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## PRESS RELEASE

### Workshop on the newly developed Carpathian Ecosystem Services Toolkit

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2021, the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic and PRONATUR NGO jointly organised a workshop focusing on the [Carpathian Ecosystem Services Toolkit](#), developed within Centralparks. The workshop was hosted in hybrid format, with participants attending on-site in Bratislava as well as online.

#### Successful knowledge exchange

The experts of the PRONATUR, the Ministry of Environment and the State Nature Conservancy introduced participants to the theme of ecosystem services, and informed about development of the ES assessment in EU and Slovakia. J. Kadlečík presented in short the Centralparks project and the preparation of one of the project's most important outputs, the Carpathian Ecosystem Services Toolkit (CEST) elaborated in 2020-2021 by a designated transnational thematic task force. One of the main authors of the CEST Mr. J. Černecký of the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic presented the CEST itself, its content and main chapters. Mr. P. Mederly (Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and PRONATUR NGO) provided an explanation of the step-by-step approach in the ecosystem services assessment process recommended in the CEST and some examples of ecosystem services assessment in Slovakia.

During the discussion (moderated by P. Semjanová) participants expressed the need for urgent ecosystem services assessment and data availability for the integrated evaluation of the benefits of ecosystem services, especially in national parks and other protected areas related to the planned transformation of nature conservation and administration in Slovakia. Moreover, participants urged the Ministry of Environment and other authorities to continue in the process of mapping and assessment of ecosystem services and speed up these activities. Generally the workshop received a positive feedback and participants expressed their interest in the theme and the CEST itself.

#### What are ecosystem services?

Ecosystem Services are considered to contribute to ecosystems (natural or semi-natural) and human prosperity (quality of life). Ecosystem services are dependent on natural resources such as soil, air, water, biodiversity and fauna, which are generally described as *natural capital*. Therefore, simply put, ecosystem services are the “benefits of nature directly or indirectly used by humans“. Through nature and its services, people meet a large part of their needs, in particular:

- Basic resources needed for survival (food, water, raw materials ...)
- Adequate quality of the environment and its components (air, water, soil, biota and biodiversity ...)
- Socio-cultural superstructure (relaxation, education, spiritual values...)

#### What is the Carpathian Ecosystem Services Toolkit?



The Carpathian Ecosystem Services Toolkit in an interdisciplinary toolkit developed for managers and analysts, to support the effective assessment of ecosystem services in the Carpathians.

Within the Centralparks project, numerous experts from the Carpathian countries have worked on the Carpathian Ecosystem Services Toolkit (CEST) which is intended to serve as both a guide and a valuable resource for the evidence-based decision-making as well as for the similar management practices not only in the Carpathian region but also in other European countries. It provides a practical set of procedures for understanding what might be gained or lost from a given management choice and the human dimensions of such effects. It can help managers to better comprehend and address potential issues and reduce conflict. As a separate deliverable developed within Centralparks, a step-by-step guidance document to complete a comprehensive ecosystem services assessment has been developed within the Toolkit. This includes guidance about the information, analysis, and process needed, using experience from similar ecosystem services assessments and will depend on what is required to address.



## More about Centralparks

The Carpathians are one of the most important European wildlife refuges harbouring some of the last undisturbed ecosystems (primeval beech forests) and one-third of European vascular flora (endemic and threatened plant species). This area supports viable populations of all big native carnivores (incl. the brown bear, wolf, lynx) and all big native herbivores (incl. free-roaming European bison). Moreover, it forms one of the main European ecological corridors allowing migrations of animal populations and genetic exchange. Biodiversity loss is a global problem and the Carpathians are no exception. Threats are increasing due to changes in social and economic conditions, incl. infrastructure development and tourism pressure, habitat destruction and fragmentation, poaching and illegal logging, pollution, climate change, over-harvesting and inappropriate natural resource management methods, putting the mountain ecosystem under an enormous pressure.

The Carpathian protected area system is not capable of an effective management, as nature conservation policies and management cultures significantly vary among the Carpathian countries. Traditional approaches to natural resource management and biodiversity conservation may no longer be sufficient to guarantee long-lasting economic benefits and provision of ecosystem services.

The [Centralparks project](#) aims to reconcile nature conservation and local socio-economic development, as well as to ensure the support and better involve local communities. Policy support documents and tools, tailored for decision-makers and protected area managers will focus on enhancing biodiversity and landscape conservation, local sustainable tourism development, integrated nature conservation planning, habitat evaluation and communication with local communities.

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