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## PRESS RELEASE

### Carpathian Network of Protected Areas Steering Committee Roundtable meeting: Intensifying Carpathian cooperation

How can sustainable development and nature conservation be strengthened in the Carpathian region in the long-term? The roundtable meeting of the Steering Committee of the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA) aimed to answer this question. The online meeting took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December within the Interreg CE Centralparks project, made possible with the support of the ConnectGREEN project as well as the Carpathian Convention.

The overall objective of the virtual gathering was to harmonize activities related to the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas, with special attention to the two ongoing projects sponsored by the European Commission, as well as the recent outcomes of the [COP6](#).

The meeting was moderated by the interim chair of the Steering Committee of the CNPA, Mircea Verghelet, Director of the Piatra Craiului National Park in Romania. Opening remarks were made by Bożena Haczek, Polish Ministry of Climate and Environment, on behalf of Poland, holding the new Presidency of the Carpathian Convention. She expressed her gratitude to the Carpathian Convention Secretariat as well as the Centralparks and ConnectGREEN projects for supporting this meeting. It is the first Carpathian meeting within the Polish presidency after the successful COP6.

Furthermore, Mr. Harald Egerer on behalf of UNEP Vienna-Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention highlighted the important role of CNPA within the Carpathian region and the opportunity raised by the Centralparks and ConnectGREEN projects. He welcomed the nominated Steering Committee members and thanked them for their participation. The meeting provided the opportunity for a round of introductions by the new and already confirmed steering committee members, representing all Carpathian countries. Moreover, the projects Centralparks and ConnectGREEN were presented to identify the opportunities of support.

#### Jointly for the future of the Carpathians

Looking into the [outcomes](#) of the COP6, the CNPA has important tasks ahead in the field of biodiversity protection in the Carpathians but also on a global scale, contributing to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Therefore, it is a priority to activate and fully realise the CNPA, to connect the institutional with the ecological networks and to work towards achieving that the CNPA becomes a new and leading example of a fruitful network of protected areas not just in Europe but all around the world.

Next year will be an important one for the CNPA. Upcoming activities include a second roundtable meeting of the CNPA Steering Committee within the 6<sup>th</sup> Forum Carpathicum, planned to be held in Brno, Czech Republic on 21-25 of June 2021 and the CNPA Conference organised within the ConnectGREEN final conference, to be held in Visegrád, Hungary, on 28-30 of September 2021. The Steering Committee also formulated its intention to intensify the cooperation between the Alpine, Danube and Carpathian regions, based on the [Memorandum of Cooperation](#) between the three networks [ALPARC](#), [DANUBEPARKS](#) and the [CNPA](#).

It was a very informative meeting providing a lot of inspiration to the Centralparks partners, encouraging us to continue with our efforts to contribute to a more sustainable Carpathian future.



## 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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