promotion of volunteer involvement of both the local residents and incomers/tourists in the implementation of measures aimed at the maintenance and preservation of the locally specific natural, landscape, and cultural heritage values, including voluntary support for protected area management operations, providing for enhanced sense of common responsibility for the preservation of these values, deeper sense of authenticity of the visitor experience, and the greater emotional attachment of both above stakeholder groups to the region 🗣️
- elaboration and application of the locally-adopted ‘Code of Conduct’ for visitors to a particular PA, informing them on the uniqueness of protected natural values of this PA, encouraging and instructing the visitors on how to act in an environmentally friendly manner and behave responsibly, to minimize the impact of their visit on the most ecologically sensitive sites and areas, rare and protected species (e.g. by the application of the 9 principles of the Respect Nature initiative by the European Wilderness Society⁴¹) 🌐 🗣️ 📄
- promotion of litter-free hiking behaviour (e.g. application of the 7 “Leave no trace” rules, which also helps to prevent and minimize potential human / wildlife conflicts), launching local litter collection/plogging campaigns aimed at the reduction of the amount of waste disposed in nature
- promotion of responsible behaviour rules for PA visitors practicing outdoor sports (e.g. by the application of the 10 Good Principles for Outdoor Sports in Protected Areas)⁴² 🗣️
- influencing visitors’ expectations, behaviour in PAs, and decisions on their itinerary and thorough choice of trails and routes, e.g. on what to see, where to go (or not to go, in case some trails might be too demanding for those not enough fit and prepared for wilderness exploration), with special emphasis on promoting the most suitable offer for either the elderly or disabled people, as well as children and teenagers, able to influence parents’ choices and decisions 🗣️
- de-marketing, discouragement, or (if legally possible) significant limitation or ban (except for carefully selected and specially designated areas) on recreational activities and visitation of the area with the use of motorized vehicles of potentially high environmental and ecological impacts (such as off-road vehicles, snow mobiles, motorcycles, quads, helicopters, ultralight aircrafts and motorized hang gliders), as well as paraglides and UAVs
- de-marketing, discouragement, or (if legally possible) significant limitation or ban on the development of new cable car lines, gondola and chairlifts, and other transport means non-traditional for the Carpathian mountain tourism
- modernization and/or adaptation of the existing local transport means (e.g. narrow-gauge forest trains, cable car lines, gondola and chair-lifts) and existing accompanying infrastructure (e.g. cable car and ski lift stations, rafting or boating piers and landing places), in order to decrease the demand for new developments
- de-marketing, discouragement, or (if legally possible) significant limitation or ban on the organization of mass cultural (e.g. concerts, shows) and sport events, and extreme outdoor sports performance inside PAs 🗣️

⁴¹ Respect Nature Information <https://wilderness-society.org/european-wilderness-definition/respect-nature-information/>

⁴² 10 Good Principles for Outdoor Sports in Protected Areas

<https://www.europarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/10-principles-outdoor-sports-in-PAs-poster.pdf>

Building on the local assets for sustainable tourism development

- promotion of environmentally friendly and sustainable forms of tourism and recreation (in particular nature- and culture-based tourism, agrotourism)
- application of the Greenways⁴³ concept at the local scale, by the development and maintenance of specially designed and equipped multi-functional natural and cultural heritage routes along rivers, historic trade routes, natural ecological corridors and railways, accessible solely for non-motorized forms of mobility, promoting a healthy lifestyle, active tourism, and outdoor recreation 🌱
- enhancement of the development of environmentally friendly modes of mobility in tourist destinations, in particular those based on locally available services, which shall also include the planning, construction and maintenance of the specially designed and equipped networks of trails (if possible separated from each other, for the user safety reasons) for walking, hiking and climbing, cycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, boating, kayaking, and white-water rafting 🌱
- development and presentation of attractive video and multimedia shows in visitor centres, free of charge, providing the visitors the opportunity of ‘virtual sightseeing’ of the area, regardless the season, time of a day, and actual weather conditions (which shall also lower their motivation for the ‘in-person visitation’, thus limiting the human penetration of the most pristine and valuable areas inside PAs) 📺
- encouraging the certification of destinations or tourist businesses and accommodations related to the sustainability, responsibility and quality of tourist management and local tourism products and services on the international (e.g. accordingly to the Destination Criteria⁴⁴ by the GSTC - Global Sustainable Tourism Council, or similar to the quality label by the ECEAT - European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism⁴⁵), cross-border (e.g. similar to the Tradice Bílých Karpat⁴⁶ regional quality label), national, or regional level.

⁴³ European Greenways Association <https://www.aevv-egwa.org/greenways/>

⁴⁴ Global Sustainable Tourism Council Destination Criteria
<https://www.gstcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/GSTC-Destination-Criteria-v2.0.pdf>
<https://www.gstcouncil.org/certification/become-certified-destination/>

⁴⁵ European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism quality label <http://www.eceat.org/index.php/public/en/10>

⁴⁶ Tradice Bílých Karpat regional quality label <http://www.tradicebk.cz/znacka-tbk>



OO 1.2. - Raising awareness and appreciation of the local natural and cultural heritage

– OO 1.2. - Raising awareness and appreciation of the local natural and cultural heritage
– Raising the appreciation and awareness of the importance and values of the locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources, as well as on threats for their maintenance, among the local residents and tourists

Raising awareness on the local assets for sustainable tourism development

- Informing local communities about the locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources which can be valuable assets for the local sustainable tourism development
- application of the Centralparks Guidelines on communication between protected areas and local communities in the Carpathians (Centralparks WPT1 output O.T1.3) 📄
- proper presentation and interpretation of the local living culture and intangible cultural heritage (including local traditions, handicraft skills, arts, music, language, and other aspects of the local identity and distinctiveness) 🌟
- communication and interpretation of the locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural heritage values by the locally-recruited (possibly also certified / licensed by local PA/s) tourist guides
- designing, development and maintenance of interpretative nature and culture trails, or, especially in case when the existing network of tourist trails inside PA is already quite dense, adding the interpretative contents (e.g. interpretative boards with QR codes at trail stops and campsites, brochures, mobile applications and mobile tools, either generally available, or provided by the PA or local visitor centres) to the already existing tourist trails 🌟 📄
- development of programmes aimed at the proper presentation, interpretation, and promotion of the locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources; as well as educational exhibitions, and ecological awareness raising programmes, tailored for different target audiences 🌟 📄
- installation of interpretative boards concerning the locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural values also outside the PA territory
- development (e.g. on the basis of already existing tourist information points) and maintenance of PA and other local visitor centres, providing, among its different functions, the information on the locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources; as well as educational exhibitions, and ecological awareness raising programmes tailored for different target audiences
- development and presentation of attractive video and multimedia shows in visitor centres, free of charge, providing the visitors the opportunity of ‘virtual sightseeing’ of the area, regardless the season, time of a day, and actual weather conditions (which shall also lower their motivation for the ‘in-person visitation’, thus limiting the human penetration of the most pristine and valuable areas inside PAs) 📄
- application of modern information and communication technology (ICT) solutions, such as web-based tourist pre-trip (travel planning), en-route, in-destination, and post-trip information platforms, QR code based visitor information mobile applications (using QR codes placed

e.g. along interpretative nature- and culture trails and routes for scanning by tourists to obtain more detailed information) interactive maps, and other mobile applications (in particular those working off-line, due to the often limited range of mobile telecommunication and either limited or missing internet access in the mountain valley locations) for visitors, developed, maintained and updated by DMOs in partnerships with the local stakeholders, incl. tourist service providers, transport companies, PA administrations, local authorities ☺

- provision of the tourist information in both written and audio format
- provision of adequate communication tools for interpreting the locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources values for the visitors with vision, hearing, or cognitive disabilities

Raising awareness on threats for the maintenance of the local assets for sustainable tourism development

- raising the visitors' ecological awareness, understanding of sustainability needs, nature conservation requirements, and support for PA operations ☺
- elaboration and application of the locally-adopted 'Code of Conduct' for visitors to a particular PA, informing them on the uniqueness of protected natural values of this PA, encouraging and instructing the visitors on how to act in an environmentally friendly manner and behave responsibly, to minimize the impact of their visit on the most ecologically sensitive sites and areas (e.g. by the application of the 9 principles of the Respect Nature initiative by the European Wilderness Society⁴⁷) ☺☺📄
- “demarketing” of the wildest / most pristine / strictly protected, and/or particularly ecologically sensitive sites and areas inside PAs, also by informing on e.g. the restrictions of use, limitations, and lack of trail infrastructure (in comparison to other trails, more appropriate and designed for mass tourism) in visitor information materials / packages, and on info boards located at the trail entrance points, or by special trail marking system ☺
- providing adequate (and polite, e.g. instead of saying “you must not / it is strictly prohibited” use “please help us to protect / thank you for protecting”) explanations for the visitors of the reasons for any introduced restrictions, limitations, and bans on tourist access, simultaneously informing on recommended alternative visiting opportunities (also, or in particular outside the PA, in the PA buffer zone, or surrounding municipalities), providing for similar quality of the visitor experience and satisfaction ☺

⁴⁷ Respect Nature Information <https://wilderness-society.org/european-wilderness-definition/respect-nature-information/>



OO 1.3. - Managing tourism impact on the fragile mountain ecosystems of the Carpathians

OO 1.3. - Managing tourism impact on the fragile mountain ecosystems of the Carpathians

Dispersing, redirecting and channelling tourist traffic flows out of ecologically sensitive sites and areas, to the areas being less ecologically sensitive, having sufficient potential to absorb and accommodate part of the tourist traffic

Preparatory measures for managing tourism impact on the fragile mountain ecosystems

- monitoring the tourist traffic (gathering both quantitative and qualitative data)
- assessment of tourist and recreational impacts on ecologically sensitive sites and areas ☼
- estimation of the tourism carrying capacity (TCC) values for the particular most ecologically sensitive sites and areas, if the relevant methodology⁴⁸ has been adopted and indicated by the national legislation Ⓛ
- harmonization of the local tourism development plans with the conservation or management plan of the PAs designated in the region, and the regional and local environment / nature protection plans ☼
- identifying threats and management challenges for planning purposes

Direct measures to be undertaken in the protected area external buffer zone and larger surrounding region, aimed at dispersing, redirecting and channelling tourist traffic

- development of local nature- and culture based tourism services, products and packages based on locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources of the PA external buffer zone and larger surrounding region, with the objective to diversify the tourism offer, and generate sufficient demand for tourist services and local employment also in the off-seasons, thus reducing the adverse effects of the dependency of the local economy on the temporal tourist traffic concentration in seasonally-visited main tourist attractions, tourist “must-see” zones and sites (including “mousetraps”) inside PAs 📄
- promoting and marketing existing “must-see” tourist attractions, and other sites of tourist interest in the PA external buffer zone and larger surrounding region, instead of concentrating tourist traffic inside PAs and their most ecologically sensitive sites and areas ☼
- creating / enhancing the development of “honeypots” in the external PA buffer zone, located far enough from the most ecologically sensitive sites and areas, diluting the tourism impact on PAs (applying the dispersal of use / increasing supply of tourism opportunities through the space dimension concepts) 📄
- introducing innovative tourist products and visitor experience qualities which could increase the popularity and the number of users of the “honeypots” in the external PA buffer zone (e.g. recreational “via ferrata”, canopy walkways, wildlife or landscape observation points, boardwalks, platforms, and towers - provided that such artificial structures are well hidden in the forest, wetland, or tree crowns, and do not significantly disturb the natural landscape and vulnerable species) 📄

⁴⁸ e.g. methodology based on VERP (Visitor Experience and Resource Protection) and/or LAC (Limits of Acceptable Change)

- promoting alternative tourist and recreational offerings of “honeypots” in the external PA buffer zone for e.g. less skilled visitors to the area, elderly or disabled persons, and families with small children
- development and maintenance of PA and local municipality visitor centres, which can serve as “honeypots” in the PA external buffer zone or the larger surrounding region (absorbing and accommodating at least a part of the tourist traffic towards the PA) 📄
- development and presentation of attractive video and multimedia shows in visitor centres, free of charge, providing the visitors the opportunity of ‘virtual sightseeing’ of the area, regardless the season, time of a day, and actual weather conditions (which shall also lower their motivation for the ‘in-person visitation’, thus limiting the human penetration of the most pristine and valuable areas inside PAs) 📄
- influencing visitors’ expectations, behaviour in PAs, and decisions on their itinerary and thorough choice of trails and routes, e.g. on what to see, where to go (or not to go, in case some trails might be too demanding for those not enough fit and prepared for wilderness exploration), including the use of modern information and communication technology (ICT) solutions, such as web-based tourist pre-trip (travel planning), en-route, and in-destination, and post-trip information platforms, QR code based visitor information mobile applications (using QR codes placed e.g. along interpretative nature- and culture trails and routes for scanning by tourists to obtain more detailed information), interactive maps, and other mobile applications (in particular those working off-line, due to the often limited range of mobile telecommunication and either limited or missing internet access in the mountain valley locations) for visitors, developed, maintained and updated by DMOs in partnerships with the local stakeholders, incl. tourist service providers, transport companies, PA administrations, local authorities 🔄 📄
- using already existing routes and paths for planning the extension or modification of the trail network 📄
- ensuring the proper design of carefully selected tourist trails and rest stops, equipped with rain/wind shelters and benches, safety railings and barriers at more demanding or hazardous sections of tourist trails planned to accommodate the traffic of elderly or disabled visitors
- dispersing, redirecting and channelling tourist traffic flows out of ecologically sensitive sites and areas in transboundary cooperation with partners from other neighbouring countries, e.g. through coordinating and/or harmonizing management plans related to local sustainable tourism development, or through implementing joint projects, in particular in transboundary or adjacent / bordering PAs and their external buffer zones, and other areas and sites of touristic interest, located in border areas 🔄

Direct measures to be undertaken inside protected areas, aimed at dispersing, redirecting and channelling tourist traffic

- development of local nature- and culture based tourism services, products and packages based on locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources of the PA, with the objective to diversify the tourism offer, generate sufficient demand for tourist services and local employment also in the off-seasons, and establish new or upgrade existing attractive “mousetraps” inside PAs 🔄 📄

- implementation of the PA functional spatial zonation concept accordingly to the nature and landscape conservation management requirements (if not yet in place) 📄📄
- adjustment of the visitor traffic intensity and load in the most ecologically sensitive sites and areas, taking into account their characteristics, capacity and sensitivity, to optimize the visitor flow and minimize possible adverse impacts, if authorized by applicable national legislation, accordingly to the tourism carrying capacity (TCC) values, estimated with the use of the methodology adopted and indicated by the national legislation 📄
- development and maintenance of PA and local municipality visitor centres, which can serve as “mousetraps” inside the PA (filtering the visitor traffic, channelling and absorbing at least part of visitors who reached the PA territory, despite the presence of honeypots in the PA external buffer zone, or the larger surrounding region), thus preventing or considerably limiting the human penetration of the most pristine and valuable areas inside PAs 📄
- development and presentation of attractive video and multimedia shows in visitor centres, free of charge, providing the visitors the opportunity of ‘virtual sightseeing’ of the area, regardless the season, time of a day, and actual weather conditions (which shall also lower their motivation for the ‘in-person visitation’, thus limiting the human penetration of the most pristine and valuable areas inside PAs) 📄
- influencing visitors’ expectations, behaviour in PAs, and decisions on their itinerary and thorough choice of trails and routes, e.g. on what to see, where to go (or not to go, in case some trails might be too demanding for those not enough fit and prepared for wilderness exploration), including the use of modern information and communication technology (ICT) solutions, such as web-based tourist pre-trip (travel planning), en-route, and in-destination, and post-trip information platforms, QR code based visitor information mobile applications (using QR codes placed e.g. along interpretative nature- and culture trails and routes for scanning by tourists to obtain more detailed information), interactive maps, and other mobile applications (in particular those working off-line, due to the often limited range of mobile telecommunication and either limited or missing internet access in the mountain valley locations) for visitors, developed, maintained and updated by DMOs in partnerships with the local stakeholders, incl. tourist service providers, transport companies, PA administrations, local authorities 📄📄
- planning, development, and servicing the “mousetraps” in carefully selected tourist “must-see” zones and sites inside PAs - intentionally sacrificed zones and sites less ecologically sensitive, but suitable for the concentration of tourist traffic and recreational use of areas and sites inside PAs, equipped with efficient hygienic and sewage/biowaste treatment facilities, and animal-proof (“bird and/or bear-proof”) waste and litter collection containers, of the suitable capacity 📄
- limiting the number of “artificial” attractions (like “via ferrata”, canopy walkways, landscape observation towers and platforms, and other artificial structures), or banning their development inside PAs 📄
- “demarketing” of the wildest and most pristine, and/or particularly ecologically sensitive sites and areas inside PAs, also by informing on e.g. the restrictions of use, limitations, and lack of trail infrastructure (in comparison to other trails, more appropriate and designed for mass tourism) in visitor information materials and packages, and on info boards located at the trail entrance points, or by special trail marking system 📄

- differentiating the accessibility of areas and sites inside PAs by facilitating easy access to “mousetraps” in PAs, while discouraging the visitor penetration of the wildest and most pristine, and/or particularly ecologically sensitive sites and areas inside PAs, through limiting the level of investments in, and the maintenance of trail infrastructure (lack of trail surface hardening, bridges, pathways, benches, rain shelters etc.) 📄
- ensuring the proper design of carefully selected tourist trails and rest stops, equipped with rain/wind shelters and benches, safety railings and barriers at more demanding or hazardous sections of tourist trails planned to accommodate the traffic of elderly or disabled visitors
- if deemed necessary, re-designing the layout or routing of access roads and tourist trails running across the most ecologically sensitive sites and areas inside PAs, or providing seasonal alternative routing for access of PA visitors, accordingly to nature conservation management requirements for the temporary reduction of tourist impact / human disturbances (e.g. for restoration of habitats and/or road/trailside plant communities, during bird nesting or animal hibernation and/or mating seasons etc.) 📄 📄
- using already existing routes and paths for planning the extension or modification of the trail network 📄
- if deemed necessary, re-designing the layout or routing of access roads and tourist trails in the most scenic sites or areas of the PA, accordingly to the landscape conservation and restoration requirements 📄 📄
- if deemed necessary, re-designing or removal of existing tourist trail infrastructure and car parking facilities 📄
- if deemed necessary, regulating the vehicle traffic rules inside the PA, and restricting the car parking only to some selected spots in less ecologically sensitive sites and areas 📄
- if deemed necessary, restricting or reducing visitor access to the most ecologically sensitive sites and areas inside PAs, by imposing permanent or temporary (e.g. seasonal) bans or limitations of the volume of the tourist traffic on particular sections of access roads and tourist trails 📄
- providing adequate explanations for the visitors of the reasons for any introduced restrictions, limitations, and bans on tourist access, simultaneously informing on recommended alternative visiting opportunities (also, or in particular outside the PA, in the PA buffer zone, or surrounding municipalities), providing for similar quality of the visitor experience and satisfaction. 📄
- dispersing, redirecting and channelling tourist traffic flows out of ecologically sensitive sites and areas in transboundary cooperation with partners from other neighbouring countries, e.g. through coordinating and/or harmonizing management plans related to local sustainable tourism development, or through implementing joint projects, in particular in transboundary or adjacent / bordering PAs and their external buffer zones, and other areas and sites of touristic interest, located in border areas 📄 📄



S02 - Economic dimension objective

S02 - Economic dimension objective, that will allow to:
Strengthen the growth of the local economy, revive and diversify the local labour market, increase the standard of living and well-being of the inhabitants, and enhance the employment opportunities in the region

OO 2.1 - Territorial brand of the tourism destination built on local resources

OO 2.1 - Territorial brand of the tourism destination built on local resources
Strengthening the tourist attractiveness, competitive advantages, and unique selling proposition of the tourism destination by building a distinctive territorial brand based on the local sustainable tourist services, products and packages created with the utilization of locally available resources, and locally specific natural, landscape and cultural heritage assets

Building a distinctive territorial brand of the destination

- development of local nature- and culture based tourism services, products and packages based on locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources of the PA, its external buffer zone and larger surrounding region ☒ 📄
- development of programmes aimed at the proper presentation, interpretation, and promotion of the locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources; as well as educational exhibitions, and ecological awareness raising programmes, tailored for different target audiences ☒ 📄
- identifying, promoting, and marketing the unique selling proposition (USP) of a particular municipality /destination for various identified target groups of potential visitors, resulting from the locally specific mix of natural, landscape and cultural heritage assets, offering unique quality of tourist experiences, activities, attractions, and local traditions that distinguish the municipality/destination from the other competing areas ☒
- branding of the destination, and marketing of local traditional products, local tourism products and services based on, and benefiting from the existence of the PA ☒
- implementation of the local certification, branding and promotion schemes for the tourist businesses and tour-operators, linked to the protected area/s, including fee charging systems for using the protected area name and (if legally possible) logo, in order to verify, ensure and certify the sustainable and environmentally friendly conduct of these businesses, raise their CSR profile and positive image in the market, and financially support measures aimed at the maintenance and protection of the locally specific natural, landscape, and cultural values
- development and use of brand elements (e.g. slogan, logo and design elements) corresponding to the positioning of the tourist destination with particular reference to finding, developing (by local and regional tourism products and packages) and marketing unique competitive advantages, and strengthening existing USPs [In the case of destinations covering several and different national or cross-border areas, the design and implementation of the brand structure and hierarchy in order to avoid competition between tourist target areas within the region]

- identification of brand-defining elements i.e. the assets that can make the destination distinguishable as existing or potential tourist attractions and the image of the destination formed in local stakeholders (internal identity) and potential or actual visitors (external image), as well as, if necessary, intervention in the development of the internal identity and external image
- development of ‘traditional local product-based’ tourism products and packages (agricultural products, pastoral products, traditional arts and handicrafts, traditional / local cuisine, food and beverage, etc.) 🌱
- development of agrotourism products and packages
- implementation of traditional local product labelling, certification, branding, and promotion schemes (also for/by local producers networks) 🌱
- development and maintenance of PA and local visitor centres, providing, among its different functions, the information on the traditional local products and their producers, as well as offering such products for sale to the visitors, which shall raise the sense of authenticity of the visitor experience, and increase revenues of the traditional local products suppliers
- development of cross-border and national tourism thematic routes based on the products and services of local communities 🌱 📄

Strengthening the tourist attractiveness of the specific local cultural and historical assets for sustainable tourism development

- development of local culture based tourism services, products and packages based on locally specific unique cultural resources and historical values of the PA, its external buffer zone and larger surrounding region 🌱
- development of programmes aimed at the proper presentation, interpretation, and promotion of the locally specific unique cultural and historical resources; as well as educational exhibitions, tailored for different target audiences 🌱
- celebration, protection, proper presentation and interpretation of the local living culture and intangible cultural heritage (including local traditions, handicraft skills, arts, music, language, and other aspects of the local identity and distinctiveness), with the objective to provide visitors with an authentic and genuine experience 🌱
- development of cultural heritage-based tourism products and packages (visiting historical monuments, ethnographic parks / museums, open-air museums, UNESCO World Heritage sites, cultural landscapes, cultural festivals, thematic cultural tourist trails and routes) 🌱
- designing, development and maintenance of interpretative cultural and historical heritage trails, or, especially in case when the existing network of tourist trails inside PA is already quite dense, adding the interpretative contents (e.g. interpretative boards at trail stops and campsites, brochures, mobile applications) to the already existing tourist trails 🌱 📄
- promotion of the use of natural, locally acquired construction materials for the development and maintenance of the tourist infrastructure, and the restoration of the built heritage



Strengthening the tourist attractiveness of the specific local natural and landscape assets for sustainable tourism development

- development of local nature- based tourism services, products and packages based on locally specific unique natural and landscape resources of the PA, its external buffer zone and larger surrounding region ☼
- development of programmes aimed at the proper presentation, interpretation, and promotion of the locally specific unique natural and landscape resources; as well as educational exhibitions, and ecological awareness raising programmes, tailored for different target audiences ☼
- development of active tourism and recreational activity products and packages, compatible with the natural character of areas in the external PA buffer zone (e.g. trekking / hiking, biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing), in particular tourist and recreational activities which can be performed also in other seasons of the year than the main tourist season/s for particular destination ☼ 📄
- development of marked trail network/s (separate for each promoted form of active tourism) ☼
- designing, development and maintenance of interpretative nature trails, or, especially in case when the existing network of tourist trails inside PA is already quite dense, adding the interpretative contents (e.g. interpretative boards at trail stops and campsites, brochures, mobile applications) to the already existing tourist trails ☼ 📄
- introducing new / innovative tourism products, services and visitor experience qualities (incl. dark sky parks, natural sound quality of PAs, geocaching and scientific excursion / tourism, canopy walkways in the forest) ☼

Other measures aimed at strengthening the tourist attractiveness of the destination

- support for the maintenance or revival of the traditional local activities that contribute to the preservation of the characteristic and unique image of the Carpathian region, as well as enable the development of the local tourist products and services based on such distinctive natural, landscape and cultural heritage assets, specific for the Carpathian region ☼ 📄
- enhancement of the development of “honeypots” in the external PA buffer zone, located far enough from the most ecologically sensitive sites and areas, diluting the tourism impact on PAs (application of dispersal of use / increasing supply of tourism opportunities through the space dimension concepts) ☼ 📄
- promoting alternative tourist and recreational offerings of “honeypots” in the external PA buffer zone for e.g. elderly, disabled, or less skilled visitors to the area ☼
- enhancement of environmentally friendly modes of transport based on local services
- development of local “accessible tourism” and recreational activity products and packages for elderly people, people with disabilities, and others who have specific access requirements or other special needs, enhancing their opportunities to experience and appreciate locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources, as well as to increase their social, psychological and physical well-being 📄
- provision of reliable information on the local “accessible tourism” facilities, services and conditions (also for the use in reservation system), active marketing of the offer targeted at elderly or disabled tourists via relevant channels, using ways, means, modes and formats of communication suitable for persons with disabilities



OO 2.2. - Ensuring economic stability of the local tourist services sector

OO 2.2. - Ensuring economic stability of the local tourist services sector

Ensuring viable, long-term economic operations of the local tourist services sector, increasing the contribution of tourism to the local economy, enriching and supplementing the local tourism offer, allowing stable employment and income-earning opportunities, reducing the adverse effects of the tourism seasonality, and providing for more equal sharing of benefits and revenues from the tourist services sector

Increasing the contribution of tourism to the local economy and providing for more equal sharing of benefits and revenues from the tourist services sector

- development of local nature- and culture based tourism services, products and packages based on locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources of the PA external buffer zone and larger surrounding region, with the objective to diversify the tourism offer, and generate sufficient demand for tourist services and local employment also in the off-seasons, thus reducing the adverse effects of the dependency of the local economy on the temporal tourist traffic concentration in seasonally-visited main tourist attractions, tourist “must-see” zones and sites (including “mousetraps”) inside PAs 📄
- promoting and marketing existing “must-see” tourist attractions, and other sites of tourist interest in the PA external buffer zone and larger surrounding region 🌐
- creating / enhancing the development of “honeypots” in the external PA buffer zone, located far enough from the most ecologically sensitive sites and areas 📄
- development and maintenance of PA and local visitor centres, providing, among its different functions, the information on the local tourism offer, available tourist services, products and packages, (including those of the other neighbouring municipalities, and other PAs located nearby - in order to enhance cooperation at a larger scale than local, and keep the visitors longer in the region, which could also allow for more equal sharing of benefits and revenues from the tourist services sector by the other neighbouring municipalities)
- channelling towards, and concentrating the visitor traffic inside PAs in “mousetraps”, to increase the stability, profitability and sustainability of businesses operated by the local entrepreneurs concessioned by PA administration (servicing the PA visitors in such few ‘predictable visitor traffic concentration centres’ provides for much higher business viability than in case when the tourist traffic flow is scattered or dispersed over a larger area inside the PA territory) 📄

Enriching and supplementing the local tourism offer

- development of local nature- and culture based tourism services, products and packages based on locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources of the PA external buffer zone and larger surrounding region, with the objective to diversify the tourism offer, and generate sufficient demand for tourist services and local employment also in the off-seasons, thus reducing the adverse effects of the dependency of the local economy on the temporal tourist traffic concentration in seasonally-visited main tourist attractions, tourist “must-see” zones and sites (including “mousetraps”) inside PAs 📄

- development of ‘traditional local product-based’ tourism products and packages (agricultural products, pastoral products, traditional arts and handicrafts, traditional / local cuisine, food and beverage, etc.) ☼
- development of cultural heritage-based tourism products and packages (visiting historical monuments, ethnographic parks / museums, open-air museums, UNESCO World Heritage sites, cultural landscapes, cultural festivals, thematic cultural tourist trails and routes) ☼
- support for the maintenance or revival of the traditional local activities that contribute to the preservation of the characteristic and unique image of the Carpathian region, as well as enable the development of the local tourism products and services based on such distinctive natural, landscape and cultural heritage assets, specific for the Carpathian region ☼ 📄
- introducing innovative tourism products and visitor experience qualities, incl. dark sky parks, natural sound quality of PAs, geocaching, and scientific or guided (e.g. botanic or birdwatching /wildlife watching) excursion tourism ☼
- introducing innovative tourism products and visitor experience qualities which could increase the popularity and the number of users of the “honeypots” in the external PA buffer zone (e.g. recreational “via ferrata”, canopy walkways, wildlife or landscape observation points, boardwalks, platforms, and towers - provided that such artificial structures are well hidden in the forest, wetland, or tree crowns, and do not significantly disturb the natural landscape and vulnerable species) simultaneously limiting the number of such attractions, or banning their development inside PAs 📄
- development of active tourism and recreational activity products and packages, compatible with the natural character of areas in the external PA buffer zone (e.g. walking, hiking, cycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing), in particular tourist and recreational activities which can be performed also in other seasons of the year than the main tourist season/s for particular destination ☼ 📄
- development of cross-border and national tourism thematic routes based on the products and services of local communities ☼ 📄

Other measures aimed at ensuring viable, long-term economic operations of the local tourist services sector, and reducing the adverse effects of the tourism seasonality

- development of local “accessible tourism” and recreational activity products and packages for elderly people, people with disabilities, and others who have specific access requirements or other special needs, enhancing their opportunities to experience and appreciate locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources, as well as to increase their social, psychological and physical well-being 📄
- collecting and analysing feedback received from the local stakeholders and visitors to the area, in order to enhance the quality of tourist services, products, and packages offered by the destination, raise the profile of the territorial brand/s, and improve the quality of the visitor experience and the level of tourist satisfaction
- stimulating local entrepreneurship by developing and communicating tourism development initiatives raised by the collaboration of PA and other relevant stakeholders



OO 2.3. - Cooperation for the local sustainable tourism development

OO 2.3. - Cooperation for the local sustainable tourism development

Creating a cooperation platform for various local stakeholder groups, enhancing the consultation and harmonization of local and regional initiatives and activities aimed at local sustainable tourism development, for efficient planning, initiating and coordinating activities, and conducting territorial marketing

Creating cooperation platforms for various local stakeholder groups

- application of the Centralparks Guidelines on communication between protected areas and local communities in the Carpathians (Centralparks WPT1 output O.T1.3) 📄
- establishment of a specialized local or regional entity (or entrusting the below mentioned functions, tasks, and responsibilities to the already existing organization or authority) for the effective tourist destination management, providing a cooperation platform for various local stakeholder groups (including the public sector, private sector, and civil society), enhancing the consultation and harmonization of local and regional initiatives and activities aimed at local sustainable tourism development, for efficient planning, initiating and coordinating activities, assessment of the effectiveness of the locally adopted Local STD Strategy and Action Plan, and conducting territorial marketing
- development of local networks / associations of producers and service providers relevant to the development of sustainable tourism in and around individual PAs, and in the Carpathian region 🌐
- implementation of traditional local product labelling, certification, branding, and promotion schemes by local producers networks 🌐
- implementation of partnership agreements with the tourist businesses and tour-operators, linked to the local certification, branding and promotion schemes, including fee charging systems for using the local brand, in order to financially support local sustainable tourism development initiatives, and marketing of traditional local products, nature- and culture-based tourism products and packages
- implementation of local voluntary tourist services and/or local traditional products sales revenue-sharing schemes, which could financially support local sustainable tourism development initiatives, and marketing of traditional local products, nature- and culture-based tourism products and packages, as well as the local activities aimed at the preservation and protection of the natural, landscape, and cultural heritage values contributing to the tourist attractiveness and specific local competitive advantages of particular destination, agreed upon by the local producers and service providers networks and/or associations, in consultation with the local community and municipality authorities



Consultation and harmonization of local and regional initiatives and activities aimed at local sustainable tourism development

- consultation and coordination of strategies and action plans related to sustainable tourism development prepared by different local organizations/institutions for the development of a coherent “destination” plan, harmonized with the visitor management plan of the protected area/s
- convening regular meetings of protected area managers and municipality mayors to ensure continuous feedback and exchange of information concerning tourism in protected areas
- establishment of a specialized local / regional entity (or entrusting the below mentioned functions, tasks, and responsibilities to the already existing organization or authority) for the effective tourist destination management,, providing a cooperation platform for various local stakeholder groups (including the public sector, private sector, and civil society), enhancing the consultation and harmonization of local and regional initiatives and activities aimed at local sustainable tourism development, for efficient planning, initiating and coordinating activities, assessment of the effectiveness of the locally adopted and implemented STD Strategy / Action Plan, and conducting territorial marketing
- development and maintenance of PA and local visitor centres, providing, among its different functions, the information on the local tourism offer, available tourist services, products and packages, (including those of the other neighbouring municipalities, and other PAs located nearby - in order to enhance cooperation at a larger scale than local, and keep the visitors longer in the region, which could also allow for more equal sharing of benefits and revenues from the tourist services sector by the other neighbouring municipalities)
- promotion and facilitation of volunteer involvement of both the local residents and incomers/tourists in the implementation of activities aimed at the local sustainable tourism development under community-based projects



S03 - Social dimension objective

S03 - Social dimension objective, that will allow to:

Activate and integrate inhabitants in the frame of local tourism development activities, thus strengthening the local identity and a sense of common responsibility for the region

OO 3.1. - Local identity as the social integration and activation factor

OO 3.1. - Local identity as the social integration and activation factor

Building the local identity and activating the inhabitants for the purposes of identification, maintenance and preservation of the locally specific natural, landscape, and cultural heritage values, which are important assets for the local sustainable tourism development

Building and strengthening the local identity

- identification of the unique selling proposition of the municipality/destination, based on the locally specific mix of natural, landscape and cultural heritage assets, offering unique quality of tourist experiences, activities, attractions, and local traditions that distinguish the municipality/destination from other competing areas ☼
- identification and promotion of the cultural and historical heritage sites in the external PA buffer zone and larger surrounding region, which could be attractive for tourists, and allow the development of cultural heritage-based tourism ☼
- identification of the local traditional land-use patterns, and traditional practices related to agriculture, forestry, and the sustainable use of natural resources, specific for the particular community/destination
- development of programmes aimed at the proper presentation, interpretation, and promotion of the locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural resources; as well as educational exhibitions, and ecological awareness raising programmes, tailored for different target audiences ☼ 📖
- inventorying, networking, and promotion of local museums and private collections safekeeping and exhibiting artefacts associated with the history, cultural heritage, and natural values of the region ☼
- identification of the local intangible cultural heritage specific for the particular community /destination
- identification of the local knowledge of the area, for the development of the local nature and culture interpretation initiatives, strengthening the local identity and building a distinctive territorial brand, providing for enhanced quality and deeper sense of the 'local authenticity' of the visitor experience ☼
- identification and promotion of locally specific unique natural and landscape values (in particular those occurring in the external PA buffer zone and larger surrounding region), which could be attractive for tourists, and allow the development of nature-based tourism products and packages ☼
- development and maintenance of PA and local municipality visitor centres, providing, among its different functions, the information on the locally specific unique natural, landscape, and cultural heritage values, thus strengthening their local identity of the residents 📖



Activating the inhabitants for the enhancement of the local identity and protection of the locally specific values

- facilitation and promotion of the involvement of the local residents in the implementation of measures aimed at the maintenance and preservation of the locally specific natural, landscape, and cultural heritage values, including voluntary support for protected area management operations, providing for enhanced sense of common responsibility for the preservation of these values, and the greater emotional attachment to their home community and region
- celebration, protection, proper presentation and interpretation of the local living culture and intangible cultural heritage (including local traditions, handicraft skills, arts, music, language, and other aspects of the local identity and distinctiveness), with the objective to involve and integrate the local inhabitants, and benefit the local communities 🌱
- identification, promotion and marketing of traditional local products specific for the particular community /destination, in particular those locally manufactured with the use of traditional materials, techniques and skills inherited from the past generations of the local people and communities (e.g. traditional arts, products of local handicrafts following traditional design patterns typical for the area, and traditional local goods, including agricultural and regional cuisine products, in particular those utilizing raw materials originating from the local breeds of domestic animals and cultivated plant varieties, and from wild plants and animals traditionally used in the Carpathians)
- organization of thematic, multi-day program series and events based on locally grown or produced products, and/ or local services with the involvement of relevant stakeholders
- promotion of traditional architectural design patterns typical for particular subregions of the Carpathian region, and the use of traditional skills and traditional materials for the construction of tourist infrastructure objects 🌱🏠
- restoration, revitalization, modernization and adaptation of the locally preserved traditional architecture objects for tourist services functions (e.g. providing overnight accommodation and/or boarding)
- environmental education and nature interpretation programmes in PAs, targeted at the local school pupils / students, facilitating and enhancing their future involvement and support for “their local PA” operations, strengthening their local identity, and a sense of common responsibility for their home region 🌱
- launching local litter collection/plogging campaigns for the local residents, in order to reduce the amount of waste disposed in nature, and enhance a sense of common responsibility for their home community/region



OO 3.2. - Enhancing the potential of the local inhabitants for sustainable tourism development

OO 3.2. - Enhancing the potential of the local inhabitants for sustainable tourism development

Training and capacity building for the local inhabitants, increasing their professional skills and stimulating their activities for the development of local sustainable tourism products and packages

Training the local inhabitants

- local capacity building: professional training of locally-recruited (possibly also certified / licensed by local PA/s) tourist guides for nature- and culture- based tourism products and packages, with the involvement of the local PA staff responsible for natural and cultural heritage interpretation, and for managing the visitor traffic inside PAs as the trainers
- local capacity building: training of local tourist services staff concerning the special needs of elderly or disabled tourists

Other capacity building measures targeted at the local inhabitants

- identification, analysis, dissemination and promotion of the local best practice examples in sustainable tourism services, products, and packages development ♻️
- stimulating local entrepreneurship by developing and communicating tourism development initiatives raised by the collaboration of PA and other relevant stakeholders
- intergenerational learning aimed at the revitalization of traditional local arts and handicraft, through passing the traditional knowledge, techniques and skills for the preservation and continuation of the locally traditional arts, craftsmanship and vanishing occupations
- implementation of locally adopted and verified tourist services quality standards schemes
- implementation of locally adopted and verified visitor experience quality / tourist satisfaction schemes



OO 3.3. - Participation in sustainable tourism development planning

<p>OO 3.3. - Participation in sustainable tourism development planning</p> <p>Involving local residents in the process of planning and development of sustainable tourism, building upon their specific deep knowledge of local issues and problems, raising their awareness of the risks and benefits associated with tourism development, including them in decision-making, and strengthening a sense of common responsibility for their home community and the region</p>
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Preparatory measures for sustainable tourism development planning with the involvement of local residents

(see also the next chapter 5 - Checklist for planning the implementation)

- conducting an inventory of locally existing infrastructure, in particular buildings suitable for restoration, modernization, and adaptation for tourist services (e.g. providing overnight accommodation and/or boarding), which could limit the demand for new infrastructural developments and construction of new buildings
- conducting an inventory of existing routes and paths for planning the extension or modification of the trail network

Involvement of local residents in decision-making on the local sustainable tourism development

- involvement of the local residents in decision-making on defining the optimal “mix” of reactive and proactive measures, to be implemented in areas outside the protected area territory, aimed at reducing the adverse impacts of tourism on the maintenance of the locally specific natural, landscape, and cultural values
- consultation and coordination of the local strategies and action plans related to sustainable tourism development prepared by different local organizations/institutions for the development of a coherent “destination” plan, harmonized with the visitor management plan of the protected area/s 🔄
- elaboration / application of the locally-adopted ‘Code of Good Practice’ in spatial / physical planning for land-use and land management in particular municipality
- implementation of the functional spatial zonation concept accordingly to the nature and landscape conservation management requirements (if not yet in place) 🔄
- dispersing, redirecting and channelling tourist traffic flows out of ecologically sensitive sites and areas in transboundary cooperation with partners from other neighbouring countries, e.g. through coordinating / harmonizing management plans related to local sustainable tourism development, or through implementing joint projects, in particular in transboundary or adjacent / bordering PAs and their external buffer zones, and other areas and sites of touristic interest, located in border areas 🔄 📄
- if deemed necessary, re-designing the layout or routing of access roads and tourist trails running across the most ecologically sensitive sites and areas, or providing seasonal alternative routing for access of visitors, accordingly to nature conservation management requirements for the temporary reduction of tourist impact and human disturbances (e.g. for restoration of habitats and/or road/trailside plant communities, during bird nesting or animal hibernation and mating seasons etc.) 📄



- if deemed necessary, re-designing the layout or routing of access roads and tourist trails in the most scenic sites or areas, accordingly to the landscape conservation and restoration requirements 
- if deemed necessary, re-designing or removal of existing tourist trail infrastructure and car parking facilities
- planning the development / development of the accompanying infrastructure (e.g. water and energy supply, sewage and solid waste treatment systems, parking lots, roads and public transportation networks) in parallel, or well in advance to the development of the local typical tourist infrastructure (e.g. overnight accommodation and boarding / catering)
- planning the development of tourist facilities and infrastructure with due consideration of the “accessible tourism” requirements, aimed at ensuring the access, and convenience of use by elderly or disabled visitors (e.g. special parking spaces with proper identification for vehicles of persons with reduced mobility, as near as possible to the entry and exit points of buildings or tourist attractions, walkways and/or ramps)
- preparation of the local “accessible tourism destination” development strategy



5. “Checklist” for planning the implementation

As “failing to plan is planning to fail”, it is highly recommended that the local stakeholders precede the elaboration of the Local STD Strategy / Action Plan by following the checklist of necessary preparatory activities below:

- establishing the local partnership - a stakeholder working group for the implementation of the Strategy / Action Plan for local sustainable tourism development based on natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathians, with the due involvement of the local and protected area authorities
- collecting / acquiring site-specific data and baseline information (from statistical sources, and on-site surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and other qualitative research methods), and analysis of gathered information for proper planning the implementation of the Local STD Strategy / Action Plan
- using visitor surveys, visitor count/ers, and other available monitoring methods to assess the size of visitor traffic on particular sections of access roads and tourist trails in particular seasons (and possibly in particular time of the day)
- involving the national experts on local sustainable tourism development in the elaboration of the Local STD Strategy / Action Plan
- analysing the current tourist use model of the area, current and forecasted trends in tourism, main tourist market segments relevant for the area (different groups of current and potential visitors to the area), the current tourism offer of the destination (range and diversity of tourist and recreational activities currently available or promoted for particular destination)
- analysing the current state of tourist development of the municipality, and the contribution of the tourist services sector to the local economy
- assessing the possible adverse effects of the current tourist use model of the area on the locally specific natural, landscape, and cultural heritage values, and, if possible, also on the local society and economy
- determining the most urgent management challenges related to the protection and maintenance of the locally specific natural, landscape, and cultural heritage values
- determining the desired tourist use model of the area, and creating the optimal destination profile, to be incorporated into the long-term destination management strategy and action plan, developed with the participation of all relevant local stakeholders, based on sustainability principles, and taking due account of the previously identified socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues and risks



- identifying available operational human capacities and financial resources (and/or accessible external funding support schemes and programmes) necessary for the elaboration and public consultations of the Local STD Strategy / Action Plan, as well as for its implementation
- prioritizing needs for interventions and agreeing upon the local municipality/destination action plan for the local sustainable tourism development (Local STD Strategy / Action Plan), taking due account of the above operational capacities of the local partners)
- selecting the most appropriate measures and activities from among those recommended in the Strategy, for the elaboration of the Local STD Strategy / Action Plan, in consultation between all involved local stakeholders, taking into account their priorities, needs, management planning challenges, legal powers, operational capacities, and the local socio-economic context
- cooperation with the regional and local destination management organizations, or establishment of the regional and local DMOs
- cooperation and consultations with the relevant local action groups (LAGs)
- searching for partners from the other municipalities in the region, preparation of joint project applications, identifying possible synergies of dispersed local actions, avoiding overlaps and duplication of efforts by different local stakeholders, consultations, coordination, cooperation
- establishing incentive measures for local tourism businesses, in particular, but not limited to financial incentives (please see the local certification, branding and promotion schemes under OO 2.3.)



6. Potential partners and important stakeholders for the implementation

Public sector

- Ministry responsible for tourism development
- other key Ministries, incl. responsible for e.g. regional/rural development, cultural heritage
- State agency responsible for tourism development (e.g. the National Tourism Organisation), and its relevant regional branches
- regional authorities responsible for tourism development
- regional and local tourism organizations (e.g. Tourism Boards)
- State agency responsible for nature and landscape conservation
- regional and local authorities responsible for nature and landscape conservation
- regional and local self-government authorities (province, county, municipality, community, village authorities)
- regional and local state forest administrations / governing bodies for state forests
- protected area administrations
- regional and local agencies responsible for promotion, information, and tourism development
- destination management organizations (DMOs)
- entities responsible for tourist infrastructure (e.g. trail) maintenance and development
- natural and cultural resource management bodies (other than PA administrations)
- universities / research and educational institutions
- regional associations of communities / municipalities

Private sector and NGOs

- nature tourism product providers or organizers, and their associations
- cultural tourism product providers or organizers, and their associations
- active tourism (e.g. horseback riding, cycling, rafting, cross-country skiing) product providers or organizers, and their associations
- special interest tourism product providers or organizers, and their associations
- governing bodies for cross-border tourism cooperation
- industrial tourism providers (e.g. hotels and restaurants)
- associations of agrotourism / rural tourism services providers
- associations of Carpathian local products, traditional crafts and arts providers
- professional associations / organizations related to tourism (e.g. tourist guides association)
- tour operators and travel agencies
- tourism / travel media
- tourist, cultural, and environmental NGOs
- LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs)



7. Monitoring of effectiveness

A vital part of every strategy is the assessment of its impacts on the unit of measurement. In terms of local sustainable tourism development, initially, a baseline has to be established and thereafter the measurement has to be conducted regularly, in order to guarantee the continuity of the monitoring process. Regarding indicators connected to data, which should be retrievable easily (such as overnight stays), it is advised to collect the data on a monthly basis. For indicators connected to data, whose availability is low (such as data deriving from specific surveys), the data collection should be implemented during specific timeframes throughout the year, in order to create data, which is comparable year by year. The analysis and the subsequent reporting should be undertaken at least once a year, in order to be able to produce the output and information, which refer to coherent timeframes.

The main approach for selecting appropriate indicators in order to monitor the effectiveness of the LSTD strategy is that they should measure adequately the phenomena under study. However, some phenomena are inherently difficult to measure in a manner satisfactory for the analysts and, subsequently, decision-makers, which rely on the developed information (especially regarding indicators, which attempt to measure the social and cultural dimensions). Protected natural areas play an increasingly important role in shaping the settings for tourism development. They provide opportunities for recreation and learning and thus contribute to human well-being and environmental awareness. Many European regions depend on protected areas to support community development and start considering them as significant resources. The growing importance of tourism for the overall economic development requires adaptability, considering that in many cases, policymakers will be willing to accept trade-offs between conservation and recreation, which can degenerate into extreme exploitation, due to expected economic gains. Therefore, protected natural area governance and nature-based tourism development require a holistic approach and proactive management (Mandić, A. (2020). *Structuring challenges of sustainable tourism development in protected natural areas with driving force-pressure-state-impact-response (DPSIR) framework. Environment Systems and Decisions*).

Furthermore, the creation of surveys, which should be conducted additionally to the data retrieved in order to target specific aspects related to the measures and activities defined by the LSTD strategy, is advised. The sustainability of nature-based tourism and resilience of PAs is not possible in the absence of developed institutional capacity, multi-layer management system, monitoring, education, and the consent of the community.

This work is directed towards and intended for all the municipalities and protected areas levels of management and local coordination systems. A high and strong willingness to share data and content will be crucial to reach a satisfactory level in the data collection.

Possible baseline indicators

Sustainability indicators are established tools for assessing and monitoring sustainable development strategies (Bell & Morse, 2003, *Learning from experience in sustainability*; UN, 2007, *Indicators of sustainable development: Guidelines and methodologies*, 3rd ed.).



As such, sustainability indicators can lead to better decisions and more effective actions by simplifying, clarifying and aggregating the information available to policy-makers while also communicating the ideas, thoughts, and values of different stakeholder groups (UN, 2007). Sustainable tourism cannot be taken as an exceptional form of tourism anymore. However, there is no universally accepted definition of the concept of sustainability and sustainable development. Sustainable tourism development is not easy to measure without breaking it down into smaller issues represented by indicators. Since there is no “*one-size-fits-all*” approach in assessing the progress towards sustainable tourism development, the creation of a comprehensive and integrated methodology is highly suggested.

Within tourism studies, numerous researchers emphasize that indicators are crucial for identifying and monitoring the sustainable development of tourism (Kristín Rut Kristjánsdóttir, Rannveig Ólafsdóttir & Kristín Vala Ragnarsdóttir, 2017, *Reviewing integrated sustainability indicators for tourism*, Journal of Sustainable Tourism). There is a convergence of discussions about whether sustainability indicators for tourism should address the sustainability of tourism itself or the development of tourism in line with overall sustainable development principles. According to this document, indicators are intended to be an integrated element of overall policy-making and planning, and not solely within tourism management of protected areas.

There is a need to reduce the amount of input data needed to evaluate sustainability challenges in small communities and protected areas as well as in wider decision-making processes. Sometimes, applying pre-established frameworks and adapting them to local conditions is regarded as the only option in indicator design, but it demands time and resources that in many (especially small) communities are not available.

How many indicators are enough to assess the sustainability of tourism remains an open question. For the World Tourism Organization (2004), 12 to 24 indicators are seen to be optimal. Well-developed indicators help to detect sustainability problems in a given tourism destination. It also helps policymakers and PAs managers to make informed decisions on how to ensure sustainable tourism development in their regions. It would be a hard task to identify issues and areas where actions are needed most urgently without using well developed and validated sustainability indicators.

The estimated probability that the indicator data are accessible and that they will be provided by a public entity or protected area, is indicated by a scale ranging from “**High**” to “**Medium**” and “**Low**”. The estimation of the probability is made on the basis of experience and consolidated desk research. Some indicator data might be collected by 3rd parties, as specific types of information usually are not at the disposal of public entities and protected areas.

In general most accessible data in terms of statistical units are to be found on the municipality level, as they comprise administrative units, which collect data autonomously. Besides the usage of municipal data from a practical point of view, municipalities as units of analysis can also be valuable analytically, as data of different municipalities connected to a PA can be interpreted either in aggregated form (on PA level), as well as by comparison of the single municipalities with each other.



Too many indicators represent an inhibitor to the more widespread adoption of sustainable tourism practices. Instead of developing extensive lists of rather meaningless indicators, it is reasonable to **focus on a small set of meaningful, management-specific indicator themes** that can be adopted relatively easily and then embedded in the local culture. A first approach will analyze the existing situation regarding the listed indicators, aiming at creating a comprehensive overview of the Carpathian's target regions involved. This will help to create a good basis for collecting the necessary data. Adopting a smaller set of core, yet manageable actions represent a powerful first step and the definition of a core set of unambiguous and universal indicators by which these actions can be guided.

Therefore, the application of the different indicators should be at the discretion of the different local authorities, considering that, in order to guarantee an adequate quality of the data and their interpretation, the adopting entities can also initiate a procedure, by commencing their analysis with a reduced set of indicators and subsequently expand the number of utilized indicators.

For the initial baseline of indicator adoption the following aspects should be considered:

- The retrievability of the data
- The strategy of local sustainable tourism development and its distinct alignment based also on each specific local situation
- The possibilities of integration of different local stakeholders as data providers for indicators connected to specific aspects

In the following lists the suggested indicators in order to establish a strong baseline, are highlighted in **bold**.

1. Sustainable destination management and institutional indicators

Nr.	Sustainable destination management indicators	Indicator	Measure	Level of expected data availability
1.1	Presence of locally adopted LSTD strategy or action plan (yes/no).	Quantitative	On DMO/tourism office level: Monitoring of DMO/tourism office websites, direct contact with them	HIGH
1.2	Coordinated approach	Quantitative	Operating of an organization - managing body Yes/No	HIGH
1.3	Level of residents' participation in the tourism decision-making process	Qualitative	Qualitative indicator	LOW
1.4	Number stakeholders which adopt in voluntary sustainability certificates	Quantitative	Focusing on accommodation facilities, municipalities & events	MEDIUM
1.5	Residents' participation in benefit-sharing from tourism	Quantitative/qualitative		LOW

2. Economic indicators

Nr.	Economic indicators	Indicator	Measure	Level of expected data availability
2.1	Arrivals	Quantitative	Number of daily/monthly/yearly arrivals	MEDIUM
2.2	Overnight stays	Quantitative	Number of daily/monthly/yearly overnight stays	MEDIUM
2.3	Same-day visitors	Quantitative	Number of daily/monthly/yearly same-day visitors	LOW
2.4	Average length of stay	Quantitative	<u>Overnight stays</u> Arrivals	MEDIUM
2.5	Accommodation structures	Quantitative	Number of structures of hotel categories, residence, camping sites, agritourism establishments, other	HIGH
2.6	Beds	Quantitative	Number of beds of hotel categories, residence, camping sites, agritourism establishments, other	HIGH
2.7	Occupancy rate (Gross)	Quantitative	<u>Overnight stays</u> Available bed nights (Beds x days of the year)	MEDIUM
2.8	Relative contribution of tourism to the municipality/destination's economy in %	Quantitative	Calculated based on the local taxes contribution to the municipality budget or based on the contribution of tourism to the GDP	LOW
2.9	Revenue from LST in the destination	Quantitative	Survey on visitor expenditures - extrapolation by methods for valuation of ESS (European Statistical System)	MEDIUM
2.10	Direct tourism employment	Quantitative	Direct tourism employment as a percentage of total employment	HIGH
2.11	Tourism seasonality	Quantitative	Percentage of tourists distributed within the different months throughout the year	HIGH

3. Social & cultural indicators

Nr.	Social & cultural indicators	Indicator	Measure	Level of expected data availability
3.1	The impact of tourism on the quality of life of the inhabitants	Quantitative/ qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resident empowerment - Congestion and crowding - Community attitudes to tourism - Access to amenities - Changes in crime rate 	MEDIUM
3.2	Number of social/cultural events with tourist potential	Quantitative	Monitoring of DMO/tourism office websites	HIGH
3.3	Engagement of local communities	Quantitative/ qualitative	Participation of residents at participative meetings/events	LOW
3.4	Maintenance of the integrity of local communities	Qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retention of local culture and traditions - Maintenance of cultural sites - Authentic representation of local culture 	LOW

4. Environmental indicators (nature protection & resource management)

Nr.	Nature and landscape protection indicators	Indicator	Measure	Level of expected data availability
4.1	Value of the natural environment	Quantitative	List of natural heritage sites and assets, indicating type, conservation status and vulnerability. Data analysis on the biodiversity status of the PAs	HIGH
4.2	Pressure of tourist activities on fauna and flora species	Quantitative/ Qualitative	Monitoring of visitor flows and impact on natural sites	MEDIUM
4.3	Visitor management	Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existence of guidelines /rules for visitor management - Offer on guided tours 	HIGH



Nr.	Resource management	Indicator	Measure	Level of expected data availability
4.4	Traffic flows	Quantitative	Number of cars, counted by traffic counting stations	MEDIUM
4.5	Number of accommodation structures, which take environmental actions	Quantitative/ Qualitative	Survey regarding actions for - Climate change - Waste management - Sewage treatment - Water management - Energy Usage - Landscape and biodiversity protection	MEDIUM
4.6	Quality of solid waste management actions	Quantitative/ Qualitative	Recycling	MEDIUM

Ad hoc surveys for the collection of data for additional indicators

In terms of local sustainable tourism development the generation of additional data through the creation of purposive (online) surveys, is recommended. The surveys should be directed towards 3 types of respondents and should be conducted at least once a year:

- Tourism professionals/providers
- Residents
- Tourists

The aims of these surveys should be:

- To generate data in order to support/complete data regarding specific issues
- To generate data specifically connected to the strategic and operational objectives of the environmental, economic and social dimension, listed within chapter 3 of the present strategy
- To monitor and identify areas, within which additional adjustments have to be undertaken in order to ensure the coherent local sustainable tourism development through the importance-performance analysis (a brief methodological explanation of the IPA can be found within the background documents)
- To generate data in order to analyze the different perspectives in terms of importance and performance of the 3 different segments related to the themes addressed by the strategic and operational objectives
- To generate data in order to analyze the difference of the perspectives in terms of importance and performance of the 3 different segments related to the themes addressed by the strategic and operational objectives throughout a specific amount of time.