

The Carpathian Euroregion Strategy 2020 & beyond



Carpathian Euroregion 2015



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Project	Sustainable Development of Border Regions provided by the effective functioning of the Carpathian Euroregion
Source of financing	Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENPI Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013 Priority 4: Support people to people cooperation Measure 4.1 Institutional cooperation
Location(s) of the Action	1. Zakarpattya region (Ukraine) 2. Ivano-Frankivsk region (Ukraine) 3. Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg region (Hungary) 4. Presov region (Slovakia) 5. Kosice region (Slovakia) 6. Maramures region (Romania) 7. Satu-Mare region (Romania)
Applicant:	Self-Government of Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg County, Hungary
Duration of the Action:	24 December 2013 - 25 December 2015
Partners	1. Regional Development Association for the Carpathian Euroregion, Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg region, Hungary 2. Carpathian Euroregion Slovakia, Kosice region, Slovakia 3. Carpathian Euroregion Romanian Part, Maramures region, Romania 4. International Association of Regional Development Institutions "IARDI", Zakarpatska region, Ukraine 5. Public Centre "Business initiatives", Ivano-Frankivska region, Ukraine
Associated partners	1. Association of European Border Regions 2. Ivano-Frankivsk Regional Council 3. Transcarpathian County Council 4. Chernivetska Regional County Council 5. Maramures County Council 6. Satu Mare County Council 7. EuroClip Public Foundation, Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg region
Objectives	<i>Overall objective:</i> To raise the efficiency and predictability of cross-border cooperation and provide the sustainable development of border regions by forming effective instruments for the establishment of systemic and lasting cross-border cooperation. <i>Specific objectives:</i> 1. Strengthen the role of the Carpathian Euroregion in cross-border cooperation by providing new approaches for Euroregional development; 2. Provide an effective decision process in border regions by using existing instruments and forming new ones according to sustainable development. 3. Form a new level of cooperation between authorities, self-governments as well as NGOs and other stakeholders

Target groups	- Local/regional authorities and self-governments and their associations. - Developmental organisations functioning in different legal/organisational forms (regional development agencies; local development agencies; etc. - Non-governmental organisations and institutions, especially those whose activities are aimed at promoting CBC development. - International organisations that are functioning in the target area.
Final beneficiaries	- Local population in border regions, authority and self-governments, regional institutions, organizations and institutions that provide public services in border regions, professional institutions, NGOs.
Estimated results	1. An effective model of functioning of the Carpathian Euroregion agreed upon by all the participating nations - Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Ukraine. 2. Sustained partnerships and information flow between Authorities, self-governments, NGO and expert groups in border regions 3. Developed CBC initiatives that have strategic importance for cross-border cooperation in the context of sustainable development (infrastructural projects)
Main activities	- Forming national and international expert groups according to the priorities of CBC development; Identification of new approaches in Carpathian Euroregion Development, development of the recommendations and the action plan. - Forming new initiatives and proposals of strategic importance for CBC development within priorities, trainings for the main stakeholders in investment project development, workshops, round tables and conferences.



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List of abbreviations

AA	Association Agreement
AEBR	Association of European Border Regions
AM	Arithmetic Mean
ATO	Antiterrorist operation
BCP	Border crossing point
BEI	Baseline Emission Inventory
CB	Cross-border
CBC programme	Cross-border cooperation programme
CE	Carpathian Euroregion
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CDH/DH	Central district hospital/district hospital
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
EE	Energy efficiency
EEC	European Economic Community
EIB	European Investment Bank
EGTC	European grouping of territorial cooperation
EMS	Energy Management System
EN(P)I	European Neighbourhood (and Partnership) Instrument
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESPON	European Observation Network, Territorial Development and Cohesion
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union
EU28	The 28 Member States of the European Union
EU2020	A 10-year strategy proposed by the European Commission on 3 March 2010 for advancement of the economy of the European Union
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GDP	Gross domestic product
GHG	Greenhouse gas
HU	Hungary
IA CE	Interregional Association of the Carpathian Euroregion
IC	Intercity
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
INSSE	National Institute of Statistics (Romania)
INTERREG	A fund for interregional cooperation across Europe financed through the European Regional Development Fund
IP	Investment priority
IP	Industrial park
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IPCC	International Panel on Climate Change
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
KSH	Hungarian Central Statistical Office
LBT	Local border traffic
MCA	Multi-criteria analysis
MEV	Multiple entry visa
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NUTS	Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
P2P	people-to-people / person-to-person
PA	Priority axis
PHARE	Programme of Community aid to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PL	Poland
PM10	Particulate Matter up to 10 micrometres in size
PPS	Purchasing power standard
PR	public relations
PV	Photovoltaic
RDA	Regional development agency
RES	Renewable Energy Sources
RO	Romania
RRT	Rail-road terminal
RTDI (R&D, RTD)	Research, technological development and innovation
SD	Standard Deviation
SEAP	Sustainable Energy Action Plan
SK/SR	Slovakia/Slovak Republic
SME	Small- and medium-sized enterprise
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
TAROM	Romanian Air Transport
TEN-T	Trans-European Transport Networks
TO	Thematic objective
toe	Tone oil equivalent
ToR	Terms of reference
UA	Ukraine
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO /CLT/WHC	UNESCO – the World Heritage Centre
V4 countries	Members of the Visegrad Group: Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary
VAT	Value-added tax

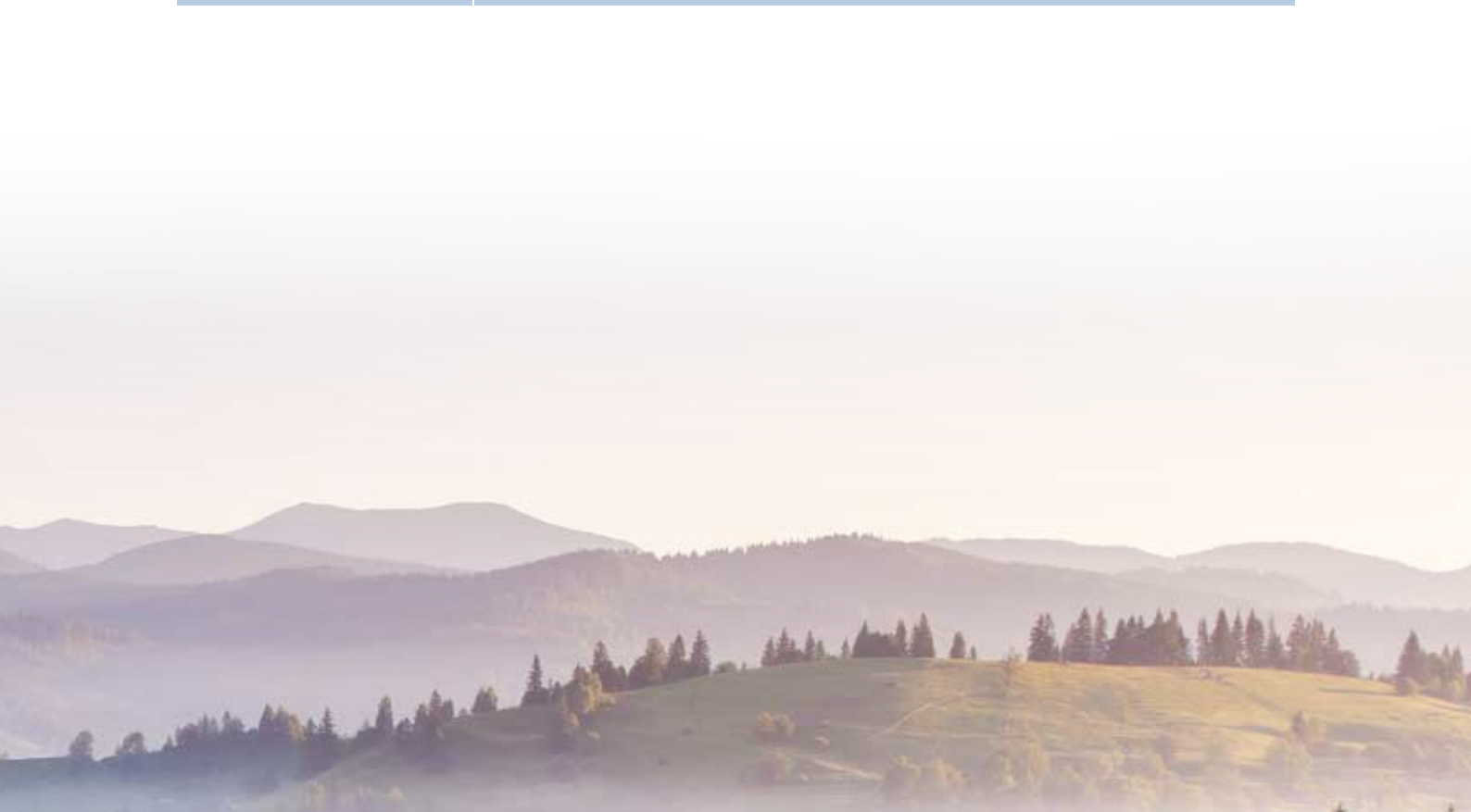


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Introduction

The Carpathian Euroregion Strategy 2020 & Beyond is designed as an initiative that would give a new drive to cross-border cooperation in the Carpathian Euroregion. It must be clearly and openly noted that the Carpathian Euroregion cooperation visibly lost its momentum after 2004. Most institutions, experts and inhabitants of the Carpathian Euroregion think that the most successful period of the CE was between 1993 and 2004. CE had a geopolitical and international mission, but esp. since the V4 countries' accession to the EU, the intensity of the cooperation has changed. This might be the direct consequence of the changed political and economic environment in the area and the fact that cooperation within the EU can be achieved by other methods and approaches, and the role of Carpathian Euroregion is no longer the same as it was at the beginning of its existence. Although the CE can get additional resources due to the EU-membership of participating countries and several CBC programs incl. Ukraine, it has lost its international importance and political significance.

At the same time, the Schengen border treaty made problematic CBC with Ukraine in terms of movement of goods, services and people over the border and thus problematized CBC within the CE. However, an even more important problem for CBC within the CE is being posed by the different models of public administration of participating states with different competencies of regional authorities. It is clear that the CE met its original goal as it created a platform for regular communication between the regional and local authorities of 5 countries; however, it could not expand sufficiently into lower levels of cooperation between CBC actors in terms of creating sustainable CBC networks, e.g. at NGO and SME levels.

The Carpathian Euroregion has the chance to survive and become effective only after serious and careful revision of its vision, mission and strategic goals. A new strategy including a communication and marketing strategy is essential for the continuation of its activities. The common strategy of the CE is a basic prerequisite for any successful development of CBC within any Euroregion. The CE stakeholders have to understand the goals they want to achieve.

Another impulse for the CE being “re-born” can be the Ukraine itself. Ukraine should receive high attention for many reasons:

- Signing the political chapters of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (AA) at the EU Summit of 21 March 2014 brought EU-Ukraine relations a new strategic development momentum. The implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), while not constituting the final goal of Ukraine's membership in the EU, will thus bring opportunities for sustainable economic development and prosperity to all the regions of Ukraine, as well as to its neighbours. The DCFTA, which will be provisionally applied as of 1 January 2016, offers Ukraine a framework for modernising its trade relations and for economic development by the opening of markets via the progressive removal of customs tariffs and quotas, and by an extensive harmonisation of laws, norms and regulations in various trade-related sectors. This will create the conditions for aligning key sectors of the Ukrainian economy to EU

standards and bring opportunities for the enhancement of trade and investment with its neighbours.

- The annexation of Crimea by Russia, and the conflict in Donbass and Doneck, created urgent assistance from the EU in many areas, from humanitarian aid, dealing with internally displaced persons (IDPs), even up to the security dimension of cooperation. Further development of the conflict can present several risks for the EU (e.g. growing migration, energy security threats, etc.).
- The current migration crisis in the EU has showed the necessity to strengthen the cooperation in the area of Schengen border protection, anti-trafficking of humans, the fight against organised crime related to migration, and other challenges. Enhanced cooperation with EU neighbours such as Ukraine will be very necessary.

In dealing with these issues, the CE can play a significant role. First of all as an interface between the EU and Ukraine, secondly as a direct initiator and, at the same time, a beneficiary of measures to be taken by the EU and Ukraine (e.g. becoming a logistic hub for the flow of goods) and last, but not least, the CE can transfer know-how from several development areas incl. EU accession experience towards Ukrainian stakeholders, incl. emerging new Euroregions in Ukraine.

The main aim formulated by the founders of the CE in 1993 doesn't need to be changed much: "improve the quality of life, preserve the peace, form good relationships between the people in the border area, reduce the dividing function of the border and ensure the permeability of the border".

All member regions of the CE still face many common problems: social and economic backwardness, incl. high unemployment, outflow of the educated and young society of the region to attractive centres outside of the region, growing regional disparities, facing Global challenges such as migration, etc. And, taking into consideration the strong EU integration interests in Ukraine, a new space is opening up for most of the players and the Carpathian Euroregion could utilize its position and the remains of its reputation for a good cause. The common problems should unite us and create common solutions.

The Carpathian Euroregion Strategy 2020 & Beyond is a fundamental, key medium-term strategic document, based on an analysis of the economic, environmental and social development of the CE area, based on an analysis of the situation and the particular needs of residents, businesses, interest groups and other entities in the area, which formulates the vision of the future. It defines possible means of fulfilment of the vision for development of the CE, to boost the social, economic, cultural and sustainable development of the area.

The Carpathian Euroregion Strategy 2020 & Beyond does not answer all the questions. It also doesn't formulate the one and only way how to achieve the common aims and priorities. It should be understood as an open document, evaluated and modified when necessary. It must be a document not sitting in the dust. It must respond to changes in the broader environment, changes in the needs of inhabitants, legislative changes, etc. It is based on the principle that the planning process will only succeed if it is treated as a long-term process and will be continually adapted and updated in accordance with the changes and needs of everyday life.

It should be a document that unites all active actors in the Carpathian Euroregion to raise the efficiency and predictability of cross-border cooperation, providing the sustainable development of border regions by forming effective instruments for the establishment of systemic and lasting cross-border cooperation. The Strategy aims at strengthening the role of the Carpathian Euroregion in cross-border

cooperation by providing new approaches for Euroregional development and being a new instrument for the need of national, regional and local authorities to take into consideration the border location of the target areas while elaborating regional policies, with the design and planning of cross-border cooperation as one of the key directions of regional development of the border areas.

The Strategy should be used also as a tool for implementation of an active cross-border policy responding to the need to increase the competitiveness of the region's economy / environment / human resources. But for sure, it must be a document that will intensify the bilateral and multilateral relations between the countries, regions, institutions and, primarily, people living in the CE territory. It should ensure a higher standard of living for inhabitants of this region.

The Strategy will be successful only if the following six conditions are achieved:

- 1| The CE should adopt its strategic goals agreed by all participants;
- 2| Regional and local authorities, as well as other stakeholders in the area should contribute to the common "CE budget", not just rely on external financing provided by the EU or other donors. It is high time for the members to establish a well-functioning membership system and think about development of a joint fund supporting important projects and programs in the future;
- 3| The CE should be able to contribute to better coordination of the regional development policy and territorial planning of the neighbouring regions;
- 4| The CE should become a platform for the planning of joint activities supported at the EU and/or national level;
- 5| The CE should aim at institutionalizing networks of cooperation on several levels, while the creation of a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) could be one of the possibilities;
- 6| The CE should aim at creating a public sense of shared CBC territory and a shared identity of CBC cooperation, including by media and a consistent PR policy.

The Strategy is a result of international cooperation between experts from all participating countries. It provides a detailed presentation of

- an overview of the area, relying primarily on quantitative information;
- joint problems, challenges and potentials of the Carpathian Euroregion;
- the future of the Carpathian Euroregion as a transnational organisation;
- priorities and measures for achieving the joint vision;
- implementation of the Agenda with an action plan, a list of potential projects as well as monitoring and dissemination details.

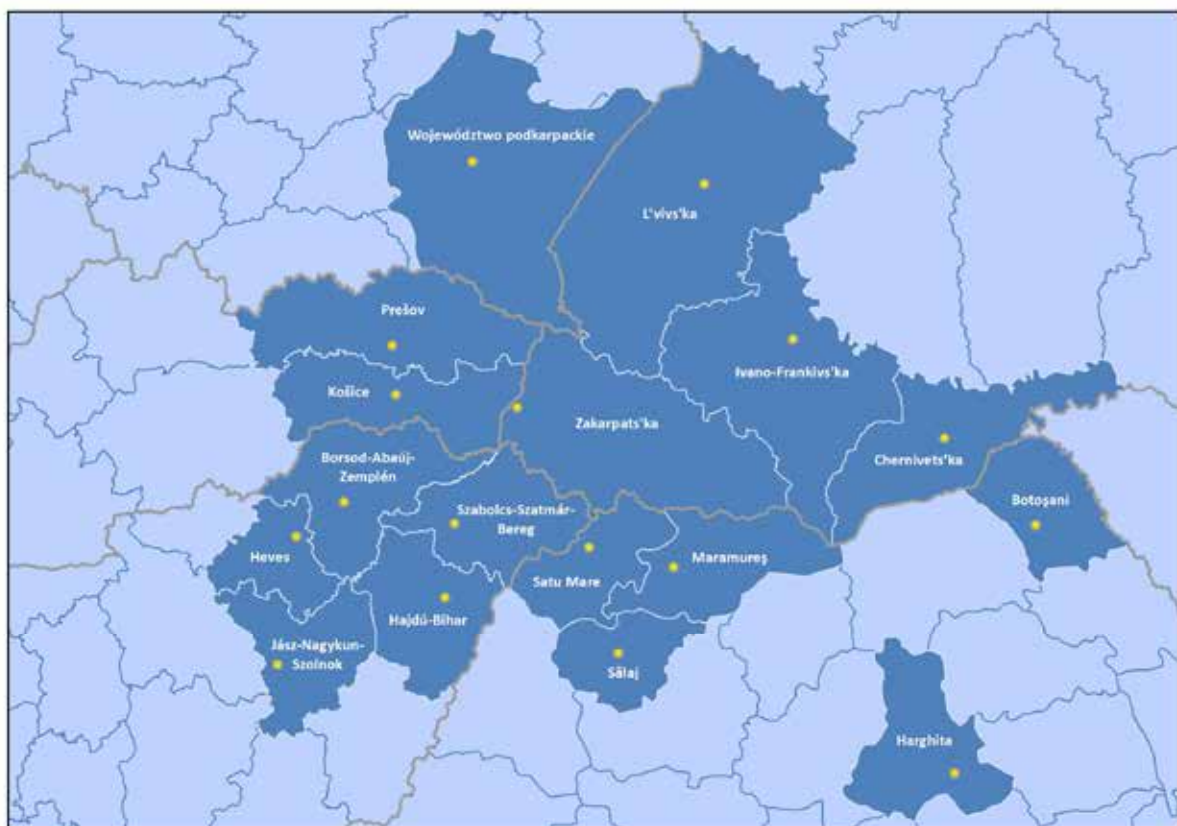
The annexes include other relevant information about

- the actual situation in the CE regions – the analytical part of the Strategy,
- the results of public and expert surveys, which were made to explore the visibility and future functioning of the Carpathian Euroregion.

1 The Carpathian Euroregion

The Carpathian Euroregion (CE) is an international association in Central and Eastern Europe, established on 14th February 1993 by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Ukraine, and Hungary in the city of Debrecen. It was the first Euroregion after the political and economic transition to integrate several administrative units from the former Eastern Bloc with a common history, parallel economic development and similar traditions. At that geopolitically instable time, the area of the CE was 53.000 km² with a 5 million population. After the joining of the Slovakian and Romanian partners it reached 145.000 km² and 14.2 million inhabitants.

Figure 1 – The area of the Carpathian Euroregion



The **mission** of the Carpathian Euroregion is to improve the quality of life, to preserve the peace, to form good relationships between the people in the border area, to reduce the dividing function of the border and to ensure the permeability of the border. In accordance with Convention No. 106. of the Council of Europe¹, the **overall objectives** of the partners are defined as follows:

- promoting cooperation in the field of society, economy, research and science, ecology, education, culture and sport;
- supporting implementation of the cross-border project through lobbying, and reciprocal cooperation with the national institutions and organisations.

¹ European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities, Madrid, 21.V.1980

The Euroregion, which is located at the geographical centre of Europe, includes 17 administrative units (counties, regions) in five countries: Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Romania and Ukraine.

The long-established Interregional Carpathian Euroregion Association represents neither a supra-state nor a supranational entity, but rather a framework for facilitating interregional cooperation (a joint advisory and coordinating body).² The CE is composed of four parts: the Council with Presidium and Chairman, International Secretariat, National Offices and Working Committees. The supreme body of the CE is the Council, which consists of three representatives from each member country. The Council meets every six months. It discusses and unanimously accepts common projects and makes decisions on important topics relevant to the cooperation (appointment, budget and organisational changes). The Chairman is elected every two years to manage the meetings and to represent the CE to the outside world.

The International Secretariat is responsible for these operative tasks:

- administration,
- coordination of the daily activities,
- organising the Council meetings,
- ensuring the relationships between the national parts,
- building relationships with international organisations.

One national office operates in each partner country to ensure the maintenance of the cooperation. They participate in organising, coordinating and translating tasks, and implement joint interregional projects.

Working Committees are created by the decision of the Council, and focus on specific areas of interregional cooperation – lead by different countries:

- Committee for Regional Development (HU),
- Committee for Cross-Border Trade (RO),
- Committee for Tourism and Environment (PL),
- Committee for Social Infrastructure (UA),
- Committee for the Prevention of Natural Disasters (SK).

² This is not an administrative level or a supranational body.

Figure 2 – Contacts

Body		Contact person	Address	Phone	Webpage
National Parts	HU	SESZTÁK, Oszkár	4400 Nyíregyháza, Hősök tere 5.	+36 42 599 501	carpathianeuroregion.org
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	RO	LAZAR, Bogdan	430311 str. Gh. Sincai nr. 46., Baia Mare	+402-62-214659	uprec.ro
	SK	LENÁRTOVÁ, Renáta	Hlavná 68, 040 01 Košice	+421 55 6419 317	ker.sk
	UA	NOSA, Natalie	Uzhhorod, Shvabskaya Street 71	+380 993 254 990	lardi.org
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National Offices	PL	LASEK, David	Rynek 16 35-064 Rzeszów	+48 17 852 52 05	karpacki.pl
	RO	LAZAR, Bogdan	430311 str. Gh. Sincai nr. 46., Baia Mare	+402-62-214659	uprec.ro
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	UA	NOSA, Natalie	Uzhhorod, Shvabskaya Street 71	+380 993 254 990	lardi.org

2 Executive summary of the Carpathian Euroregion Strategy 2020 & Beyond

2.1 This document

The main purpose of the Carpathian Euroregion Strategy 2020 & Beyond is to lay the foundations for revitalizing the CE cooperation initiative. It is a fundamental, key medium-term strategic document, based on the analysis of economic, environmental and social development of the CE area, building on knowledge of the situation and the particular needs of residents, businesses, interest groups and other entities in the area. It is the result of the work of committed professionals from all the regions involved.

It provides all the necessary information for decision-makers to take the next steps and provide a clear direction for the development of the cooperation. More specifically:

- It clearly articulates the most important challenges and also potentials the region is faced with;
- It identifies strategic alternatives for the future development and governance of the Carpathian Euroregion;
- It clearly presents the most important joint development priorities, objectives and also key measures proposed;
- It provides a clear implementation agenda, facilitating the delivery of the strategy.

This Executive Summary has been prepared for busy decision-makers – it is a concise document highlighting all the key messages of the strategy.

2.2 Challenges and potentials

The Carpathian Euroregion started out its life as a pioneer initiative after the change of regime in Central-Eastern Europe, bringing together regions from various “emerging” countries to align their priorities and cooperate instead of competing. The initiative took-off quickly, delivering great results and benefiting the participating regions by exploiting the potential of multilateral transnational cooperation.

The accession of some countries to the European Union, however, brought about negative changes from the perspective of the Carpathian Euroregion: the participating regions shifted their focus more to the various CBC and transnational initiatives of the European Union, and the CE gradually lost its importance; today, it struggles even to survive – it is only driven by its inertia. This, however, happened not by choice – this is the result of unfortunate changes in the environment to which the CE failed to adapt.

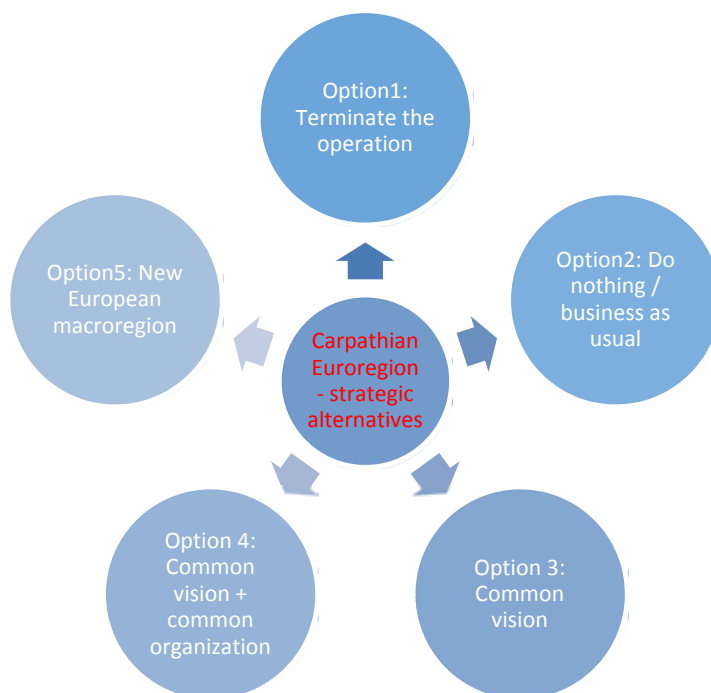
It is not just the unfortunate changes, though; even without them, the Carpathian Euroregion – while offering a unique cooperation potential – is not without its inherent difficulties. To start with, it covers an extremely large (145.000 km², 14,2 million people) and heterogeneous area, with more interregional differences than common characteristics. These – often quite stark – differences are present in the geographical conditions, spatial and settlement structure, public administration

systems, and levels of economic and social development. In addition, there are also major differences even within the countries between urban poles and rural peripheries, mountainous areas and plains. Also, we cannot forget that these regions compete for investors, grants, tourists, and quality human resources. It is not surprising, then, that even without the negative effects of some external changes, it is quite difficult to provide joint solutions, create joint objectives and to develop a common identity within the CE. On top of all that, there are physical obstacles – the state borders – that currently hinder efficient cooperation. With a visa regime in place with the Ukraine, Romania not being member of the Schengen zone, the relatively low density of border crossing points and the often inappropriate technical infrastructure at the borders for cross-border mobility – a key condition of good cooperation – is severely limited.

Fortunately, besides the challenges, this cooperation initiative also offers numerous potentials that could be exploited for the mutual benefit of all participating regions. There is a strong tradition of cross-border cooperation – bi- and multilateral alike – at regional and local levels – and also at the level of various institutions. Cultural diversity and interethnic relations are also potentially worth building on. The Carpathian Euroregion represents a 16 Million market within reach for local businesses. There is also a diverse pool of touristic attractions – providing a good basis for interregional tourism as well as for attracting tourists from outside the area. Finally, there is ample funding available for cross-border and transnational cooperation from the European Structural and Investment Funds.

2.3 Strategic alternatives

As presented above, the Carpathian Euroregion as a cooperation initiative lost its direction quite long ago. Without a joint vision and common goals – to which all the partners and their decision-makers are committed - there is no chance for recovery. Therefore, first and foremost the decision-makers need to decide on the future direction of the cooperation. In order to enable this decision, this document presents the strategic alternatives for the Carpathian Euroregion.



Below, we briefly explain the possible alternatives.

- **Option 1 – Terminate the operation.**
This is an extreme (and painful) solution: closing down the cooperation initiative; the remaining commitments are delivered, then the organizational structures are dismantled and the necessary legal steps are taken.
- **Option 2 – Do nothing / business as usual.**
This option involves keeping the CE alive with the smallest possible effort; in this case, no formal decision is necessary, the cooperation continues without any change, and the external “image of cooperation” is retained without actually pursuing a common vision.
- **Option 3 – Common vision**
A common vision – shared by all partners - adapted to the changes is established. This common vision is accompanied by a list of specific actions to be performed, and the cooperation initiative – the partners – deliver, at least, on the most important actions.
- **Option 4 – Common vision and common organization.**
Just like in Option 3, a common vision – shared by all partners and adapted to the changes is established, and the vision is accompanied by a list of specific actions to be performed. In addition, however, the partners establish one single joint organization (the common implementing body) of the cooperation initiative (possible form: EGTC) – delivering the most important actions identified.
- **Option 5: A new European macroregion.**
This option is by far the most ambitious: it entails turning the CE into a new European macroregion, being actively positioned in the European Union, with the objective of positioning the CE in the various regulations guiding EU structural instruments as a priority macroregion. The precondition of this option is the preparation and implementation of a very detailed and specific macroregional strategy.

The strategic alternatives are identified and assessed – now it is the decision-makers’ turn – they need to select which of the proposed options the CE should pursue.

In order to support that decision, the team has made its proposal, which we summarise here (for more detail, see the relevant chapter).

Option 1 and Option 2 are not proposed – both would lead to the extinction of the cooperation initiative. According to the multi-criteria analysis, Option 5 is way too ambitious at this moment. Experts propose selecting either Option 3 or Option 4 – but **Option 4** would offer a better chance of success.

2.4 Priorities, objectives and measures

If the decision is to continue the cooperation, there need to be clear objectives and priorities in place for the content of the cooperation. In Chapter 5, we propose priorities and measures based on the identified challenges and potentials.

The following table summarises the proposed vision and priorities, and we also present the proposed measures under each priority.

VISION		PRIORITIES	CROSS-SECTORAL PRIORITIES
Carpathian Euroregion: a place where people like to live, a place worth visiting			
Sustainable Development of the Carpathian Euroregion	Core strategy	1 Lively, active, competitive economy & attractive investment space	1 Assisting the Ukrainian part of the CE in EU standardisation and association via CBC activities and sharing reforms experience
		2 Clean and environmentally friendly	2 Enhancing CBC & institutional capacities
		3 Well-connected & effective border regime	3 People-to-People
		4 Innovative, skilled and well-educated	
		5 Natural heritage, local culture and history	
		6 CBC community development, health, employment and social development	
- Economic	- Compact, quality, green, clean, connected, safe		
- Social	- Real economic recovery		
- Cultural	- Sustainable neighbourhood		
- Environmental			
- Mobility			

Priority 1: The lively, active, and competitive economy of the Carpathian Euroregion & attractive investment space

- 1.1 SME and business development, incl. labour market development
- 1.2 Trade and investment promotion & enhancing cross-border transport and logistics

- 1.3 Supporting the potential of selected sectors of the economy: rural development, creative and tourism industry (incl. well-being)
- 1.4. Development of ICT services & infrastructure for better management & visibility of CBC cooperation

Priority 2: Clean and environmentally friendly Carpathian Euroregion

- 2.1 Environmental protection, sustainable management of nature and its resources, and preserving biodiversity
- 2.2 Water, sewage and waste management
- 2.3 Climate change mitigation and cooperation in emergencies
- 2.4 Enhancing energy cooperation (efficiency & security & renewable energy sources)

Priority 3: Well-connected Carpathian Euroregion & effective border regime

- 3.1 Border efficiency and security, border management, customs and visa procedures
- 3.2 Mobility & traffic safety incl. border-crossing infrastructure and equipment

Priority 4: Innovative, skilled and well-educated Carpathian Euroregion

- 4.1 Research & innovations & new technologies
- 4.2 Education enhancement

Priority 5: Natural heritage, local culture and history

- 5.1 Promotion and preservation of natural heritage, local culture and history
- 5.2 CE citizens knowledge improvement about the CE's natural & cultural heritage

Priority 6: CBC community development, health, employment and social development of the CE

- 6.1 Improving the efficiency of the public administration and the institutional capacity for CBC & CBC community development
- 6.2 Support for the development of health protection of citizens of the CE
- 6.3 Employment and social services in the CE
- 6.4. Development of a modern CBC identity & shared information/media space

2.5 Implementation agenda

The Carpathian Euroregion Strategy goes beyond identifying priorities and measures – in Chapter 6 the document presents a detailed action plan, with specific steps to be taken, deadlines and responsibilities.

In addition, it also proposes 48 specific cooperation projects in line with the proposed strategy – identified and developed by the expert team.

Finally, it also presents a monitoring system, and the necessary dissemination and legitimisation steps.

The strategy is an important first step, providing the key conditions for the recovery of the Carpathian Euroregion as a cooperation initiative. The work of the committed experts from all involved regions drafting the document got the recovery process this far – now is the time for the decision-makers to step in, carry out an honest dialogue and take some inevitable decisions. Once the decisions are in place, the professionals can take over the process again and act according to the guidance provided by those decisions.

3 Analytical part

3.1 Comparative analysis of the Carpathian Euroregion³

The Carpathian Euroregion covers 145,000 km². The biggest part belongs to Ukraine (39%), and Slovakia's share is the smallest (11%). The morphology of the CE shows a heterogeneous picture: it contains alluvial plains, hills and the mountain ranges of the Carpathians. The share of the 14.2 million inhabitants is similar to others of the area, only Ukraine and Poland have a slightly higher proportion. The largest cities are mainly the regional and county seats. Some of them are of national and interregional economic and transport importance (e.g. Lviv, Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, Košice, Debrecen). The relatively high share of the county seat population of the total population and of the urban population of the region presents risks for the expected polycentric development. However, at the same time, they can be laboratories for a coordinated polycentric development in the whole territory of the Euroregion.

Figure 3 – Territory of the partner countries (2013)

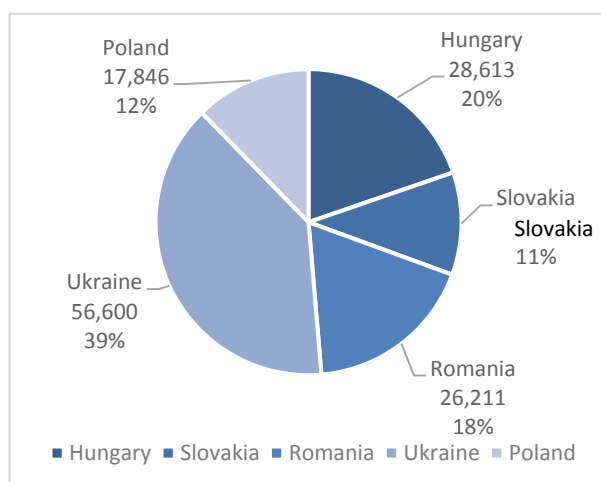
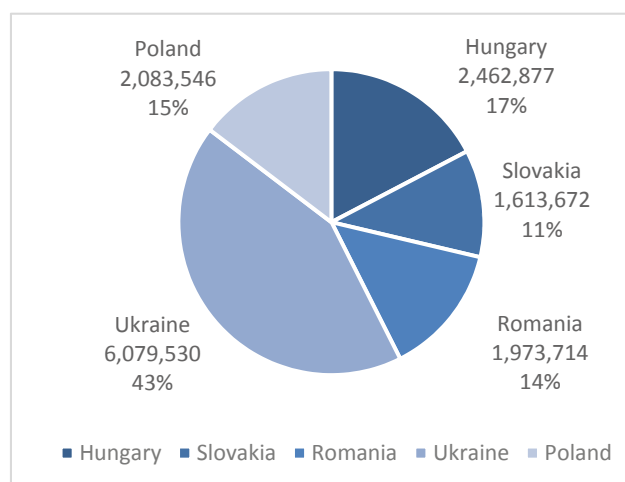


Figure 4 – Population of the partner countries (2013)



Dissimilarities in population density and in settlement structure show the different character of the regions:

- e.g. a few Hungarian counties – despite the presence of larger urban centres – are characterized by a high number of small villages; these rural areas typically face complex economic and social problems (e.g. poverty, emigration, deficiencies in services), but they

³ This chapter is based on a detailed analysis of the related regions in each member countries. These country profiles are available in the electronic version of the Carpathian Euroregion Strategy 2020 & Beyond. Data in this chapter refers to counties and regions of the Carpathian Euroregion, and not whole countries. Generally, the data sources are as follows: Hungary – the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (www.ksh.hu), Slovakia – the Statistical Office of the SR (www.statistics.sk), Romania – the National Institute of Statistics (www.insse.ro), Ukraine – the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (www.ukrstat.org), Poland – the Central Statistical Office of Poland (stat.gov.pl). In case of other sources, they are clearly indicated.

can also preserve the natural values and the traditional way of life, and their attractiveness can be used as a basis for rural, active and ecotourism;

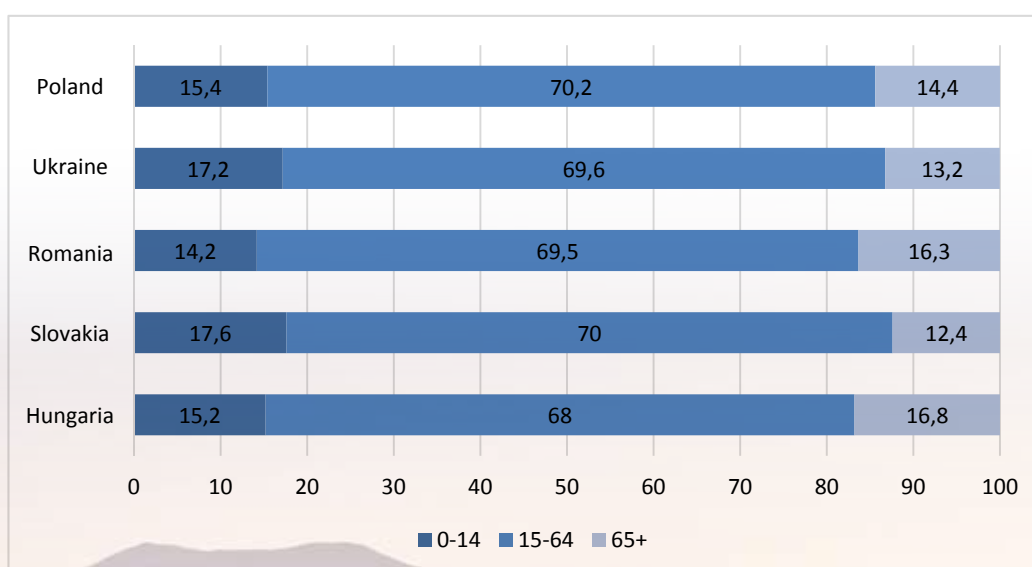
- other regions (e.g. Poland, Lviv region or Košice region) are more densely populated;
- some of the urban areas are small towns with limited catchment areas and competitiveness, but the extensive network of small- and medium-sized towns offers a wide range of (public) services for their catchment area, and they can stimulate cross-border cooperation in various sectors.

Figure 5 – Some data about the demography and urbanisation of the partner countries (2013)

	Population density (people/km ²)	Ageing index (%)	Number of cities	Number of villages
Hungary	86.1	111.3	111	757
Slovakia	102.7	70.9	40	1065
Romania	75.3	94.5	28	1283
Ukraine	107.0	77.8	81	3677
Poland	116.8	91.3	51	n.d.
Carpathian Euroregion	97.6	89.2	311	n.d.

An ageing society and emigration are the most important demographic problems in the rural regions: the tendency of ageing is getting worse year by year, but Hungary is the mostly affected by these trends. The major decline in population reduces the labour force in the region – causing competitive disadvantages. Some parts of the CE face a significant social challenge resulting from the presence of – mostly low-educated, unemployed and poverty-affected – Roma people. Partially, they are the target group of the EU2020 headline target “poverty/social inclusion”. The rate of people at risk of poverty has been growing recently in the Carpathian Euroregion, in the given NUTS2⁴ regions the ratio is approximately 20%.

Figure 6 – Distribution of the population according to age groups (2013)



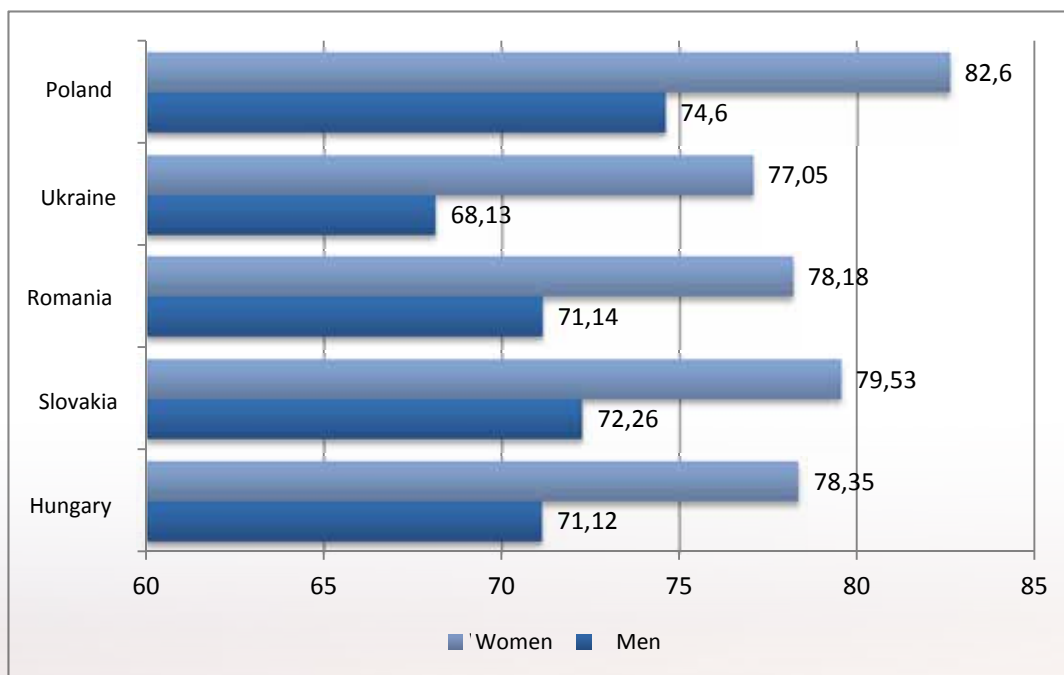
⁴ The rate of people at risk of poverty is measured at the NUTS2 level.

The educational level of the population is an important factor regarding the labour market. From this point of view, the Carpathian Euroregion lags behind the EU-average (although positive trends can be detected): the share of people with a low-level education is much higher, while the proportion of inhabitants with college or a university degree can be considered low (with the exception of the bigger cities). The main reasons behind this are selective emigration and the fact that public expenditure on education remains largely below the EU average. The high number of early school leavers erodes, in the long-term, the labour market potential of the region. The education systems of the partner countries show large differences which makes cross-border cooperation difficult. The same can be stated for health and social care: although some cross-border patient migration is detected e.g. from Romania to Hungary, the harmonization of legal and strategic documents may have positive effects on the mutual use of services by the inhabitants. Health care is one of the important factors regarding life expectancy at birth which shows:

- on the one hand, a significant increase in the whole Euroregion (men – 71.45 years, women – 79.14 years);
- on the other hand, enormous intraregional disparities.

The health status of the population partially depends on the quality of health infrastructure and services – there is a massive need for their development (especially for people in disadvantaged situation).

Figure 7 – Life expectancy at birth (2013)

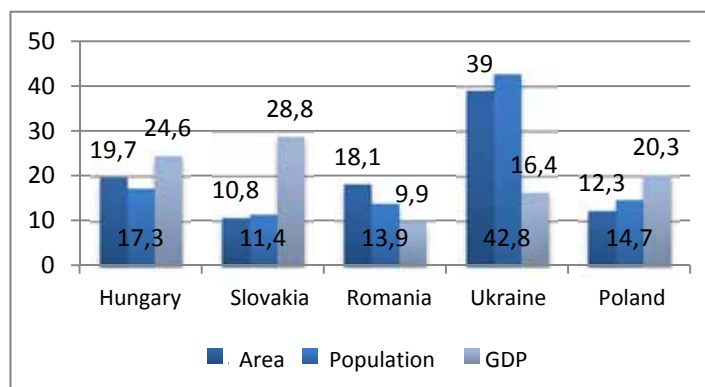


The total GDP produced in the Carpathian Euroregion is 76,900 million Euros – Eastern Slovakia contributes to this to the greatest extent (28.8%), and it has also first place concerning GDP per capita. Besides Slovakia, Hungary and Poland have a larger economic significance. The data shows huge interregional disparities of the economic performance and level of development.

Figure 8 – Gross domestic product (GDP) at current market prices (2013)

	GDP/capita (EUR)	GDP (mEUR)
Hungary	7 670	18, 892
Slovakia	13, 753	22, 175
Romania	3 857	7 613
Ukraine	2 079	12, 642
Poland	7 477	15, 578
CE	6 967	76, 900

Figure 9 – Countries' share of national indicator (2013)



The differences in the development level and the inner potentials are reflected also in the key sectors of the economy – some examples:

- in mountainous areas, the wood processing industry and the mining industry are important, while lowlands provide optimal conditions for crops or fruit production;
- more-developed urban areas attract knowledge-intensive industries and services (e.g. aviation, machine and automobile industry, chemical and pharmaceutical production, mechanical engineering, IT services);
- in less developed and rural regions, labour-intensive sectors are more dominant (e.g. agriculture, food processing, light industry).

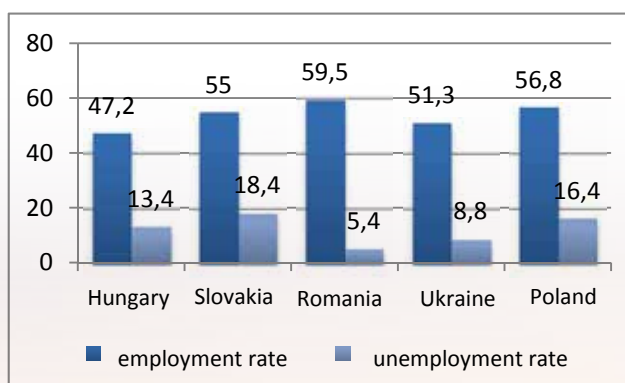
These facts, namely the wide range of the branches, can result in various advantages:

- it can be a basis for horizontal and vertical economic integration and cooperation, clusters (e.g. in sustainable tourism, agro-food industry, renewal energies),
- it creates opportunities for interregional trade,
- the above mentioned diversification can provide certain protection against economic crises and volatility.

Figure 10 – Total number of active enterprises and number of enterprises per thousand inhabitants (2013)*

	Number of enterprises	Business density
Hungary	119, 479	48.2
Slovakia	34, 508	21.4
Romania	31, 605	16.0
Ukraine	36, 663	6.0
Poland	88, 302	42.4
CE	310, 557	26.8

Figure 11 – Labour market indicators (2013)

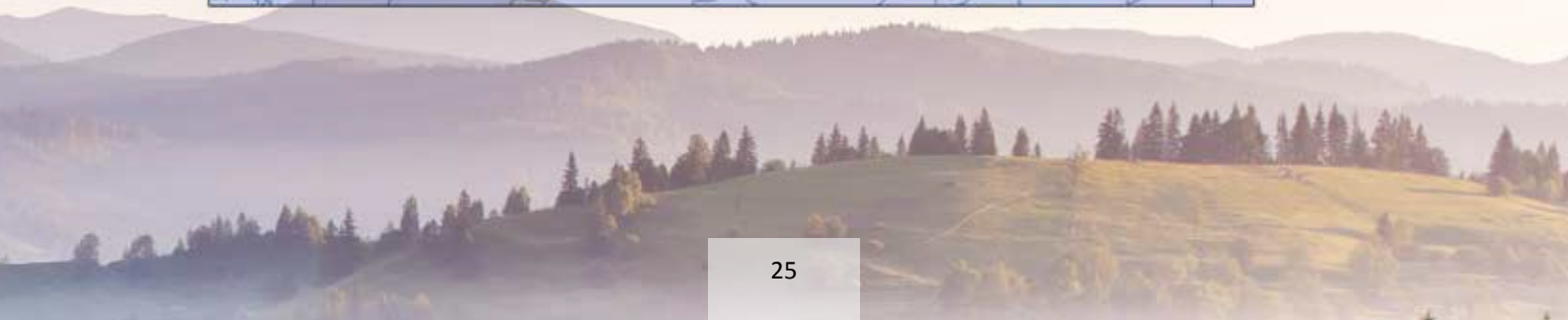


* The comparability of the data is limited because of the differences in registration of enterprises. The same statement holds true for the labour market indicators.

Approximately 300,000 enterprises operate in the Carpathian Euroregion, the majority of them in Hungary, which can be traced in the data about business density. However, most of them are small-

Besides which, county capitals are the centres of research, technological development and innovation (RTDI). Despite its distance from the national capitals, the area has a vivid academic life. The large number of universities and colleges have several different institutes, faculties and locations with very extensive training, offered to the almost 200,000 students. The universities and research units of the area have a solid academic background and RTDI capacity, providing a good foundation for better utilizing research results.

Figure 12 – Main roads and border crossing points in the Carpathian Euroregion



The problems with transport infrastructure and services can have an effect on every type, as well as on the intensity and regularity, of cross-border cooperation. Despite the large-scale development projects of the last decade, serious problems remain to be solved:

- lack of proper north-south connections,
- inadequate density of motorways and main roads,
- poor quality and/or missing sections of smaller roads leading to and across the border,
- infrastructural inequalities concerning railway lines,
- permeability of borders,
- uncoordinated and inharmonious cross-border public transport services,
- partial deficiencies regarding intermodality.

Figure 13 – Transport infrastructure indicators (2013, km)

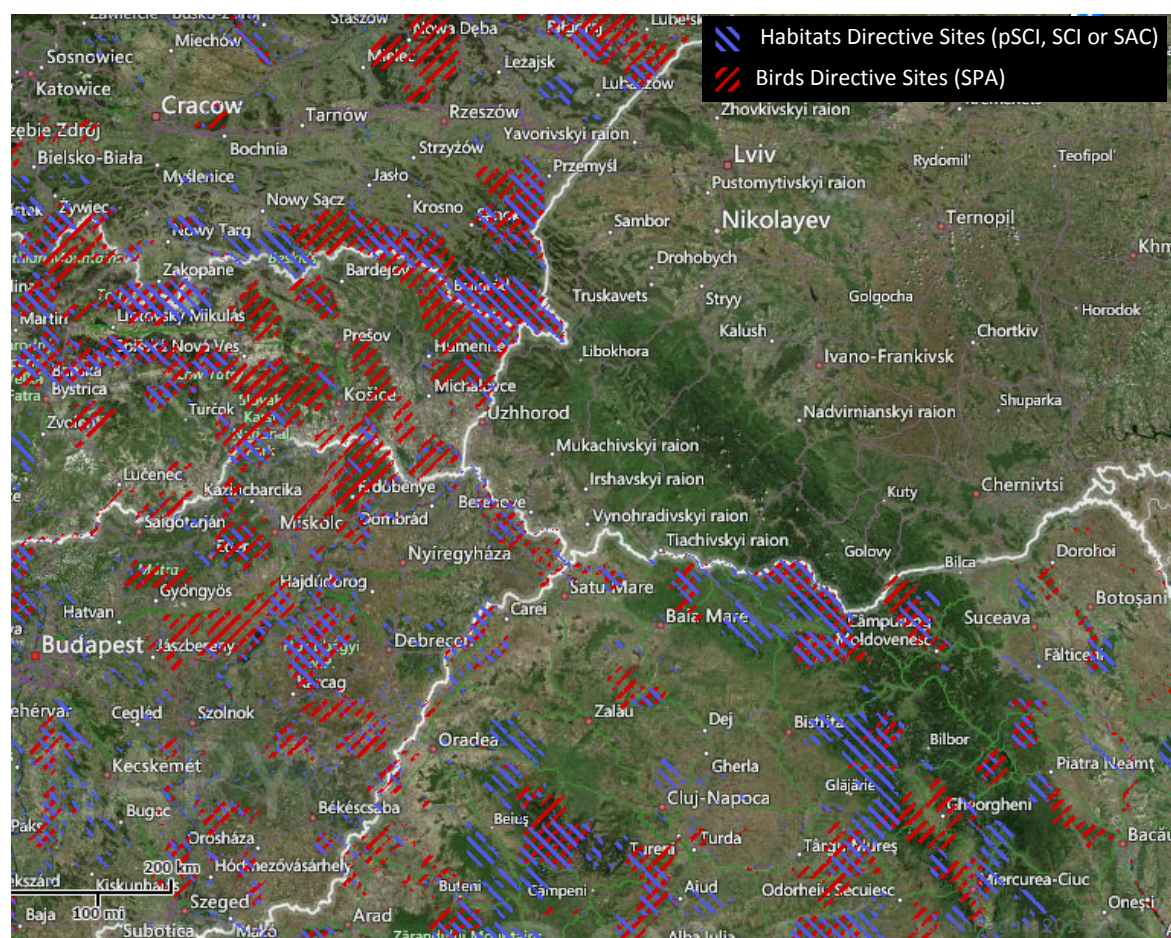
	Length of motorways and motor roads	Length of other roads	Length of railway lines
Hungary	283	8 774	2 156
Slovakia	89	13 965	1 129
Romania	0	9 560	976
Ukraine	n.a.	18 700	2 772
Poland	91	20 130	924
CE	n.a.	71 129	4 957

The 10 international airports contribute to the easier and more flexible accessibility of the Carpathian Euroregion. External transport links are also a decisive factor in tourism, which can be identified as one of the main joint strengths of the CE. Numerous cultural and natural tourist attractions provide a strong basis for joint development to improve the attractiveness of the area:

- UNESCO World Heritage sites,
- natural treasures such as 26 national parks⁵, other protected areas, mountains, caves, forests, lakes and rivers,
- wine regions and routes,
- museums, architectural heritage sites (churches and cathedrals, castles, palaces, ruins) – although continuous degradation of the cultural-artistic heritage is a problem,
- spas based on thermal water,
- folk art and traditions,
- touristic events and festivals.

⁵ The national parks are distributed as follows: Hungary – 3, Poland – 2, Romania – 2, Slovakia – 6, Ukraine – 13.

Figure 14 – Natura 2000 sites (2015)



Source: <http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/>

According to which, different types of tourism are present in the Carpathian Euroregion:

- balneary and health tourism,
- cultural, architectural and religious tourism,
- active tourism (e.g. hiking, winter sports, rafting, cycling⁶, water and ecotourism),
- rural tourism,
- gastronomy,
- business tourism.

Despite the good touristic potentials, the sector faces major challenges regarding the quality and quantity of tourism infrastructure and services, as well as deficiencies in the effectiveness and organisation of tourism marketing. It negatively influences the number of tourist (4.4 million), their overnight stays (11.5 million) and the average length of stays (2.56 nights).

⁶ Cycling routes are not only important in tourism but also in daily cross-border connectivity. More BCPs have been established and are planned at certain border sections.

Figure 15 – Basic indicators of tourism in the Carpathian Euroregion (2013)

3.1.1	Beds in accommodation establishments	Visitors	Overnight stays by visitors	Average length of stay (days)
Hungary	75, 925	1, 428, 260	3, 646, 967	2.5
Slovakia	60, 270	1, 014, 899	2, 906, 706	2.9
Romania	17, 323	412, 903	847, 403	2.1
Ukraine	31, 466	765, 546	1, 837, 310	2.4
Poland	21, 591	782, 127	2, 297, 077	2.9
Carpathian Euroregion	206, 575	4, 403, 735	11, 535, 463	2.56

According to different research studies, the territory of the Carpathian Euroregion is very sensitive to climate change impacts: most parts of the CE can expect a strong increase in mean temperature and summer days, as well as a strong decrease in sub-zero days and precipitation. These changes can cause different emergency situations (e.g. floods, heat waves, drought), which can be handled more effectively with cross-border risk management. Climate change contributes also to the modification of biodiversity, conditions in protected areas and forest cover (cc. 30% in the Carpathian Euroregion).

Public utilities again show a heterogeneous picture of the area. Regarding wastewater, the worst situation is detected in Hajdú-Bihar and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties. The proportion of households connected to a regular waste disposal system is at least about 90%. Solid waste collection problems (e.g. the low share of waste collected selectively) have a negative impact on the quality of the environment, which can be perceived especially in the contamination of rivers and drinking water sources. The area is very diverse when speaking about emissions: there are several metallurgy and chemical industry companies that cause very high emission rates, but air quality is much better in the untouched mountain areas.

Using renewable resources energy is one way to reduce the effects of climate change. The Carpathian Euroregion has remarkable potential for geothermal, solar, wind, biomass energy and hydropower, but the share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption is very low (with the exception of Romania).

Migration and cross-border mobility is a crucial factor in terms of transboundary cooperation. At some border sections (esp. between Romania and Ukraine), the number and density of border crossing points is very low compared to the length of the border. Data is not available about the number of passengers and vehicles crossing the border in between Schengen countries, only per section of the Schengen external border. The number of persons who legally cross the border from or to Ukraine has decreased – esp. because of the crisis in Ukraine.

Figure 16 – Number of border crossing points

Border section	Railway	Road
SK-PL	1	2
SK-UA	2	3
SK-HU	2	12
UA-PL	2	5
UA-RO	1	2
UA-HU	2	5
RO-HU	3	5
CE	13	34

Several problems occur regarding the border crossing procedure:

- inefficient, non-transparent and time-consuming procedure,
- lack of harmonisation of border and custom procedures,
- border crossing management deficiencies, incl. personnel problems and corruption,
- deficiencies in technical infrastructure, even after some modernisation of the border crossing was realised,
- lack of border crossings for pedestrians and cyclists.

Illegal migration has been a key issue in the European Union recently. Increasing pressure from illegal migration can be detected in the last period and has arisen because of international conflicts. Illegal migrants use the Carpathian Euroregion countries mostly as transit zones. The European Union is interested in controlled migration into its territory – preventing illegal migration to and across the related countries.

Despite the differences between the countries as well as the physical and human barriers of the partnership, there are many good examples of cross border cooperation in various sectors (e.g. tourism, education, nature protection, people-to-people actions, etc.) – partly due to programmes co-financed by the European Union. However, these types of cooperation are mainly driven by external resources. Differences between public administration systems and legal frameworks also make regular and continuous cooperation more difficult.

3.2 SWOT analysis

3.2.1 Geography & Demography

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Various relief forms such as mountains, hills, and plains present advantages for agricultural and tourism development - A positive natural increase in population ratio esp. in UA, SK and PL CBC regions - The presence of several urban poles such as Debrecen, Eger, Miskolc, Nyiregyhaza, Szolnok (HU), Košice, Prešov (SK), Rzeszow (PL), Uzhgorod, Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk (UA), Maramures, Baia Mare, Satu Mare, Botosani (RO) - Minority cross-border ethnic groups create a favourable multicultural environment for different cultural and economic activities - The availability of valuable minerals in some of the mountain areas - The favourable age structure of the population – a relatively high ratio of pre-productive age population in some parts of the CE area	- Several sparsely populated areas and rural areas & large urbanization gaps between the main urban centres - A low population density in some parts of the CE, implying higher operating costs for providing public services for the population - The mountain relief imposes restrictions on and increases costs of developing infrastructure and transport communications between settlements, especially in the North-South direction - The uneven distribution of large urban centres leads to polarization and inter-regional disparities - Negative migration balance, selective migration - The natural decrease of the population in Hungarian and Romanian counties and in some Ukrainian regions

Opportunities	Threats
- Increased attractiveness of the CE border area and the potential return of expats & and young people that left for other regions - The proximity of other CBC areas offers cooperation potential e.g. via the Central Europe Programme and the EU Strategy for the Danube region	- High risk of natural disasters due to the diversity of relief types (e.g. mountain landslides, slope erosion, floods) - Increased frequency of weather extremities due to climate change endangers agricultural production - Long term trend in the negative natural increase ratio: population decline is a major threat in the border area – more prominently present in the rural areas - The ageing process of the population - Significant migration from rural to urban settlements due to lack of opportunities, services, and other amenities, especially in areas with a small number of urban centres - Sustained intensive emigration from the Euroregion to more developed regions and counties

3.2.2 Economy, Competitiveness & the Labour Market

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Recent economic growth in the majority of the CE after the financial and economic crisis (except for the Ukrainian regions) - The presence of strong, basic industries in certain parts of the CE (e.g. metallurgy, chemical industry, engineering, oil) - Emerging new growth poles facilitate the development of new emerging industries (e.g. ICT) - Lower labour costs than in the rest of Europe and a labour force with good education and skills - Diverse economic structure - The availability of important natural resources (e.g. forestry, raw materials for construction work) - High quality fruit production, internationally recognized wine areas, wild forest products - High number of industrial zones and parks as attractive areas for investors (except UA where the necessary legislation for creating industrial parks and the attraction of investors has emerged only recently) - High proportion of working-age population - Abundance of touristic attractions (high natural, balneal, cultural and landscape values, great number of historical and	- The CE is relatively far from the specific economic developing axes in Europe - High share of businesses with outdated technology - Low level of labour productivity - Limited ability to attract capital, low level of (external) investments - Some industrial parks are characterized by low utilization rate (main reasons: insufficient infrastructure, poor location, low levels or absence of business services) - The main economic activities have low added value (agriculture, forestry, fishing, trade and tourism related services) - Low innovative capacity in private and public sectors, low innovation degree and fairly low implementation degree of innovations, low technological know-how and ICT (persisting technological and knowledge stagnation, low research intensity and innovation) - Low cross-border trade intensity in the CE area - Inadequate level of cross-border business cooperation and clusters - Business density of the CE is far below the EU average - Limited competitiveness of SMEs and middle-sized companies (poor risk-taking

cultural monuments, numerous health-resorts, etc.) - Existence of primary clusters in industry and tourism - High proportion of people with a higher education degree (especially in the Ukrainian and Romanian part) - Market size – the CE represents a cc. 16 million market - Positive trend in the number of enterprises after 2012	capacity, small own capital, scarce resources for R&D, low access to credit) - Businesses do not know cross-border markets and business opportunities due to insufficient level of multilingual and interconnected information provision to SMEs and citizens. - Poorly developed business support infrastructure - Common marketing of the CE is weak - Regional tourism strategies are not harmonised - Low level of tourism infrastructure, products and services development compared to EU standards - Weak marketing and promotion of the border areas as a tourist destination and underdeveloped / absent joint tourism information system - Number of international tourists is relatively low – except for transit visitors - The total number of the economically active population is relatively low - Relatively high level of unemployment (also hidden unemployment, not reflected in the official statistics – especially in the Ukraine) - Very low ratio of employed population is hired in high added value activities such as R&D, innovation – weak innovation activities of companies based in the CE - High share of long-term unemployment and unbalanced employment rate by several factors: age, gender, education - Dependence of the CE on the import of strategic raw materials (esp. energy and energy sources) - Low level of integration of the Ukrainian economy to EU standards - Undercapitalisation of small businesses and low access to finance
Opportunities	Threats
- Smart specialization in own sectors of excellence in the CE area (e.g. tourism, wood, energy, robotics & automation, ICT, creative industries) - Opportunities related to the EU member-state status of HU, PL, SK, RO (attractiveness	- Further increase of regional economic and development disparities between cities and rural areas - Sustaining political and security instability in Ukraine harm the economy in the CE region - Instability and poor arrangement of

for foreign investments, European Structural and Investment Funds and H2020) and to the signing of the Association	legislation negatively influencing the business environment, foreign investments influx, and cross-border business
- Major funds for the development of the CE areas located in the EU Member States are available. - Major potential for increasing trade exchange between the European Union and Ukraine - Other donors increasing their financial assistance programs in Ukraine focusing on economic reforms and locally based economic development - Potential for the development of logistics functions associated with the transit location of the CE - Higher added value from cross-border cooperation for companies and cross-sectoral innovations developed in cooperation between business and R&D organizations - Indigenous cultures and traditional livelihoods provide opportunities for the development of other industries, for example the creative industry - Increase of cross-border contacts and communication at the business level - Further engagement in cross-border networks (business, education, R&D, innovations) - Utilisation of new technology and content production in creating new possibilities - Increasing interest of potential investors in the CE territory - Potentially increasing the number of international tourists, and growing interest towards a nearer tourism destination - Growing interest in various consumer groups in consuming/purchasing local and organic food products - Innovative, high skilled labour force development and exchange via national and EU programs - Better integrated CE labour market that would lead to more opportunities for work (including work opportunities for the elderly), lower unemployment (including youth unemployment) and decreased risk of social exclusion	- Sustained administrative burdens and trust deficiencies hinder more widespread cooperation of businesses - Further delay in Romania joining the Schengen area - The scenarios for the change in number of persons in the labour force between 2005 and 2050 presume high labour force reductions by 2050 - Administrative obstacles and lack of harmonisation of employment conditions limit the free flow of workforce - No link between school programmes and business resulting in an increase of unemployment of young people - Enhanced competition between the border regions due to the similar range of products and services (e.g. in agricultural, tourism sectors) - Further 'brain-drain' – emigration of qualified experts to other regions and abroad - Lengthy and complicated European integration of the Ukraine

Public utilities, Infrastructure & Transport

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Good density of road and railway infrastructure (except in the Ukrainian part) - The territorial-administrative reform in Ukraine will create opportunities for the of development border regions, investors and simplify cross-border cooperation - The motorway network has been extended significantly in the past ten years, enabling better internal and external access - Good energy supply network for inhabitants - Good internet access (using broadband technologies), especially in urban area - Despite the low values of the ICT indicators, the trends are clearly positive (the share of individuals regularly using the internet is increasing exponentially) - The existence and increased use of airports based in the CE	- Cross-border accessibility is limited on the Ukrainian border: long access times, insufficient density of border stations - The quality and density of the road network is not satisfactory – this problem concerns especially Ukraine but affects the whole border region by hindering the implementation of joint activities - Missing important EU networks (TEN-T): roads, railways, esp. in the North-South direction in the CE area - No cross-border motorways connecting large cities - Low coherence of the transport infrastructure between the regions and weak bus/train or even absent regular connections - Insufficient quality and quantity of small roads connecting villages in the border areas - Poor quality of railway infrastructure differences in gauge width between UA and the rest of the CE region - Cut-off railway links, relatively low number of cross-border trains, passenger rail transport is slow, of low quality - Partly missing water and sewage networks esp. in rural area, incl. absence of sewerage plants (especially in the Ukraine) - Deficient energy basis, dependence upon distant transmission of electric power, gas and fuel - Technological obsolescence of electricity grids in the Ukrainian part of the CE - Insufficient access to public utilities in small peripheral settlements - Very limited direct air connectivity to the CE, esp. towards EU capitals - Outdated airport infrastructure esp. in RO & UA parts of the CE - ICT indicators have lower values than EU28+4 area, and show high internal disparities - Weakly developed multimodal transport systems, lack of transport and logistics centres at the border - Lack of financial resources to develop infrastructure in certain parts of the CE region

Opportunities	Threats
- The TEN-T network improvement and its better availability has had a high priority in the few last years within the EU - 2014-2020 EU programs to support the development of infrastructure esp. in the EU parts of the CE - There are plans for the completion of the motorway network - Development of multimodal transport systems in economically developed territories and in tourist areas - Improvement of the cycle route network esp. across the borders	- Political instability and international conflicts or tensions can directly threaten significant investments in infrastructure development, which need long-term planning, predictability and stability - Planned motorway network and small roads will not be developed – the accessibility of the CE and interconnectivity within the CE will not be improved - Railway development receives lower priority in national agendas

3.2.3 Governance & Public Administration

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Appropriate political and economic relations between the Carpathian Euroregion countries - Existing long-term regional and local level cooperation supported on a bilateral and multilateral agreement basis - Good experience in working with EU (also CBC) programs at central, regional and local levels of public administration - Improved capacity of public administration (central, regional and local) in project management - Last year's improvement of regional and local strategic planning was also focused on cross-border cooperation enhancement	- Differences in the legislative and institutional systems, which hinder the development of cross-border cooperation in the CE - Administrative burdens, bureaucracy and inflexible budgetary framework limits attractiveness to potential investors - Absence of national and regional cross-border cooperation support instrument tools and resources (mainly financial) – dependence on external resources - Poor coordination of cross-border cooperation activities - Insufficient number of UA consulates in the CE area, which negatively affects establishing P2P and B2B contacts on both sides of the Schengen border - Low level knowledge of foreign languages of the middle-aged population - Lack of knowledge about the operation and potentials of the CE among the staff of national public administration systems - Major differences between the public administration systems of the countries involved in the CE. - Differences in the legal framework of CE countries
Opportunities	Threats
- New association agreement between the EU and Ukraine, administration system reform in Ukraine - Alignment of the legislative and institutional systems between the EU and Ukraine	- Unfavourable geopolitical situation, political instability and international conflicts or tensions can divert focus from cross-border cooperation

- Enhanced civil society cooperation and development of NGO sector - Development of ICT technologies provides solutions for cooperation without physical meetings and travel in an increasing number of areas - Further development of cross-border cooperation based on common planning and institutional development - Better sustainability of long-term institutional cooperation (e.g. through the creation of joint protocols or harmonization of national legislation) increases trust and inner coherence of the CE - Increased cooperation between local municipalities in the CE	- Regional/local governments focus more on their internal development rather than supporting CBC - Language barriers of communication between different ethnic groups of the CE (lack of a common language, or better knowledge of each others' languages) - Absence of the Polish part of the CE in the multilateral ENPI CBC HU-SK-RO-UA 2014-2020 Programme > obstacle for multilateral cooperation enhancement in the CE territory - Limited involvement of Ukrainian authorities and local government in the CE
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3.2.4 Environment, Climate change & Energy

Strengths	Weaknesses
- High quality natural sites and the biodiversity of ecosystems, incl. A high number of protected areas – altogether resulting in major natural value - A variety of natural sites and ecosystems: mountain, plain and floodplain forests, alpine meadows, meadows, wetlands, rivers and lakes, mountain and lowland swamps - The area has a rich joint water base (surface and underground) - Low level of air pollution (especially in small cities and rural areas) - Good condition for green and renewable energy: hydro, solar and wind power, biomass, renewable wastes Transboundary water agreements ensure the prevention and joint investigation of occasional accidental pollution of natural waters - Presence of high quality agricultural land, arable land and pastures - The area is rich in forests (except the Hungarian part) - Existing agreements and understanding of the need for joint cooperation in emergency preparedness	- Degradation of natural values (water, soil) as a consequence of urbanisation processes, tourism and economic activities - Significant air pollution around major cities and close to main roads - Groundwater pollution by waste, toxic filtrates and also by nitrates and nitrites resulting from agricultural activities; - Major sources of soil degradation include soil erosion due to wind/water, landslides, drought and extraction of mineral resources - Incomplete technical and biological re-cultivation of old environmental burdens - Insufficient waste management infrastructure and sewage treatment - The recycling rate of municipal solid waste is below the EU average - Insufficient joint planning, programming, management and monitoring in the field of natural environment protection - The risk of flooding in certain parts of the CE is high - The catchment areas do not end at the border, the risks and damages are common and require co-operation in management - Inappropriate flood protection around some settlements - Low level of ecological awareness of people and also businesses - Energy production is based on fossil resources, esp. in HU, PL, UA

	- Lack of joint overall standard CB emergency system in case of natural disasters - Most of the counties and regions of the CE are facing medium negative impact of climate change, while they only have low adaptive capacity - Low energy efficiency of industry and insufficient number of energy-saving measures esp. in the Ukrainian part of the region
Opportunities	Threats
- EU funds are available to finance environmental protection, develop public utility infrastructure, energy efficiency and green energy production - Favourable changes in EU regulations regarding renewable sources of energy - National & Foreign Direct Investments in green energy (especially solar and wind power) - Using new technologies and renewable resources of energy – geothermal wind and solar energy, energy of biomes, hydropower - Increasing the effectiveness of environmental and nature protection initiatives - Increasing public knowledge and awareness about environmental issues - Strong commitment of authorities in terms of environmental protection and climate change mitigation - Co-operation between the environmental sector and industry - Initiatives to increase energy efficiency and the share of renewable sources in energy production - Signing an association agreement between the EU and Ukraine, approximation of Ukrainian legislation to EU law that will give the opportunity to develop a single environmental monitoring network standard	- Unstable political & legal framework regarding subsidies for green energy production - As a result of negative climate processes, the risk of environmental disasters increases - Strengthening human activity such as agriculture, forestry, transport, certain industrial sectors, and tourism can threaten nature - Low level of environmental investments & lack of harmonized investment support schemes - High price of alternative and renewable sources of energy - Unfavourable changes in the national legal and regulatory environment can hinder a more widespread use of renewable sources of energy - Unused renewable energy resources can result in a higher dependence status of the CE on energy consumption - Uncoordinated exploitation of thermal water may lead to overuse, decreasing stocks

3.2.5 Health & Social Affairs

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Health & social services are fairly well distributed across the area - Well-equipped hospitals in some bigger cities of the CE	- Lower quality of health & social services compared to the EU level - Low level of health and social infrastructure in some parts of the CE area

- Existing cross-border cooperation between hospitals and medical institutions - Increasing number of private medical facilities - Cross-border health care service provision is operational in the area (especially in Hungary) - Famous resorts and balneal centres located in the area (Bardejov, Debrecen, Miskolc, Hajdúszoboszló, Eger, Truskavets, Morshyn, Zakarpattia and others) - Wide range of specialized medical schools in the area	- Lack of interconnected emergency response services - Higher level of poverty in the CE compared with the national average - Several areas with extreme poverty, mostly connected to Roma settlements - Several areas of deteriorated accessibility to social and health facilities - Lack of social involvement in civil society development - Lower rate of life expectancy at birth compared to EU levels - Poor general health status of the population - Inefficient preventive measures to improve health status - Poor healthcare system in the Ukrainian parts of the area – underdeveloped social security, ineffective health-care services, lack of insurance medicine - Inappropriate social care for disabled people, especially in the Ukraine
Opportunities	Threats
- Higher national and EU support for communities and social groups with special needs - EU directive on cross-border health care sets key European-wide rules related to, among others, e-health, cross-border communication and telemedical infrastructure (between EU Member States) - Availability of EU-funds for developing health and social care infrastructure and services - Improving health by improving early detection and disease prevention - Many mineral water springs in the CE area are a possible source of spa tourism and balneal medical services - Sustainable use of existing natural resources to provide unique medical services / treatments to people from other parts of Europe	- Global threat to health of citizens and animals - Decreasing health and social care spending - Failure to create proper administrative conditions for cross-border health care financing may lead to an increase in semi-legal or illegal practices - Differences between national health care strategies (including emergency) and inconsistency among hospital development plans within the CE - A growing number of people at risk of poverty and of populations living in comparatively poor areas - High risk of the proliferation of infectious diseases as a result of increased trans-border migration

3.2.6 Mobility, Migration, Borders & Security

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Border traffic agreements in place - Existence of local institutions dealing with migration & borders	- Border regime associated with the external border of the European Union, with various dysfunctions that occur at border crossings

	and which considerably hamper cross-border interactions - Visa regime with UA - Emigration of young people and educated workforce from the area to other regions - High cross-border criminality esp. smuggling of sensitive“ goods (fuel, cigarettes etc.), illegal migration - Inefficient and not harmonized procedures at border crossing points - Insufficient technical infrastructure at the borders, lack of border crossings for pedestrians and cyclists - Crossing the border takes a long time - Insufficient technical and social equipment of existing border crossings related to their low capacity of legal migration
Opportunities	Threats
- Liberalization of the visa policy of the EU to Ukraine and facilitation of the visa and travel documents application procedure - Legislative harmonization in the field of border security and migration policies - National, bilateral and EU-level initiatives for the establishment of a common control system at entry border points, unification of border crossing rules, expansion of border crossing capacity and opening new entry border points - On-going political discussions on opening new cross border points, esp. for CBC tourism development - Increased co-operation between operative actors and new solutions to cope with border disadvantages	- Negative effects of globalisation and common threats, such as insecurity, organized crime, terrorism, communicable diseases, drugs and human trafficking - Limited regional influence on national and EU-wide migration and border policies - Negative effect of political instability and the crisis in Ukraine (incl. large number of people moving from the East of Ukraine) on cross-border migration and EU border security - Decline of the security level due to the growing conflict between Ukraine and Russia

3.2.7 Education, Innovation, Culture & Society

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Existence of higher education institutions, which opens up possibilities for the development of academic and research cooperation and student exchange - The innovation attractiveness and potential is relatively high - Stabilized network of elementary and secondary schools & the gradual development of universities - Co-operation between public, private and R&D sectors has increased in recent years	- Insufficiently developed infrastructure for science, research and innovation linked with the brain drain, low productivity and poor efficiency of science and research in the region - Territorial overconcentration of RTD activities and employees around the biggest universities, with no such activities elsewhere - Despite the rise of R&D spending, the expenditure in the share of GDP is rather low,

- Growing R&D spending of universities and businesses in many of the CE-regions - Common historic heritage and culture, multi-ethnic composition and multi-language skills of residents, positive traditions of peaceful multicultural coexistence - Strong and diverse cultural heritage and long and positive tradition of multi-ethnic cohabitation - Good cultural infrastructure: museums, cinemas, libraries, etc. - Shared cultural and linguistic background to support exchange experience and joint initiatives - Many natural and cultural preserved areas such as national parks, town monument preservation - Many listed areas on the UNESCO - World Cultural and Natural Heritage List, some of which are on both sides of the border, e.g. the cave system of the Slovak Karsts supplemented with the Ochtinská Aragonite, Dobšinská Ice and Stratenská caves together with the Aggtelek caves in Hungary and Uholky in Ukraine - Many similarities in cultural heritage throughout CE territory	well below the EU28 average (in most of the CE-regions) - The majority of the CE can be classified as a “creative imitation area”, exhibiting low knowledge and innovation intensity, entrepreneurship, and creativity - Vocational and higher education do not respond to the labour market demand - Poor physical accessibility to educational infrastructure in rural areas - High number of early school leavers - Bad technical condition of many historical and cultural sites - Despite cooperation between universities, the offer of joint trainings, doctoral programmes and curricula does not reach the required level - Language barriers still play a major role in the insufficient cooperation in the fields of education and culture - A small number of people speak foreign languages - Lack of knowledge and understanding about the neighbours, lack of trust
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Opportunities	Threats
- Improved quality of human capital, providing the basis for socio-economic development and cross-border cooperation - Stronger pool of higher education institutions with (partly) complementary training offered to ensure student mobility within the CE, and to decrease the emigration - Better orientation of secondary school students towards professions having a higher labour market demand - The cooperation of primary and secondary schools is an important confidence-building tool as it brings people together at an early age - Using regional identity, tradition and history to promote the region and form services and tourist products aimed at the European market - Resources and initiatives for cross border networking in education as well as intensification of educational and research co-operation	- R&D spending remains low both in the public sector and in the business sector - A low level of investment in the field of R&D continues - Unfavourable changes in national legislation related to higher education cause the emigration of potential students of the CE (except for Ukraine that has adopted a progressive law) - Fading of regional customs and traditions as a result of the spread of mass culture and the globalization process - Degradation of the conditions of historical sites, historical municipal zones, nature reserves and the landscape - Contradictory discussions regarding minorities rights & the financing of national and minorities’ cultures

- Utilising cultural differences and similarities
- Joint information channels and cooperation of information professionals for better promotion of cultural events and tourism
- Similarities of structure and problems regarding the provision of the development of national minority cultures
- Potential to develop a “mega-regional” brand similar to Scandinavia

3.3 The main challenges and potentials of the Carpathian Euroregion

3.3.1 Challenges

A decisive element of strategies is their future viability. Therefore, rather than focusing primarily on what has been done to date, the Strategy must anticipate future developments, or, at least, be open to them.

It is certain that the current trends & challenges in the World will continue to occupy us for the next decade and beyond. Such trends & challenges are:

- Climate change
- Urbanisation
- Demographic development
- Globalisation

At the same time, a significant part of the Carpathian Euroregion territory is part of the EU and is affected by the key EU Strategic development initiatives such as the Europe 2020 “smart growth” and “sustainable growth”.

The main challenges and potentials of the Carpathian Euroregion are thus strongly interconnected with Global and EU trends & challenges. Furthermore, joint socio-economic analysis and SWOT analysis of the CE area was used as the basis for identifying the Carpathian Euroregion area’s joint needs and challenges. The Strategy will focus on these areas, and, in particular, those in which cross-border cooperation can provide the greatest added value:

- Utilising the potential of the Carpathian Euroregion
- Improving knowledge flow
- Improving companies’ innovative capabilities
- Vulnerability to the impacts of Climate Change
- Using natural and cultural heritage and resources to drive economic growth
- Economic and Social Cohesion
- Mobility & Security

Today, not excluding the Global challenges, the Carpathian Euroregion faces also several “internal” challenges. The extremely large area of the CE (145,000 km², 14.2 million people) limits the level of comparability and common characteristics. There are huge differences in the potentials and challenges in each part of the Euroregion. Such intraregional differences are mostly in:

- geographical conditions (mountain areas and plains)
- spatial structure and settlement network (urban poles and rural peripheries)
- public administration system
- level of development
- demands and interests of the active stakeholders

The main economic challenges are to overcome the “lagging behind” status and low level of competitiveness that requires huge stimulus to the local economy and connected areas, as well as to reduce wide disparities in research and productive innovation between the areas of the Carpathian Euroregion and other areas located in the countries forming it, and to remove impediments to the single market.

As regards human and social capital, the Carpathian Euroregion faces negative demographic trends. Despite a relatively young society, the region is characterised by a major outflow of qualified and young people, the social exclusion of some groups of economically active population (esp. Roma), incl. the elderly and the disabled, and the relatively low average age of life expectancy (especially among men). The area is faced with a deficit of young, well-educated persons being the driving force for innovation and development.

Other important issues are connected to low accessibility and the need for the improvement of networks, ending the energy isolation of parts of the region, and ensuring the sustainability of transport modes by the use of environment friendly means. Sustainable development of the cities being sub-local development centres as well as rural areas is also very important.

Other challenges include:

- regional differences within the countries > increasing peripherality of the CE regions, low level of competitiveness compared to the core regions,
- dependence of local and regional governments on the central authorities,
- missing or insufficient transport links esp. in the North-South direction,
- limited number of CB business cooperation,
- low level of economic activity and employment,
- intensive (selective) emigration from the Euroregion to more developed regions and countries,
- high proportion of Roma population that faces social exclusion,
- language barriers.

In such circumstances, it is difficult to provide similar solutions, to create joint objectives and to develop a common interregional identity and image for the Carpathian Euroregion. At the same time, joint institutions created to support the CBC in the Carpathian Euroregion started to have organizational and operational problems. We can sum up these into the following s:

- low awareness and visibility of the CE (e.g. absence of a joint marketing strategy towards the inhabitants of the CE, but also for external cooperation),
- lack of clear vision,
- systemic inefficiency of “institutional activities”,
- unstable financial basis,
- activities and operations are project-based, which limits the possibilities for continuous development,
- inappropriate communication between the partners,
- separate legal entities in each of the countries,
- different level of motivation and commitment of the partners.

The crucial challenge is, however, the need for the creation and reinforcement of internal institutional relations between particular areas in the region and its actors, and stakeholders supporting the development of the region. If the CE is to be a successful project, the functioning of CE institutions has to be improved.

Currently, many experts and regional leaders are openly noting that Carpathian Euroregion cooperation is “coming down, declining, falling apart, slowly dying, decreasing, nothing is happening, is not able to solve common problems like unemployment in such a large territory”⁷. While the first period of the Carpathian Euroregion’s existence is evaluated in a positive way, such as the project fulfilled its mission to encourage, facilitate and coordinate cross-border cooperation among people living in the Carpathian territory. The CE has been serving as a unique platform for cross-border cooperation to enable, facilitate and coordinate among local authorities.

The expectations of the founders of the CE were huge and sometimes naïve; without strong national and external political and financial support, they could not succeed. E.g. in the late 90’s, there were some ideas that the CE should be a partner e.g. for NATO, however this was never implemented. Generally, the CE lost its geopolitical significance after 3 (in 2004) +1 (2007) member states joined the EU. At the same time, the controversial processes of “cooperation vs. competition” occurred among the CE countries, esp. in competition between the countries and regions for investors, tourists, inhabitants, capital and grants and, at the same time, “identity-building of the nation states” was contrary to cooperation initiatives.

Another factor that influences CBC in the CE is the borders. Creating a Schengen border between EU and Ukraine helped to decrease illegal migration, but established a visa regime and other obstacles, (see below) which caused the number of travellers to drop and many contacts were lost. The borders of UA (and RO) became barriers to intensive and effective cross-border interactions “thanks to”:

- visa regime with UA / Schengen regulation (RO),
- relatively low density of border crossing points in some parts of the CE,
- insufficient technical infrastructure at the borders,
- lack of border crossings for pedestrians and cyclists,
- poor border management, inefficient and not harmonized procedures in border crossing points causing e.g. long waiting times,
- criminality connected to borders.

The crisis in Ukraine after Russia’s’ annexation of Crimea and war in the East of Ukraine constitute an urgent challenge also for the CBC in the CE. In many ways, however, the new situation in Ukraine and the will of Ukrainians to come closer to the EU can bring new breath to CE cooperation, until the Ukraine becomes a member of EU.

3.3.2 Potential

The Carpathian Euroregion has a vast potential which might be used in a more efficient manner: an extensive and very-well preserved natural environment rich in natural resources, cultural heritage, which is unique on both a European and a global scale, as well as many years of tradition in regional co-operation. In some areas, the Carpathian Euroregion boasts big competitive advantages. The framework provided by European Union policies and law provides a strong base on which to build

⁷ See e.g. Bauer, R. (2015): The Carpathian Euroregion project. Short study. CESCO, Budapest.

more effective cooperation in the field of increasing competitive advantages, in particular in regard to new technologies, innovation, creative industries (including culture and tourism), and others.

Other factors that affect the development potential of the CE are:

- existing long-term CB cooperation at regional, local and institutional levels,
- multiculturalism and interethnic relations (“unity in diversity”),
- market size – the CE represents a 14.2 million market within reach for local (also cross-border) businesses,
- increasing logistic function between the EU and the “East”,
- a wide range of tourist attractions,
- EU-Ukraine AA/DCFTA and prospects for lifting the visa regime for Ukraine,
- European Structural and Investment Funds > financial sources from INTERREG and ENI programmes.

The development potential can be described by these possible areas of cooperation:

- mobility, migration, borders and security,
- supporting the democratisation process in Ukraine,
- coordination of territorial planning of the border areas,
- risk prevention and disaster management,
- nature protection,
- tourism, cultural heritage and cultural events,
- stimulating CB business relations,
- HR development, common CB labour market,
- intensifying the international cooperation of the CE with other similar organisations,
- community-led local development, P2P cooperation.

Opportunities for the CE’s future development can be connected to various scenarios, but internal and/or external impulse will be needed. The internal impulse must come from the local stakeholders, representing whole segment of society (self-governments, companies, universities, NGOs). External opportunities can be based on these ideas:

- to connect with “the Carpathian Convention project” territorially and/or financially and obtain support from the central level of the respective parties;
- to push ahead with the newly considered macro-regional strategy “The Carpathian Region”, with the aim of being approved by the European Commission – this needs high national level involvement and support;
- to change the territorial scope of current ENPI CBC programs and to create a joint program for the 5 countries involved;
- to create a new Visegrad+ fund (involving RO, UA) strand or special national fund with member states contribution (could be managed by the Carpathian Foundation) for the CE territory to develop the CE in order to obtain additional financial sources to implement joint projects.

Crucial “internal” factors for CBC development within CE will be: 1) resetting institutional cooperation between participating local and regional authorities that should plan and coordinate regional development in the CE area; 2) the ability to create new common tools for the support of CE cooperation such as own funds following an IVF model that would support CBC projects; 3) the ability to change and/or enhance CE institutions, e.g. how they are organized and how they should be changed/reformed in order to revitalize CBC within the CE; 4) finding new internal drivers of CBC cooperation and, first of all, the stakeholders’ capacities to develop effective institutions for CBC.

4 Future of the Carpathian Euroregion

4.1 Carpathian Euroregion – strategic alternatives

4.1.1 Introduction

The Carpathian Euroregion started out its life as a very innovative, pioneering initiative after the change of regime in Central-Eastern Europe, bringing together regions from various “emerging” countries to align their priorities and cooperate instead of competing. The initiative took-off quickly, delivering great results and benefiting the participating regions by exploiting the potential of multilateral transnational cooperation.

The gradual accession of some of the countries to the European Union, however, brought about some negative changes from the perspective of the Carpathian Euroregion: the participating regions shifted their focus more to the various CBC and transnational initiatives of the European Union, which offered significant funding, and the CE slowly lost its importance. Although the founding partners kept up the efforts to at least sustain its operation, still it gradually lost its significance and, today, the CE struggles even to survive. This, however, happened not by choice – this is the result of unfortunate changes in the environment to which the CE failed to adapt, and also as a result of the incapacity of CBC stakeholders to adapt the CE to the new conditions.

The Carpathian Euroregion today is a transnational cooperation driven only by its inertia. There is some level of operation in place – mostly as a result of still running projects that need to be completed. The motivation of partner regions, however, is at an all-time low, real commitment from decision-makers is lacking, and the activities are oriented by individual projects rather than by a joint vision and common goals of the involved regions.

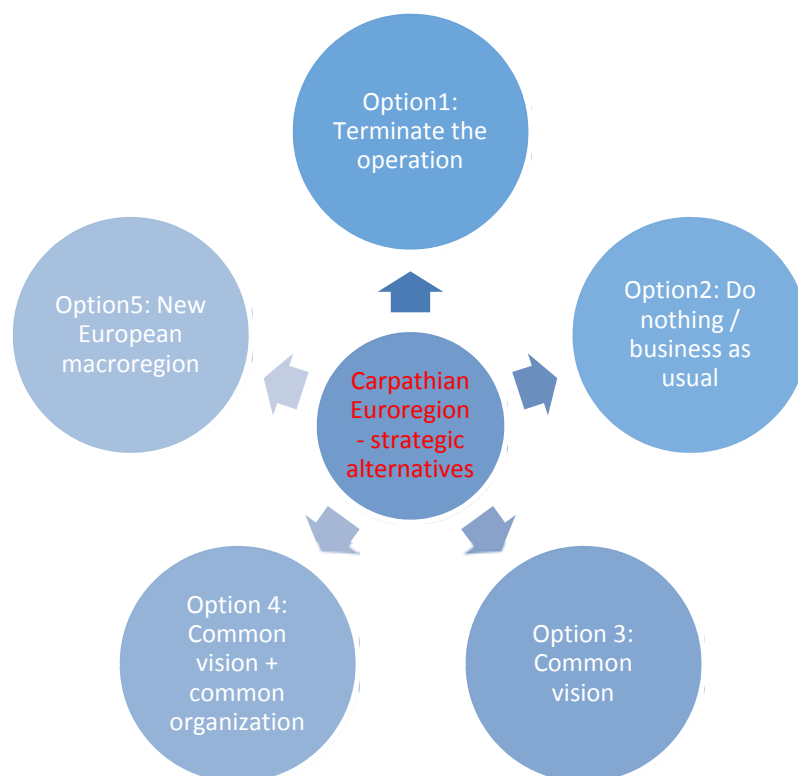
As part of devising the strategy of the Carpathian Euroregion, therefore, it is essential to at least identify the possible strategic alternatives facing this cooperation initiative. The strategic alternatives presented below have been devised as a result of extensive discussions involving experts from all cooperating regions.

In the following chapters we will go through the possible alternatives in details:

- First, we provide a graphic overview of all the alternatives on one page.
- Then we present each alternative individually, one by one
 - o describing its key features, characteristics;
 - o presenting its potential benefits;
 - o and also highlighting its negative aspects and risks;
- At the end of the individual descriptions we present a comparative summary table, highlighting the most important aspects of each alternative;
- Finally, we present our key conclusions, and also our proposal – using the results of a multi-criteria analysis – as to which alternative should be followed.

This is the point where the expert team can currently reach. The process, however, cannot stop here. By identifying, describing, comparing and analysing the possible alternatives we provide the “raw material” necessary for the decision-makers – representatives of the involved regions – to make their decision and select one of the alternatives. Once a decision is in place, the selected alternative has to be elaborated on in due detail and its delivery needs to be launched immediately.

Figure 17 – Overview of possible alternatives

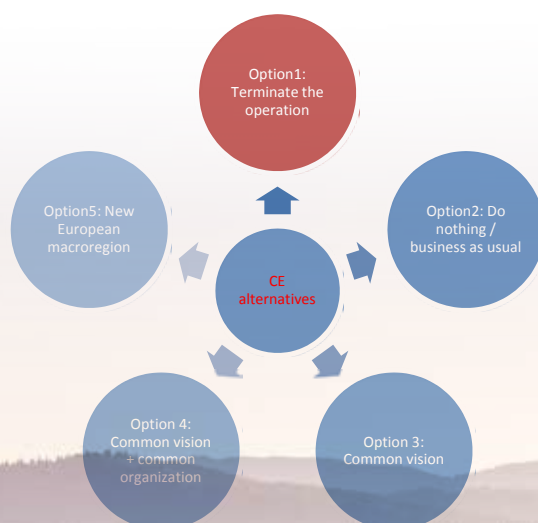


4.1.2 Detailed description of the alternatives

4.1.2.1 Option 1: Terminate the operation

Key features, characteristics

Option 1 offers an extreme solution to the current status of the Carpathian Euroregion: instead of continuing its operation without a proper vision, real commitment, and struggling to survive from project to project, the partners make the decision to terminate the operation of the cooperation initiative. This means that – after duly delivering all – still pending – commitments, closing all running projects, all related organizational units are dismantled, and the necessary procedures are carried out to close the related legal entities.



The partner regions realign their priorities and shift their focus towards other transnational (bi- or multilateral) cooperation initiatives. This would be an important political decision, the official and open recognition of the fact that the once important, successful and beneficial cooperation initiative lost its significance and relevance for most of the partners.

Potential benefits of this Option

Without a strong joint vision and common goal, the activities of the Carpathian Euroregion can only create modest (if any) added value for the participating regions. Sustaining the cooperation may be beneficial for a small number of organizations, but transnational co-operations are not supposed to be driven by the interests of individual organizations. While a negative step, this option can actually result in benefits for the participating regions: a definite decision to terminate this cooperation initiative – after some transition time – can stop the waste of financial and human resources of the participating regions on activities that do not serve their interests. These resources can then be redirected to cooperation initiatives – bi- or multilateral – that are more in line with the priorities of the regions.

While painful and unpopular (decision-makers everywhere prefer opening or launching something over closing down or dismantling), in the long run such a decision can bring significant benefits for the regions – they can focus on actions that actually contribute to their development. Existing partnerships and networks can still be maintained, and provide a strong basis for other cooperation initiatives.

Negative aspects and risks

Terminating a cooperation that has a successful past and many traditions is not easy – either for the decision-makers, or for the professionals who have invested their time and effort.

There are many emotional bonds involved, and people emotionally connected may even feel offended by the step.

Being an extreme solution as it is, if not every partner agrees, it can create significant tensions. While the other options may not be ideal but still possible to be tweaked to be acceptable for all partners, this option is different: someone is either for or against closure – there's not really an in-between or compromise solution.

Terminating the cooperation is also a point of no return: it is extremely difficult, if at all possible, to re-launch the cooperation later, if the partners – for some reason (for instance to respond to positive changes in the environment) - decide to do so.

Altogether, it really is an extreme solution, which should not be applied without carefully weighing up all important aspects, implications, possible risks and consequences.

Key conditions and steps

- Before taking such a serious decision, extensive and honest discussion of all involved partners – representatives of all regions – needs to take place;
- Prior to these discussions, all important implications, consequences and risks of this option need to be revealed to the partners;
- The decision needs to be based on consensus – given its extreme nature, no majority voting is proposed.

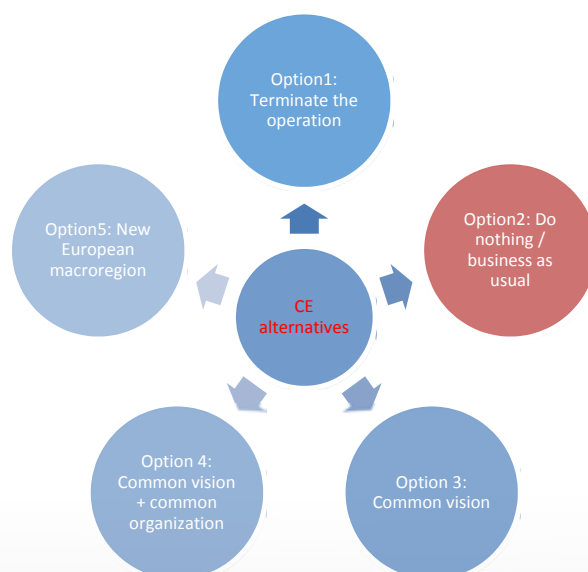
Another alternative to this option is to reduce the number of participating states or regions. Euroregions of the size of the CE (territorial and also number of inhabitants) seem to be less effective than smaller CBC entities. That's a fact of CBC cooperation in various corners within the EU. Maybe discussions might lead to a consensus that the CE has become dysfunctional also due to its artificial size. For the process of deciding on the optimal option to be selected for future development, the argument of feasibility of the size of the CE should be also addressed.

4.1.2.2 Option 2: Do nothing / business as usual

Key features, characteristics

Option 2 is the “do nothing” or “business as usual alternative”. It involves operating “low profile”, keeping the CE alive with the smallest possible effort; having occasional protocol meetings, implementing projects here and there, but nothing more.

It is the easy way out for the partners – it does not even necessitate a formal decision; even without a decision, the cooperation continues without any change.



While it does not require a decision, selecting this option (or, rather, arriving at it) is still a “decision”, albeit not an explicit one: the partners decide to maintain the “image of cooperation”, but without actually pursuing a common vision and goals. It is a convenient choice, does not require a major commitment, does not run the risks of conflict, and does not involve the mobilization of additional resources.

This option requires and involves a low level of partner motivation, reflects an “it could not hurt if we maintain it” approach.

In this scenario, the cooperation is mostly kept alive by the ambitions of individuals, rather than anything else. The lack of commitment means that nobody really wants to pay for the occasional and

inevitable expenses, thus the cooperation continuously struggles with financing difficulties, and barely survives without actually delivering real results or benefits for the partners.

While such a status can easily be dragged on for a long time (many years, in fact), it cannot be maintained forever. It either leads to “extinction” – or the decision-makers realize the need to make changes.

Potential benefits

At first, this alternative seems easy to dismiss quickly, as it offers no real benefits for the partner regions. Interestingly, however, it provides explicit benefits for the decision-makers, therefore it is a genuine alternative that actually cannot be ignored.

Selecting this alternative (or, rather, letting this alternative happen) requires no major political commitment; it does not require the prior dedication of significant financial (or human) resources, either; finally, with this scenario in place, there is no scope for conflicts or heated debates. All these attributes make this option extremely attractive to decision-makers; even though they understand its risks and its “dead-end street” nature, the immediate benefits would probably still draw them towards this option.

As opposed to Option 1, however, this option leaves scope for revving up the cooperation if and when there is a potential to do so.

Negative aspects and risks

The most important negative aspect is exactly what has been presented above: pursuing this option, continuing “business as usual”, offers no real benefits to the participating regions, all the while making the decision-makers comfortable that they actually do something for the cooperation.

Certainly, to maintain the current level of cooperation still requires some resources – people and money – but using these for something without real results is still a waste of those resources, which could be used for something with better chances for success. The lack of joint vision and common goals also means that this option has no mobilizing power whatsoever towards the partners – even when it would actually be important to strengthen the cooperation. And this is exactly the biggest risk of this option.

Key conditions and steps

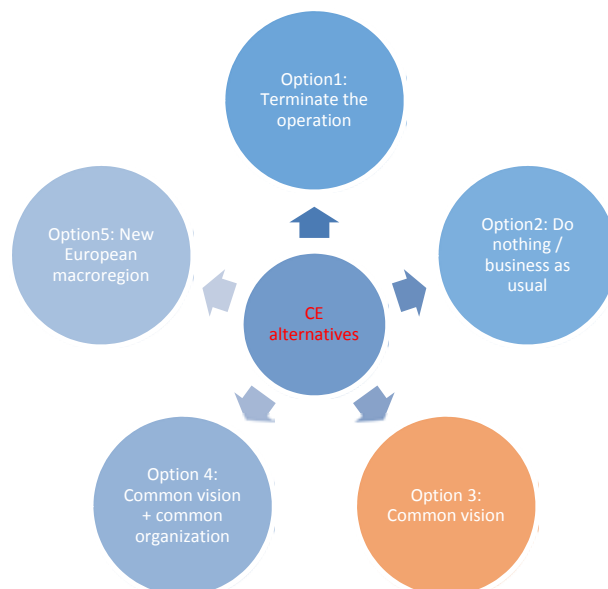
As its name suggests, this option actually occurs if the stakeholders “do nothing”, just continue doing what they did before.

If, for instance, the decision-makers ignore the importance and need to open up and pursue an honest discussion about the future of the Carpathian Euroregion, most probably this option will prevail. The same happens if a discussion takes place, but the parties cannot come to an agreement and neither of the options described here are selected, and no critical decisions are made.

4.1.2.3 Option 3: Common vision

Key features, characteristics

Option 3 – as its name suggests – actually requires decision-makers and stakeholders to come up with a common vision for the Carpathian Euroregion. Such a vision existed at the start of the cooperation, but even though the environment of this cooperation initiative has changed dramatically, no genuine and honest discussions have taken place that could have led to shaping the direction the cooperation is moving towards.



Such a discussion, however, cannot be postponed any further; as presented in the description of Option 1, if the stakeholders continue “doing nothing” and follow business as usual, failing to take some crucial decisions, that could lead to the gradual dying of the cooperation.

Option 3 foresees a scenario where the stakeholders – primarily the decision-makers – recognize what is at stake and – based on the input from the experts and on honest discussions – establish a clear, agreed common vision for the Carpathian Euroregion.

The vision has to be clear and understandable for everyone, describing where the cooperation initiative wants to be in 10-15 years time. The vision also needs to be truly joint – shared by all the partner regions - selected based on consensus rather than on majority voting. It cannot be a long, all-encompassing wish-list – rather, it needs to contain a small number of focused priorities. Finally, in addition to deciding where the Carpathian Euroregion wants to be in the future, it is also important to devise a roadmap, which – instead of general actions - consists of genuinely joint, very specific activities.

Potential benefits

The most important benefit of Option 3 is that the stakeholders of the CE – instead of passively letting things happen – again take an active role and identify the future direction of the development of the cooperation initiative. With aligned plans for the future in place, partners can then take the necessary steps to gradually revive the cooperation.

While this Option requires some level of commitment from the partners, it is possible to start small and then grow gradually – there is no need (initially, at least) for major commitments or to mobilize significant resources. It is perfectly possible to start with baby steps, have some quick wins at the beginning to demonstrate the benefits and the potentials to decision-makers, so that they can make bigger commitments and allocate more resources confidently. The important element is that all these actions lead towards the same agreed common direction.

Negative aspects and risks

Establishing and agreeing on a common vision still requires work. Even with the necessary information in place – information collected, structured and analysed, possible alternatives identified and described – the decision-makers, preferably from all regions involved, are supposed to come together on various occasions and have honest discussions. Unfortunately, though, with the issue of the CE being not very high on the agenda, it is difficult to mobilise the decision-makers. Also, some professionals need to coordinate and facilitate this process – which requires some investment.

Although identifying a common vision is a crucial step towards the revitalization of the CE, which simply cannot be ignored, it may not be sufficient to motivate decision-makers; from their perspective, it is not a topic that deserves their attention, as it does not promise visible results, at least not in the short run.

Even if the decision-makers were open to have a series of honest discussions, chances are that – based on the very different situation and current priorities of the regions involved – it would be difficult to facilitate an agreement around a small number of very specific focus areas.

Key conditions and steps

In order to have a common vision, it is necessary to have a document in place that – based on a thorough analysis of the CE – suggests objectives, priorities and also development alternatives that can support the decision-making process. This current document fits the bill – but it has to be clearly presented and explained to the decision-makers.

Once that is done, the decision-makers – representing preferably all involved regions – need to dedicate some time: they have to come together at least once (preferably more than once!) to sit face-to-face and have an honest and well-facilitated debate that lasts until there is a consensus-based decision made regarding the key parameters of an agreed vision.

With the key directions decided on, based on the agreed upon vision and the current strategic documents, a team of professionals needs to elaborate the roadmap: a plan of very specific actions that enables the achievement of the established vision.

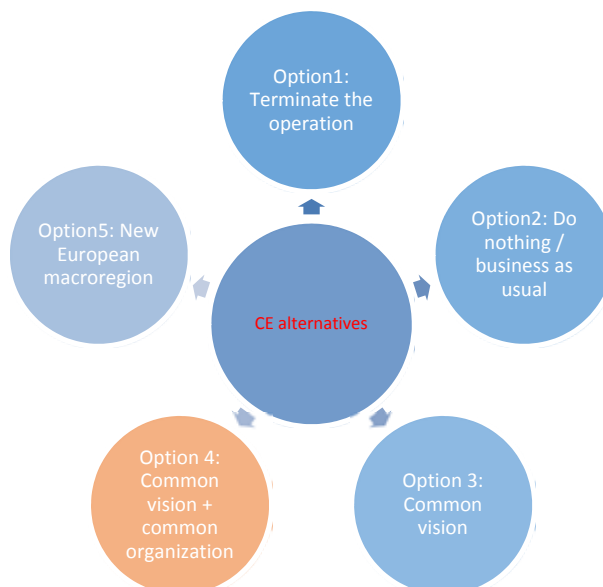
4.1.2.4 Option 4: Common vision and common organization

Key features, characteristics

Option 4 is basically an extended version of Option 3, in that it not only encompasses the identification of a joint vision, but the partners also take active steps and establish a common organizational structure.

This Option has all the most important attributes of Option 3, namely:

- necessitates an honest and open discussion between the stakeholders about the future of the cooperation initiative (which needs to be done quickly);
- leads to the identification of a clear, easy-to-understand vision for the CE that is shared by all the partners (i.e. based on consensus), that has a small number of very specific priorities;
- the vision is translated into a roadmap of very specific actions, enjoying the support and commitment of the partners.



In addition to all these, however, this scenario shows that the parties are truly confident in the future of the CE, and they are really committed to making it successful: it involves the establishment of one single joint organization – acting as the common implementing body of the cooperation initiative, translating priorities into actions, obtaining funds and managing the implementation of those actions. In this, the term “building trust” is a crucial issue for sustainable and long-lasting CBC: the generation of trust amongst partners, removing psychological barriers and prejudices, which sometimes are even worse than the most impassable physical border.

While the joint organizational structure may take various forms, given the character of the cooperation and the involvement of regions from different countries, the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation – or EGTC – could be an optimal format, created exactly for such purposes. It is transnational, enjoys various benefits and advantages in European ETC (European Territorial Cooperation) programmes and, while not very widespread, there are already some examples of good practices in place (even in the region).

“Euroregional Cooperation Groupings” can also be an ideal solution for the stronger and more formalized collaboration within the Carpathian Euroregion. Protocol No. 3 of the Madrid Convention of the Council of Europe provides for the legal status, establishment and operation of “Euroregional Cooperation Groupings”. Composed of local authorities and other public bodies from the Contracting Parties, the aim of a grouping is for transfrontier and interterritorial co-operation to be put into practice for its members, within the scope of their competences and prerogatives. Under the Protocol, the Council of Europe may draw up model national laws for facilitating adoption by the Contracting

Parties of appropriate national legislation for enabling the “Euroregional Co-operation Groupings” to operate effectively.

Potential benefits

This Option shares the most important benefit of Option 3: here, too, the stakeholders of the CE – instead of passively letting things happen – take an active role and identify the future direction of the development of the cooperation initiative. However, they go one very important step further: demonstrating their commitment they actually establish a joint organization that can act as an operational body of the cooperation. This comes also with some major additional benefits. Not only will the CE have aligned plans for the future in place, but a dedicated joint organizational unit will be in place to quickly deliver all the necessary specific actions. That would lead to a much quicker recovery of the cooperation initiative.

In addition, a dedicated organization with quality human resources (which is a key condition!) can drastically improve the capacity of the CE to get funding, mobilize the partners and deliver projects that serve the interests of the partners. The most important is the capacity of joint CE institutions to develop common planning of their regional development and to come up with strategic projects aimed at improving the development potential of participating regions. The strategic projects that could be implemented only within a CE area and which will bring benefits to all participating regions might become a fundament for a joint vision. If we cannot identify strategic projects, only a common and shared vision might become possible.

While in the case of Option 3 – even with a joint vision in place - the CE poses the risk of falling back on the “business as usual” route; the chance of this scenario is much more limited if there is a common organizational structure. Having an EGTC as the common organization also expands the financing potential of the Carpathian Euroregion – EGTC-s present a strong case to be co-financed from bi- and multilateral territorial cooperation programmes.

Altogether, Option 4 – having a common vision together with a joint organizational structure in place – lays the foundation for a more dynamic future development of the CE.

Negative aspects and risks

Certainly, this Option is not without its risks, either. As opposed to Option 3, a major commitment needs to be made by the partner regions early in the process: firstly, functions should be identified (strategic projects, joint vision ...), and only later can a functional organization be established. Partner regions have to agree on setting up a joint organizational body and take all the necessary steps to do so immediately after identifying a common vision.

In addition, partners have to invest their capacities and also financial resources at the beginning: to set up a joint organization requires work and some financial investment – and that can only be provided by the partner regions. Besides, the partners commit to ensure the financial and other conditions even when no external funding is available. Even though the common organization is expected to operate without major partner (financial) contribution in the long run, there may be periods when the partners still need to contribute financially.

While not a strategic issue, the selection of the location and the human resources may still create unnecessary tensions among the partners and weaken unity; there is a tendency in such cooperation initiatives that partners insist on hosting the joint institution and providing at least some of its people.

Finally, setting up a joint organizational structure by partners from various countries is not a simple challenge; it involves various legal and bureaucratic hurdles and difficulties. To solve all these difficulties may easily shift the focus to form over content already at the beginning.

Key conditions and steps

The key conditions are very similar to those of Option 3:

- A document that suggests the objectives, priorities and developmental alternatives (this study), which is clearly presented to decision-makers;
- An honest, facilitated discussion between the decision-makers as soon as possible, in order to arrive at a consensus-based decision;
- A roadmap – a plan of action – to arrive at the vision.

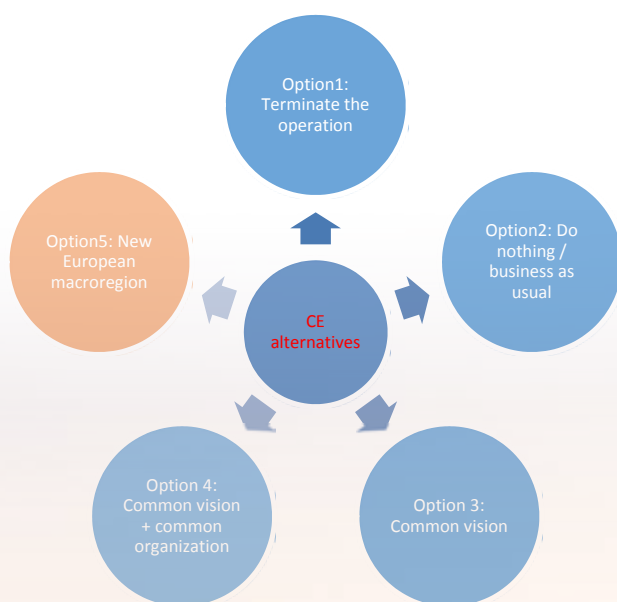
In addition, however, decision-makers need to go a step further, and agree on setting up a joint organizational structure. Besides, they need to dedicate the necessary resources – human and financial, and to actually establish this organization.

The key to success of the new common organization is the quality of human (and other) resources at its disposal; consequently, it is important that both its location and its human resources need to be selected based on professional aspects rather than political intentions.

4.1.2.5 Option 5: New European Macroregion

Key features, characteristics

While Option 1 envisages the immediate closure of the Carpathian Euroregion cooperation initiative and represents a fairly extreme solution – Option 5 sits at the other extreme of the alternatives, with the very ambitious vision of turning the CE into a new European macroregion, similar to the ones of e.g. the Danube Region. This vision also involves the active positioning of this old-new macroregion in the European Union as a transnational cooperation offering answers to many of the region's key challenges.



With proper lobbying and joint political representation, a strong EU-level background is established, the Carpathian Euroregion gains position in the various regulations that guide the use of European structural instruments.

With proper support and financing in place a fully-fledged, ambitious macroregional strategy may be devised and also implemented.

Potential benefits

Establishing (or re-establishing) a real macroregional cooperation contributes to a strong and unquestionable identity, increased motivation for the partner regions to identify and exploit cooperation potentials, and act together to represent key issues that are important for them.

In the European Union's definition "A 'Macroregional strategy' is an integrated framework endorsed by the European Council, which may be supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds among others, to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area relating to Member States and third countries located in the same geographical area, which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion"⁸.

By being part of an acknowledged, strong European macroregion – if the partner regions are ready to give up some of their small-scale particular interests and act jointly in regard to some key issues – undoubtedly increases their negotiating and political power and enables them to achieve things which would otherwise be unattainable for them as individual regions.

In Europe, there are a small number of macroregional cooperation initiatives that already have their approved and officially recognized macroregional strategies in place (Baltic Sea Region, Danube Region, Adriatic and Ionian Region, Alpine Region). Their access to financing possibilities and other resources is significantly better than that of other cooperation initiatives. (Re)Positioning the Carpathian Euroregion as a real European macroregion would significantly improve its "competitiveness" as opposed to other similar initiatives.

Negative aspects, difficulties

While a tempting scenario, in addition to its benefits it also presents numerous negative aspects and also major difficulties which may even prove insurmountable. Building such a cooperation initiative requires the agreement and commitment of ALL partner regions involved: decision-makers have to agree and equally promote the idea; they need to lobby, constantly demonstrate their commitment to the cooperation, and follow a common agenda. That is not easy to achieve in the first place, let alone maintain in the long run, when even putting the decision-makers around the same table at the same time presents difficulties.

Opting for this scenario also means that the partners have to do the "heavy lifting" at the very beginning: a lot of work has to be invested, major capacities and even fairly significant funding need

⁸ Source: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/

to be mobilized at the beginning, while no quick tangible benefits can be expected at the level of the individual regions.

Being at the beginning of the 2014-2020 programming period is, on the one hand, a benefit, as there is ample time to take the necessary decisions and steps to reposition the Carpathian Euroregion as a European macroregion; on the other hand, it is also a disadvantage, as it takes a fairly long time before major benefits may be expected – which is not very attractive for the politicians.

Another difficulty is that – as shown above – there is already “fierce competition” in place by other recognized European macroregions with their strategies prepared, approved and also taken into account by the various structural instruments of the European Union. In addition, some of the partner regions of the Carpathian Euroregion are partners in the Danube Region as well.

Last, but not least, it should be noted that the bigger a structure is, the more control Member States will have. There is a high risk that full control of a “Carpathian Macroregion” will be taken over by the national authorities, leaving very little room for sub-national authorities to implement their policies.

Key conditions and steps

In order to embark on Option 5 right from the beginning requires – before anything else – a clear commitment from all the partner regions (without exception) to follow this road. This decision has to be taken by decision-makers having the proper authorization and being fully aware of its implications.

Once such a decision is in place, a very detailed plan of action needs to be elaborated with specific tasks, responsibilities, resource and capacity needs. Then, even before taking any specific steps, this plan of action needs to be thoroughly discussed and again approved by the representatives of the partner regions – at this stage already aware of their responsibilities, tasks and the funding (and other resources) they have to provide. Ideally, this approval and the commitment to provide the necessary resources are reinforced by the binding agreement of ALL partners.

Then the approved plan of action has to be carried out by the partners; this is not possible without a common operational body in place, which possesses authorization from the partners and the capacity / resources to coordinate the implementation process.

Actions to be delivered would include organizational development, identity development, communication and promotional activities, lobbying, devising a detailed macroregional strategy, project development, etc.

4.1.1.3 Comparative summary table of alternatives

Name of the alternative	Key features, characteristics	Potential benefits	Negative aspects, difficulties	Key conditions and steps
Option 1: Terminate the operation	- Extreme solution: closing down the cooperation initiative; - remaining commitments are delivered, then the organizational structures are dismantled and the necessary legal steps are taken.	- Stop the waste of financial and human resources; - resources can be redirected to cooperation initiatives that are more in line with the priorities of the regions. - existing partnerships and networks can still be maintained and provide a strong basis for other cooperation initiatives.	- If not every partner is agreed, it can create significant tensions; - there's not really an in-between or compromise solution; - a point of no return: it is extremely difficult to re-launch the cooperation later - should not be applied without carefully measuring all important aspects.	- Extensive and honest discussion between the representatives of all regions needs to take place; - prior to these discussions, all important implications, consequences and risks need to be revealed to the partners; - the decision needs to be based on consensus.
Option 2: Do nothing / Business as usual	- Involves keeping the CE alive with the smallest possible effort; - no formal decision is necessary, the cooperation continues without change - the "image of cooperation" is retained without actually pursuing a common vision.	- Provides explicit benefits to the decision-makers; - letting this alternative happen requires no major political commitment, no prior dedication of resources; - no scope for conflicts or heated debates; - leaves scope for revving up the cooperation if there is a potential.	- Offers no real benefits to the participating regions, while making the decision-makers comfortable that they actually do something for the cooperation; - requires minimal resources but using these without real results is still a waste; - has no mobilizing power towards the partners; - leads to the gradual death of the cooperation.	- No active steps are necessary.
Option 3: Common vision	- A common vision – shared by all partners - adapted to the changes is established; - the vision is accompanied by a list of specific actions to be done;	- The stakeholders of the CE take an active role in shaping the future of the cooperation; - aligned plans enable the taking of steps to revive the cooperation; - it is possible to start small and then grow gradually.	- Needs discussion and decision making – but it is difficult to mobilise the decision-makers; - not motivating enough for decision-makers; - difficult to facilitate an agreement around a small number of very specific focus areas.	- A document must be in place that suggests the objectives, priorities and also development alternatives (done – this document); - the options and risks need to be presented and explained to the decision-makers; - the decision-makers have to have an honest debate to achieve a consensus-based decision; - a plan of action needs to be elaborated.

Name of the alternative	Key features, characteristics	Potential benefits	Negative aspects, difficulties	Key conditions and steps
Option 4: Common vision and common organization	- A common vision – shared by all partners - adapted to the changes is established; - the vision is accompanied by a list of specific actions to be done; - partners establish one single joint organization (the common implementing body) of the cooperation initiative (possible form: EGTC).	Benefits of Option 3 +: - a joint organizational unit dedicated to delivering the necessary steps; - much quicker recovery of the cooperation initiative; - drastically improved capacity of the CE to get funding, mobilize the partners and deliver projects - no risk of falling back to the “business as usual” route.	- A major commitment is needed early in the process; - Partners have to invest capacities and also financial resources at the beginning; - the selection of the location and human resources may create unnecessary tensions; - various legal and bureaucratic hurdles and difficulties may occur.	Conditions of Option 3 +: - agreement on setting up a joint organizational structure; - dedication of the necessary resources; - actual establishment of the organization; - selection of staff and location driven by professional considerations and not by political agenda.
Option 5: New European macroregion	- Turning the CE into a new European macroregion; - active positioning of this old-new macroregion in the European Union. - the CE gains position in the various regulations guiding EU structural instruments; - preparation of a macroregional strategy.	- Strong identity; - increased motivation for partners to actively contribute; - increased negotiating and political power; - significantly improved “competitiveness” and financing position.	- Agreement and commitment of ALL partners – difficult to achieve and maintain; - major capacities and significant funding to be mobilized at the beginning without quick tangible benefits for the individual regions; - a long time before major benefits occur; - competitive arena of European macroregions.	- Clear commitment from ALL partner regions; - a very detailed plan of action needs to be elaborated (and approved) with specific tasks, responsibilities, resource and capacity needs; - common implementation body needs to be established.

4.1.4 Multi-criteria analysis of the alternatives

In the chapters above, 5 strategic alternatives have been presented, described and also compared. This, however, is only the very first step – a decision needs to be in place before anything can be done.

Therefore, decision-makers need to learn these options – their implications, potential benefits, risks and key conditions. This has to be followed by an honest discussion with the participation of the representatives of ALL regions (preferably with the authority to decide) forming the CE. This discussion then can lead to a decision regarding the future direction of the CE as a cooperation initiative; it could be either one of the options presented above – or it could also be a totally different option. The important thing is to have a consensus around the future direction of the CE.

Multi-criteria analysis (MCA) establishes preferences between alternatives using an explicit relative weighing system for the different criteria – to provide enough information for decision-makers. MCA includes the following phases:

1. identifying options (presented in the previous subchapters),
2. defining criteria,
3. setting weight,
4. analysing variants according to each criteria,
5. identifying the most preferred options.

The following criteria are being considered during the analysis. For the weighing, a paired comparison is made to evaluate which criteria is more important (1 = more important, 0 = less important, 0.5 = importance is equal).

Figure 18 – Paired comparison of the criteria

	Political support and acceptance	Need for financial and human resources	Feasibility	Positive impact on the CE	Sustainability of the CE
Political support and acceptance		0	0	1	1
Need for financial and human resources	1		1	1	1
Feasibility	1	0		1	0
Positive social, economic and environmental impact on the CE	0	0	0		0
Sustainability of the CE	1	0	0	1	
Total	3	0	1	4	2
Weight	0.9	0.6	0.7	1	0.8

The next step is the analysis of the alternatives according to each criterion – also using the method of paired comparison.

Figure 19 – Paired comparison of the alternatives along with the criteria

Political support and acceptance	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Option 1: Terminate the operation		1	1	1	1
Option 2: Do nothing / business as usual	0		1	1	1
Option 3: Common vision	0	0		1	0
Option 4: Common vision and common organization	0	0	0		0
Option 5: New European Macroregion	0	0	1	1	
Total	0	1	3	4	2
Weight	0	0.9	2.7	3.6	1.8

Need for financial and human resources	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Option 1: Terminate the operation		0	0	0	0
Option 2: Do nothing / business as usual	1		0	0	0
Option 3: Common vision	1	1		0	0
Option 4: Common vision and common organization	1	1	1		0
Option 5: New European Macroregion	1	1	1	1	
Total	4	3	2	1	0
Weight	2.4	1.8	1.2	0.6	0

Feasibility	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Option 1: Terminate the operation		1	0	0	0
Option 2: Do nothing / business as usual	0		0	0	0
Option 3: Common vision	1	1		0	0
Option 4: Common vision and common organization	1	1	1		0
Option 5: New European Macroregion	1	1	1	1	
Total	3	4	2	1	0
Weight	2.1	2.8	1.4	0.7	0

Positive impact on the CE	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Option 1: Terminate the operation		1	1	1	1
Option 2: Do nothing / business as usual	0		1	1	1
Option 3: Common vision	0	0			1
Option 4: Common vision and common organization	0	0	0	1	0.5
Option 5: New European Macroregion	0	0	0	0.5	
Total	0	1	2	3.5	3.5
Weight	0	1	2	3.5	3.5

Sustainability of the CE	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
Option 1: Terminate the operation		1	1	1	1
Option 2: Do nothing / business as usual	0		1	1	1
Option 3: Common vision	0	0			1
Option 4: Common vision and common organization	0	0	0	1	1
Option 5: New European Macroregion	0	0	0	0	
Total	0	1	2	3	4
Weight	0	0.8	1.6	2.4	3.2

By summing up the score, the optimal alternative can be chosen implicitly: Option 4 – Common vision and common organization.

Figure 20 – Decision table as a result of the multi-criteria analysis

	Political support and acceptance	Need for financial and human resources	Feasibility	Positive impact on the CE	Sustainability of the CE	Total
Option 1: Terminate the operation	0	2,4	2,1	0	0	4.5
Option 2: Do nothing / business as usual	0,9	1,8	2,8	1	0,8	7.3
Option 3: Common vision	2,7	1,2	1,4	2	1,6	8.9
Option 4: Common vision and common organization	3,6	0,6	0,7	3.5	2,4	10.8
Option 5: New European Macroregion	1,8	0	0	3.5	3,2	8.5

4.1.5 Key conclusions

In order to facilitate the discussion on the future of the Carpathian Euroregion, the expert team hereby presents its key conclusions and also makes a proposal for selection as a result of the comparison and the multi-criteria analysis.

4.1.5.1 Key conclusions

Identifying and analysing the possible strategic alternatives has made it clear that we are in the final hour: the stakeholders need to think about the future of the Carpathian Euroregion. Whatever the outcome may be, the most important thing is to have a real dialogue between the representatives of the partner regions – such a dialogue has been ignored for far too long – which is one of the key reasons behind the current decline of this once dynamic cooperation initiative.

It is imperative that decision-makers understand how critical the situation actually is, and that key decisions regarding the future of this cooperation need to be made. They also need to see that the Carpathian Euroregion as a cooperation initiative – which currently faces various operational (and also other) challenges – still offers lots of potential to its members. To exploit this potential, however, the partners need to be proactive.

The analysis has also demonstrated that, without real commitment from all the partners, funding and dedicated resources, no results or benefits can be expected.

Finally, it also became clear that there is no one ideal option or solution – each option has its advantages and disadvantages, as well as risks – these all need to be considered before one of them is selected.

4.1.5.2 Our proposal

The key attributes of all the options have been presented in the previous chapters – now it's up to the decision-makers. Nevertheless, by reviewing the strategic alternatives, the expert team has also formed an opinion – which we will briefly share below.

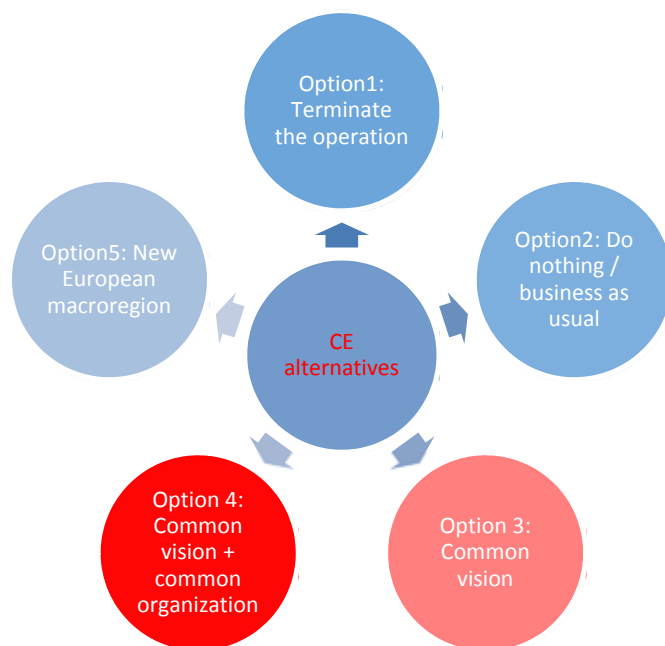
One option that is definitely **not proposed is Option 2** – business as usual; it provides no benefits for the partner regions, has no mobilising power, and – while convenient for the decision-makers – does not offer any potential for more dynamic development in the future, either. In fact, it is likely to lead to the gradual extinction of this cooperation initiative, all the while still wasting resources without any meaningful results.

To a certain extent, actually, **even Option 1** – terminating CE – **would be a better choice**, as it would reflect that partner regions admit that they would like to concentrate their efforts elsewhere, when it comes to cooperation. Given the traditions, past successes, and also the future potential as a partnership providing responses to some of the pressing challenges of the area, however, such a drastic measure would only be justified if the regions were not able to commit to take a more active position in developing the cooperation. This option is not proposed, either.

Option 5 – while a tempting alternative – involves too many risks, and – considering the CE's current status, the commitment level and motivation of partners – is also **way too ambitious**. It is simply not realistic to expect that the partners, after so many years of de facto inactivity, suddenly would invest major resources to rev up the cooperation. As things stand today, it is more of a daydream.

It is more **realistic**, however, **to aim for either Option 3 or Option 4**: establishing a common vision and gradually taking the steps leading to that vision. Either option is possible, but **Option 4 offers significantly better chances of success**. Having a vision and even a good plan of action in place – while a big step forward – still has the risk of failure without having the capacity to implement them. Option 4 would certainly place the stakes higher for the regions – as they would have to establish the necessary organizational structure, but it would also guarantee that the resources are in place (at least at the beginning) to take the necessary steps. Besides, a very strong interest and motivation is built into the system: the interest of a common organization and of its staff.

Figure 21 – Proposed alternatives



4.2 Long-term vision

The Strategy vision describes the desired positive situation in the Carpathian Euroregion area after 2020. The vision is developed based on the Logical Framework method, combining the overall objectives of each priority. At the same time, the Strategy and its vision are in line with a number of strategies and policies which set out the European Framework for delivering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The key strategies and policies are: The Europe 2020 strategy; The Territorial Agenda 2020; The Common Strategic Framework; Horizon 2020; The European Commission policy paper on 'Regional policy contributing to smart growth in Europe 2020' (published in 2010); The EU strategy on adaptation to climate change (adopted by the European Commission in April 2013), and some others.

The overarching strategy will be to address challenges and shared priorities of common interest for member regions of the CE. The Strategy supports activities providing solutions to identified challenges and, in so doing, achieves the greatest impact and genuine cross-border added value and effect. The Strategy can act as an enabler and innovator in seeking solutions to issues facing cross-border

cooperation in the Carpathian Euroregion. The Strategy targets also economic objectives in alignment with the emphasis on jobs and growth.

It is important to note the Strategy cannot address all specific cross-border development needs. This is for a number of reasons: limited resources and financial capacity; there is an increased need to ensure realistic and measurable results; and the successful implementation of the Strategy requires external (national, EU) support.

The overall objective is to promote a viable economy and the attractiveness of the region, where inhabitants and visitors can enjoy nature and where the natural resources are used in a sustainable way.

The joint **Vision for the Carpathian Euroregion 2020 & Beyond** is as follows:

Carpathian Euroregion: a place where people like to live, a place worth visiting.

The Carpathian Euroregion area is a flourishing, environmentally-friendly area with a viable economy, fluent mobility of people, ideas and technologies, and where people to people cooperation is an essential value.

The Carpathian Euroregion should be, in 2020, a more attractive place to live – to ensure that the CE is a place where people can live healthy, active and productive lives and where the quality of life is high. It should be a more attractive place to relocate to – to ensure that the CE is a place where people choose to live, stay and move to. This links closely to it being both an attractive place in which to live and work. The CE should be also a more attractive place to work – to ensure that the CE is a place where businesses choose to invest, or where local entrepreneurs can flourish, where people have a range of career opportunities and are encouraged and supported to reach their full potential. It should be a more attractive place to visit – to ensure that the CE is a place where people want to travel to and enjoy, supporting the local economy and where the shared culture and heritage of the area is celebrated and sustained.

To achieve this Vision, the core strategic elements must be taken into account. It is necessary to concentrate effort on:

- promoting economic and social development in the regions on all sides of the common borders,
- address common challenges for the environment, public health, safety and security,
- promote better conditions and modalities for facilitating the mobility of persons, goods and capital.

The Strategy objectives focus on 2 areas:

1. **Sustainable Development of the Carpathian Euroregion** (Economic, Social, Cultural, Environmental, Mobility)
2. **Core strategy**
 - Compact, quality, green, clean, connected, safe

- Real economy recovery: intelligent and smartly specialised, energy sustainable
- Sustainable neighbourhood

The aim is to initiate an integrated approach to territorial development by building on the CE area's territorial assets, addressing territorial challenges, link it to relevant territorial development policies (e.g. smart specialisation strategies, regional and CBC EU programmes) and follow a cross-sectoral approach. The important aim is reducing territorial disparities and, through doing so, achieving a greater level of territorial cohesion in the Carpathian Euroregion. The Strategy should contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Implementation of the strategy shall take into account the principles of EU regulations concerning partnership, equality, sustainable development as well as information society. It should also bear in mind these core elements:

- CROSS-BORDER – genuine cross-border operations, providing clear added value
- ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES – focus on economic activity and jobs and growth, as well as on entrepreneurial and research spirit
- QUALITY – good quality operations seeking solutions to shared challenges and priorities
- RESULTS AND IMPACT – strong focus on tangible outcomes with maximum impact
- PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE – promotion of local cross-border people to people actions
- INTERNATIONALISATION – e.g. the international orientation of the education, research and business sectors must be strengthened and the recognition of the CE as a business and research region improved. Through international cooperation with other European regions, long-term strategic alliances are to be formed.
- FUTURE TRENDS – recognise global future trends and accommodate them using new technologies and strategies, incl. awareness of the importance of research and development in society must be strengthened.

The choice of Thematic and Cross-sectoral Priorities as well as planned Measures has been carried out on the basis of the following: 1) the potential added value of adopting a cross-border approach for the implementation of actions; 2) evidence arising from the joint socio-economic analysis and the SWOT analysis for the CE area; 3) lessons learned from the previous period, which includes surveys among key CBC stakeholders in the area; 4) the relevance of the Priorities and Measures for the key challenges and most important cross-border development needs identified in the analytical part of the Strategy; 5) alignment with the strategic priorities of the EU strategies and programs such as ENI CBC for 2014-2020, as well as national development strategies (e.g. Smart specialisation strategies).

5 Priorities and objectives of the Strategy

5.1 General concept

VISION		PRIORITIES	CROSS-SECTORAL PRIORITIES
Carpathian Euroregion: a place where people like to live, a place worth visiting			
Sustainable Development of the Carpathian Euroregion - Economic - Social - Cultural - Environmental - Mobility	Core strategy - Compact, quality, green, clean, connected, safe - Real economic recovery - Sustainable neighbourhood - Intelligent and smart specialisation	1 Lively, active, competitive economy & attractive investment area 2 Clean and environmentally friendly 3 Well-connected & effective border regime 4 Innovative, skilled and well-educated 5 Natural heritage, local culture and history 6 CBC community development, health, employment and social development	1 Assisting the Ukrainian part of the CE in EU standardisation and association via CBC activities and sharing reforms experience 2 Enhancing CBC & institutional capacities 3 People-to-People

5.2 Summary of priorities & measures

Priority 1: Lively, active, competitive economy of the Carpathian Euroregion & attractive investment area

1.1 SME and business development, incl. labour market development

- supporting the most potential business cooperation activities in order to achieve concrete and sustainable results from the cooperation, e.g. subcontracting, production cooperation, joining forces in the marketing of products and services, transfer of technologies and innovations, etc.;
- promoting and supporting entrepreneurship and business start-ups in jointly chosen prior branches, e.g. in knowledge based and innovation driven sectors, and the exchange of regional business support structures that aim to assist SMEs;
- supporting the foundation and functioning of science parks (industrial / business / technological) and innovation centres, and, where appropriate, through small-scale infrastructure projects;
- fostering cooperation between the public and private sectors, esp. for cross-border know-how transfer and for development of new value added industrial chains;
- strengthening economic and technology clusters, esp. their cross-border and international projects;
- developing mutual integration between CE based industrial enterprises and the integration of Ukrainian companies into the European business community with jointly chosen prior branches.

1.2 Trade and investment promotion & enhancing cross-border transport and logistics

- creating and promoting the mutual brand of the region on internal and external markets to promote the attractiveness of the region in terms of investment;
- creating mechanisms for simplification of international trade, e.g. developing environmentally sound transportation and logistics services and networks, cargo terminals, logistic centres;
- increasing the speed and transparency of the goods flow via new information tools, removing barriers to goods flows and enhancing customs procedures;
- improving multimodal transportation systems through small scale infrastructure projects.

1.3 Supporting the potential of selected sectors of the economy: rural development, creative and tourism industry (incl. well-being)

- developing an intensive and environmentally sound tourist industry and increasing tourist attractiveness of the region by promoting culture, heritage, natural beauty, improving the quality of services and cooperation of tourist infrastructure companies, developing new products, promoting tourism etc.;
- enhancing the competitiveness of rural areas, incl. supporting the development and modernisation of businesses (e.g. in tourism, agriculture, community-led local development).

1.4. Development of ICT services & infrastructure for better management & visibility of CBC cooperation

- increasing the cross-border awareness of the situation on the other side of the border;
- establishment of joint virtual spaces / websites for CBC between the private & public sectors;
- improvement of cross-border cooperation between organizations and entities within the field of media and journalism (e.g. exchange of programmes between media, articles in print media);
- improvement of the level of ICT communication warning systems for protection of the territory against natural disasters;
- joint development and improving of the quality of existing communication links & ICT infrastructure;
- joint projects on the preparation of feasibility studies related to the creation of broadband networks and their implementation;
- supporting the implementation of public administration policies and increasing their efficiency for enhanced CBC;
- improvement of cross-border services, development of the necessary small infrastructure incl. joint planning and development of cross-border services, development of legal instruments and ICT solutions improving cross-border service provision (strengthening the flow of information, e-governance, m-governance etc.).

Priority 2: Clean and environmentally friendly Carpathian Euroregion

2.1 Environmental protection, sustainable management of nature and its resources, and preserving biodiversity

- promoting nature protection and conservation of the environment, and preserving biodiversity, including better cross-border management of special ecological zones;
- supporting public awareness of environmental safety, energy and eco-efficiency, and sustainable development;
- improving research, planning and educational activities in the field of environmental protection, efficiency and sustainable resource management, eco-efficiency, environmental audit schemes and strategic environmental assessment.

2.2 Water, sewage and waste management

- promoting the rational use of natural resources (esp. water) and the implementation of sustainable systems for waste and water management;
- improving municipal systems of waste management, incl. the development of the CBC network of municipalities and companies specialising in waste management and processing;
- improvement of the knowledge of CE inhabitants about the importance of separation of waste in cross-border, national and international relations (incl. e.g. activities aimed at joint harmonisation of the waste recycling procedures in the CE territory).

2.3 Climate change mitigation and cooperation in emergencies

- promoting low carbon and climate resilient development, reduction of emissions and pollution;
- developing cooperation between industrial enterprises, SMEs, and R&D institutions in using environmentally safe and eco-efficient technologies;
- cooperating in climate change challenges, including modelling the impacts of the changing climate, and development of the corresponding measures;
- promoting cross-border cooperation aimed at reducing the environmental load and risks;
- preparatory actions in case of natural and environmental disasters and emergency situations;
- activities supporting the prevention of natural and man-made disasters;
- improving the qualifications of staff taking rescue actions and developing the ability to participate effectively in a joint response to incurred risks;
- enhancement of existing and development of joint prevention, monitoring, response and disaster recovery systems.

2.4 Enhancing energy cooperation (efficiency & security & renewable energy sources)

- promoting energy cooperation, e.g. encouraging R&D, use of new solutions and training in renewable energy sources and energy efficiency, use of bio-fuels, and transfer of (energy saving, environmentally sound, and best available) technologies and know-how, and sustainable management practices, incl. e.g. sharing experience about the zero energy buildings pilot actions taken.

Priority 3: Well-connected Carpathian Euroregion

3.1 Border efficiency and security, border management, customs and visa procedures

- supporting border efficiency and security;
- promoting training and networking between border authorities;
- exchange, internships, workshops to improve border crossing conditions considering the humane approach to travellers, with the focus on EU standards, focusing on the issue of transparency and anticorruption and other problematic areas at the border crossings;
- exchange of know-how and information;
- improving border management operations, customs and visas procedures;
- prevention of and fight against organized crime;
- independent and impartial Schengen border monitoring with the aim of improving processes and pointing out challenges as well as evaluating the success of taken measures.

3.2 Mobility & traffic safety incl. border-crossing infrastructure and equipment

- in cooperation with national authorities and EU institutions, preparing the conditions for construction of the North-South highway connection (“Via-Carpathia”) through the CE;

- enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes (construction of cross-border roads, bridges and ferries and related infrastructure);
- improving CE cooperation with national authorities and EU institutions with the aim of reforming the Schengen legislation and institutions so that the external border of the EU is safe in terms of illegal migration, however open as much as possible for legal contacts between citizens living in the CBC area;
- adaptation and extension of the existing border crossings for pedestrian and bicycle traffic;
- development of the EuroVelo (<http://www.eurovelo.org>) system of cycle routes in the CE with special focus on the border- crossings;
- creation of a coherent system of signs and visual identification of border crossings;
- improving border-crossing infrastructure, incl. roads leading to border-crossings;
- improving equipment at border crossing points;
- measures improving traffic safety, including enhancement of information systems for travellers / citizens;
- development and integration of cross-border public transport services, establishing transport associations;
- improving the border-crossing environment, e.g. territory re-cultivation, ensuring basic hygiene needs (sanitary facilities, drinking water) if needed, garbage collection/clearance.

Priority 4: Innovative, skilled and well-educated Carpathian Euroregion

4.1 Research & innovations & new technologies

- promoting R&D, innovation, education and training in business areas of mutual interest;
- activities focusing on exchange of know-how, innovative processes and new technologies, experience between the countries and regions;
- enhancing cooperation between the leading universities of CE among themselves, and between them and the business sector in the area of R&D, innovation and ideas to market solutions;
- elaboration and testing of selected joint CBC R&D pilot projects.

4.2 Education enhancement

- joint educational planning and supporting local cooperation in education, incl. A cross-border exchange of good practice in the implementation of programs / initiatives of professional and vocational education and model solutions in the field of school and life-long education, as well as good practices in the governance of education and financing of education, as well as R&D;
- joint programs / initiatives for cross-border exchanges and trainings for students and teachers of secondary schools and universities in the sector and professional training (e.g. internships, pilot scholarship programs, study visits for teachers and students);
- creation of education of crafts and cultural skills from generation to generation between the CE member states.

Priority 5: Natural heritage, local culture and history

5.1 Promotion and protection of natural heritage, local culture and history

- common development of cross-border strategies for the preservation and use of natural sites, areas, and landscape;
- development and implementation of joint cross-border standards / regulations for the protection and conservation of cultural and natural heritage;
- joint activities, initiatives and events regarding the promotion and preservation of natural heritage, local culture and history;
- exchange visits of ensembles and artists, their cultural performances assigned to the regional inhabitants;
- preparation and realization of investments in tourism infrastructure and services increasing the use of natural heritage and cultural heritage in tourism, including a complementary tourist infrastructure to facilitate the use of cultural heritage (e.g. bike racks, signs, infrastructure for people with special needs etc.).

5.2 CE citizens knowledge improvement about CE natural & cultural heritage

- joint information campaigns and media activities about CE natural heritage, local culture and history for citizens of the area;
- joint trainings for guides, restorers and representatives of institutions involved in activities related to the protection of the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

Priority 6: CBC community development, health, employment and social development of the CE

6.1 Improving the efficiency of the public administration and the institutional capacity for CBC & CBC community development

- activities aimed at the development of cooperation in the field of exercising public power (creation of partnerships between the state administration, self-governing regions, CSOs and public corporations) and the realisation of joint projects e.g. for the purpose of regional planning, local and regional development, dealing with local priority questions; analysis and preparation of joint plans with the aim of social and economic development of the region;
- activities focusing on mutual socializing of the people living in the border region, establishment of new contacts aimed at getting to know institutions, people, municipalities and cities within the border region, their habits and culture (e.g. exchange student and pupil programs, camps and summer schools, social, cultural and sporting events, festivals, friendship days, theatre performances, exhibitions, concerts, charity events, events promoting cross-border cooperation and getting to know each other, national cuisine etc.).

6.2 Support for the development of health protection for the citizens of the CE

- enhancing health access in the CBC area;
- preventing the spread of human, animal and plant diseases across the borders;
- supporting the development of public health;
- common health prevention programs for citizens of the CE.

6.3 Employment and social services in the CE

- improving the conditions of cross-border employment and labour mobility;
- strengthening employment by the creation of products and services based on local potential (e.g. development of local product markets; revitalising rust belts and declining industrial zones by ensuring new ways of utilisation; improving the conditions for tourism; development of the social economy mainly in regions with a high level of poverty and Roma people, etc.);
- initiation and implementation of joint integrated cross-border employment initiatives e.g. joint employment initiatives, labour market cooperation initiatives, employment-oriented cross-border business cooperation, innovative employment projects (with emphasis on the employability of Roma and immigrants);
- supporting the development of social services incl. A joint programme against poverty and social exclusion;
- stimulating cooperation between institutions in the field of fighting unemployment;
- joint education and training programmes for the unemployed incl. exploration and preparation of training needs, with the aim of determining the training directions necessary for the labour market, common use of expert and consultancy services, common use of expert and consultancy services.

6.4. Development of a modern CBC identity & shared information/media space

- Creation of the joint brand “the Carpathian Euroregion”, realisation of marketing activities inside the CE, but also outside to promote the “trademark” of the CE, organisation of information campaigns;
- Creation of media cooperation platforms for sharing information across the borders, networking of media, exchange of journalists;
- Finding new models and testing pilot projects for enhancing cross-border information flow (e.g. via social networks).

Thematic / cross-sectoral priorities

T1 Assisting the Ukrainian part of the CE in EU standardisation and association via CBC activities and sharing reforms experience

T2 Enhancing CBC capacities & tools in the CE area (including new cooperation formats)

T3 People-to-People

6 Implementation Agenda

6.1 Action plan

6.1.1 Institutions & Procedures

Implementation of the Strategy lies on the existing institutional set-up of the Carpathian Euroregion – in the first stage – until the decision is made on the reform of the CE institutional set-up and which development option will be chosen. The CE became marginal also because of its ineffective institutions. They should be reformed if CE is expected to be revitalized.

Therefore, in the first stage of the Strategy's implementation, CE institutions should pay special attention to improvement of their functioning. Complex organisational development with the purpose of an institutionalised and formalised Carpathian Euroregion must be started. Activities must include setting-up a proper structure of the CE, legal foundation procedures (e.g. registration, authorisation) for a supranational body if this alternative is chosen, setting-up of the organs, drawing-up protocols and so forth. The decision must be approved by all member states and agreed in the Council.

During this process (as it may last for several months), the current set-up, namely the International Secretariat, National Offices and Working Committees, should keep working on the following tasks:

- setting up and operating an implementation and monitoring system for the administration, support and evaluation of the Strategy;
- realisation of activities connected with the preparation and support of common projects (already in the implementation phase or those to be prepared and submitted for external co-financing) ;
- daily management and work;
- preparation of reports and studies (e.g. annual reports, mid-term evaluation, etc.);
- promotional, information and publicity activities.

It is important also to improve the internal and external communication of the Carpathian Euroregion. Quickly organised activities can include the creation of a joint website about the CE and for the CE staff, and networking with international organisations and other Euroregions (organising [and participating in] conferences and workshops), with the aim of sharing the best practices and joint projects preparation.

To put in place the management and secure implementation of the Strategy, three joint teams should be created:

- The **“joint project team”**, which should consist of project contact persons (experienced project managers and project coordinators), who have been dealing with projects for their whole lives, starting from consultations to assessments and later to the monitoring of project implementation. For each Priority of the Strategy, a contact person (or Lead expert) with experience in the substance matter as well as project and programme management should be selected. This person would be responsible for ensuring the

strategic approach within each Priority through consulting projects at different stages of their life-cycle and supporting colleagues with theme specific expertise.

- The “joint financial team” should be responsible for the financial management of common projects, including searching for possible ways of external financing of the projects and securing co-financing. If the joint CE fund is to be established, the “joint financial team” should manage it on a daily basis.
- The “joint info team” should coordinate the Strategy and general CE information and communication activities. It will be responsible for developing the communication strategy as well as translating the strategy into concrete activities. Communication activities can also be carried out by a network of contact points in each member region of the CE.

These three teams must be supported by the International Secretariat and National offices, and coordinated by the Council. The Council should perform also monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy’s implementation.

6.1.2 Target groups

The beneficiaries of the Strategy’s implementation are only the citizens of and visitors to the Carpathian Euroregion.

A very important target group is the CE Association, as well as its institutional set-up itself. The Strategy includes several measures and project ideas to enhance the functioning of CE institutions. The Strategy advises reforming the CE institutions for a possible CE “revival”.

As the Strategy is very complex and envisages the need to develop several priority areas, the target groups represent a wide spectrum of partners that must be involved in the Strategy’s implementation in each part of the CE:

- regional and local self-governments and their organisations acting as legal entities, regional councils;
- non-state actors (NGOs, foundations etc.);
- national, regional and local organisations implementing policies in the fields of relevant policies defined as Strategy priorities;
- semi-public institutions such as regional development associations and promoters, innovation and development agencies, clusters, research institutes and universities;
- regional and local associations of enterprises (e.g. chambers of commerce, unions), professional organisations;
- the business sector;
- mass-media/press organisations at European, national, regional and local levels.

Successful implementation of the strategy requires their direct involvement in the measures and activities, not just being the “consumers” and/or “end users”.

The special target group should be National governments and ministries. The CE’s ambition must be to become their equal partner to tackle the big development challenges e.g. related to globalisation, climate change, migration etc. The national governments can be also one of the stimuli for revival of the CE, if Euroregional activities are to become the national priority.

6.1.3 Tools

The key tool is the people: those who are involved in the CBC within the Carpathian Euroregion and who are willing to face the development challenges ahead. The success of the Strategy's implementation lies on the ability of the involved people to implement the measures and proposed projects. And, whatever the new set-up of the CE institutions will be, the crucial factor will be just-and-only the people standing behind it. Besides the existing involved persons, it is important to encourage other experts, active people, businessmen and young people to actively participate in the implementation of the Strategy.

A very important task is to use the current and existing institutional capacities of the CE. The involvement of a wide spectrum of institutions is important. Further development of a network and co-operation platforms can be a very effective and important tool for enhanced CBC in the CE in line with the Strategy implementation. Building channels for the transfer of knowledge, expertise, technologies and best practice is a crucial part of the Strategy and the core part of many of the proposed projects (see the suggested list of projects) Enabling the way for investment in the design, development, testing or delivery of new processes, products, studies or services – for example pilot actions, demonstration models etc. is also a way / tool how to effectively look for the required solution for CBC enhancement.

As for the implementation tool, it the most effective system in the project based approach. The Strategy indicates the strategic programs/projects of the CE for the next period (2016-2020 & beyond) for each of the above identified priorities. Preparation and implementation of the proposed project requires proper and sound project management and the setting up of adequate and qualified teams and/or institutional set-up.

It must be said that the List of projects is not the final one and can be changed and added to by other projects on a half-yearly basis on the decision of the Council. The Strategy must be a working document, a living document that will be evaluated on a yearly basis.

In addition, there should be a way identified on how to coordinate the preparation and implementation of projects esp. financed by external funds, such as EU funds. In the first stage, the Council and the International Secretariat should fulfil this role. Setting up a joint committee or other body to do those activities would be beneficial at a later stage.

The proposal of the creation of the CE's own fund (e.g. following the example of the International Visegrad Fund), created by contributions from the CE stakeholders, must be taken into consideration. This can be the key future tool of the CE, whatever the institutional set-up will be. Even if the CE fund were more symbolic, in terms of financial volume, it would be crucial for developing a shared sense of CBC as well as joint ownership of CE. Involvement by the Carpathian Foundation in the operation and management of such a fund would be beneficial.

Last, but not least, the Strategic Communication and Dissemination plan must be elaborated (see the subchapter on this issue below). Visibility of the CE in the CE area and outside is very low. Even communication among the national parts of the CE has many weaknesses. One of the first results of the Strategy's implementation must be a communication and dissemination action plan for the next few years.

Indicative list of projects 2016-2020

Project name (preliminary title)	Aims	Planned activities	Result/Output	Planned year(s) of realisation					Expected budget in ths. EUR	Source of possible co-financing	
				2016	2017	2018	2019	2020			2021-24
Priority 1: Lively, active, competitive economy of the Carpathian Euroregion & attractive investment area											
	Economic and business integration of the Carpathian Euroregion: increasing cross-border trade, investment and mobility of the labour force	Creation of a common multilingual (5 languages including ENG) information portal (database of CE companies, online search for business partners, conference centre guide, business practice & advice, daily communication platform for companies and other stakeholders, etc.) .	I-services, Web site Company database, Conference centre guide developed	X	X	X	X		1 000	ENI HU-RO-SK-UA & ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programmes Danube Strategy Central Europe Programme	
	Increasing the competitiveness of the Carpathian Euroregion through its promotion as a tourist destination	Elaboration of the touristic study / strategy of the CE, PR & marketing activities, organisation of events (expert meetings, workshops, conferences, people-to-people events), publishing a promotional brochure.	Touristic strategy of the CE Information & promotion campaign Expert meetings, workshops, conferences Brochure	X	X	X			490	ENI HU-RO-SK-UA 2014-2020 Programme Danube Strategy Central Europe Programme	
	To raise the attractiveness of the Carpathian Euroregion for potential investors, attracting investors to the local and cross-border cooperation development.	Creation of a network of interconnected centres for investment support such as regional development agencies, business incubators, chambers of commerce etc.	Investment support network created Investment promotion activities realised	X	X				600	ENI HU-RO-SK-UA & ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programmes Central Europe Programme	
	Development of tourism potential in the cross-border regions, increasing the	Creation of the scientific tourism product “Carpathian Pl@NETour” .	New joint tourism product created			X	X	X	780	ENI HU-RO-SK-UA & ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programmes	

	contribution of the tourism sector to the economic development of the Carpathian Euroregion.	Creation of a network of key stakeholders to facilitate the transfer of the best practices in the scientific tourism field.	Network of stakeholders in new tourism segment established														ERASMUS Plus Horizon 2020 Danube Strategy 2020
Developing eco-tourism infrastructure in protected areas of Ukraine and Poland	Develop eco-tourism infrastructure within protected areas for the promotion and use of natural heritage for the purposes of tourism	Mapping of cycling and walking routes in selected area. Development of terms of reference for the establishment of cycling tourism and hiking trails within the protected areas of Poland and Ukraine. Marking of bicycle and pedestrian travel routes.	Elaborated study & ToR Several kms of marked routes				X	X	X								ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programme
Cross-border network "Science – Innovations – Enterprises"	Enhance the transfer of know-how and innovation exchange between organizations, universities and the business sector.	Creation of an institutional and communication cross-border network and tools for the increase of efficiency of scientific-inculcating and innovative-inculcating services in the target border regions.	Established cross-border network & Information-consulting centres and Developed implemented ICT instrument				X	X	X								ENI HU-RO-SK-UA & ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programmes Danube Strategy 2020
Carpathian Euroregion Camping Network	Enhance the tourist camping system in the territory of the Carpathian Euroregion.	Development of coordinated and unified criteria and requirements for services in tourist campsites in the CE territory. Mapping and later spatial planning of possible new camping locations and pilot construction of 2 typical camp sites in attractive tourist areas. Creating a network of camping sites in the CE.	Elaborated standardisation for campground network in the CE, elaborated spatial planning document, 2 pilot camp-sites projects implemented.				X	X	X								ENI HU-RO-SK-UA & ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programmes
Priority 2: Clean and environmentally friendly Carpathian Euroregion																	
CoM CapaCITY - Cross-border capacity building of municipalities	Promotion and supporting the Covenant of Mayors Initiative in	Development of the Baseline Emission Inventory (BEI). Development of the Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP).	Realised energy awareness campaigns, energy performance audits and certifications, elaborated				X	X	X								ENI HU-RO-SK-UA & ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programmes

Environmental Heart of the Carpathian Euroregion	Providing the ecologically balanced development of the border with Ukraine and the creation of an environmentally friendly border area between Ukraine, Slovakia and Hungary.	Establishment of Local Agencies for Sustainable Development of border regions. Creation of the concept "Clean Water and Clean River".	Established agencies promoting environmentally friendly CE, development strategy, built up capacities.	X	X	X				2 750	Regional and state programs, Local budgets (regional administrations, municipalities) ENI HU-RO-SK-UA 2014-2020
CBC concept on solid waste landfill in border regions & testing 2 pilot projects: Uzhhorod district and Yanoshi village	To develop Cross-Border Cooperation Concept on solid waste landfill in border regions and to complete construction of the landfill for Berehovo district and introduce it into operation.	Development of project documentation and a feasibility study. Launch an information campaign to establish a system of separate waste collection for the population. Test 2 pilot projects for the disposal and management of solid waste in selected municipalities.	Clean and environmentally friendly Carpathian Euroregion	X	X	X				2 500	ENI HU-RO-SK-UA 2014-2020 Programme Local budgets (regional administration, municipalities)
Priority 3: Well-connected Carpathian Euroregion & an effective border regime											
Development of cycle – train tourism in the CE	Research of conditions for cycle routes in narrow gauge railway areas in parts of the CE and mobility possibilities between them.	Creation of a network of experts, organising events (expert meetings, workshops, conferences), research and elaboration of a feasibility study, analysing good European practices and setting-up a proper structure for cycle routes in the CE.	Feasibility Study elaborated, network of experts created with regular meetings and exchange of information and expertise	X	X	X				300	ENI HU-RO-SK-UA & ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programmes
Healthy links – bicycle trails of the CE	Building and enlarging the existing infrastructure (cycle routes) of the adjacent border area, together with tourism	Creating new and reconstructing existing bicycle trails along and across the borders. Development of thematic routes for cycling, supporting the	At least 50 km of newly constructed and reconstructed cycle-routes in CBC area		X	X				3 500	ENI HU-RO-SK-UA & ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programmes Danube Strategy 2020

	Carpathian Euroregion/ Promotion of the cooperation between local actors.	HU, SK-UA, RO-UA and PL-UA borders: b2b meetings between NGOs, self-governments, as well as local businesses and other stakeholders.								2014-2020 Programmes
7 Wonders of the Carpathian Euroregion	Promoting & preserving the special heritage places of the CE.	Census among the citizens of the CE on the most attractive tourist sites of the region, development of thematic tourist routes incl. organisation of promotional events, conferences, and raising awareness campaign.	Census promotional activities realised.	X	X					ENI HU-RO-SK-L & ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programmes
Conservation of sacred wooden architectural heritage in the Carpathian region.	Creation of a cross-border system of storage and use for tourism and educational purposes about the unique historical and architectural heritage of the Carpathian region - wooden churches, monasteries and chapels. Digitalization of unique artefacts and exchange of already digitalized and preserved inventories.	Establishment of an expert group to study, inventory and harmonize information about the wooden architecture objects in the Carpathian Euroregion. The group will develop recommendations for their protection and conservation for the use of tourism and educational purposes. Development and implementation of modern technologies for preservation and fire safety of the wooden architecture of the Carpathian Euroregion.	Common inventory and preserved objects of wooden architecture put in place. New technology for the physical preservation of wooden architecture introduced	X	X	X	X			ENI HU-RO-SK-L & ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programmes
Patrimony in danger	Efficient valorisation of the existing material and immaterial patrimony from the cross-border area and strengthening relationships among	Researching the material and immaterial patrimony from the CE cross-border area, organisation of joint exhibitions, elaborating on and publishing the publication and documentary movie	Restored patrimony, Organized exhibitions, Published publication, Elaborated movie	X	X					ENI HU-RO-SK-L 2014-2020 Programme RO-UA ENI CBC 2014-2020 Programme

Carpathian Health Centres Network	Strengthening cooperation between professional health institutions and hospitals in the Carpathian Euroregion.	Creation of a network of hospitals and health institutions, incl. development of a database of provided services and places with specialised services in the health sector.	Network and i-database created.		X	X	X			450	ENI HU-RO-SK-UA & ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programmes Danube Strategy
Hippo-therapy Centres – Development of specialized rehabilitation training and health programs	Introduction of innovative rehabilitation methods for improving health care.	Creation of a platform for the hippo-therapy rehabilitation method, promotion of health centres and development of a training program involving international experts for wider implementation of the method of hippo-therapy method in health centres in the region.	Network of centres, informational database of rehabilitation services provided, promotional activities realised.	X	X	X				980	ENI HU-RO-SK-UA & ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programmes Danube Strategy
The CE media platform	Enhancing the regular flow of information across the borders.	Creation of an “umbrella” platform based on regular and also social network meetings, workshops, working groups of media in the CE – establishing channels for information exchanges between media. Realisation of pilot projects of info exchange, anti-propaganda tools establishment, etc.	Platform created, regular meetings, i-services for media introduced	X	X	X	X			600	ENI HU-RO-SK-UA & ENI PL-BY-UA 2014-2020 Programmes
“Progress Art” Centre – the way of personal and community development	Improving integrated social, cultural and health services in rural communities situated in the Romanian-Hungarian-Ukrainian border area	Creation of fixed and mobile training and development centres; Elaboration of the development plan of the involved communities; Establishment of an equestrian theatre – cultural caravan	Elaborated development plans; Created equestrian theatre & 16 pilot performances; 15 trained trainers for the competence development of people with disabilities; 1 established equestrian centre for disabled people	X	X	X	X			300	ENI HU-RO-SK-UA 2014-2020 Programme Local budgets (local and regional administration, sponsors)

6.1.4 Indicators

To monitor the Strategy's achievements and report the progress towards the defined goals, the objectively verifiable indicators that reflect the Strategy's needs have been defined as follows:

output and result indicators for each priority.

Output indicators measure the direct products of the projects implemented within the Strategy and capture what the Strategy is expected to deliver. Output indicators present the number of the key generic deliverables expected from the beneficiaries for the benefit of the target group. Defined result indicators measure the broader societal impact of priorities. Defined result indicators, to a certain extent, are affected by the outputs, but, in general, they are also affected by other external factors that lay beyond the activities defined in the Strategy. There is a causal link between the output and the result indicator, meaning that changes in the output indicator exert effect on its corresponding result indicator. Indicators serve mainly for monitoring purposes. Achievement of quantified targets will be assessed and corrective actions initiated whenever necessary by the CE Council and the International Secretariat.

Indicators

Indicator	Name	Information source	Unit	Baseline 2015	Target value 2020
Priority 1: Lively, active, competitive economy of the Carpathian Euroregion & an attractive investment area					
Output	Number of projects having a significant direct positive influence on the economy	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	7
Output	New jobs created thank to the projects realised	CE Int. Secretariat, data from job registration authorities	Number	0	100
Output	Number of services and products developed esp. in tourism	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	20
Output	Number of partnerships established in order to develop the economy of the CE	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	100
Result	Increased GDP of the CE area	Statistical Offices, Eurostat	% growth	0	8
Result	Decreased unemployment in the CE area	Statistical Offices, Eurostat	% decrease	0	5
Result	Increased number of tourists visiting the CE area	Statistical Offices, Eurostat	% growth	0	10
Priority 2: Clean and environmentally friendly Carpathian Euroregion					
Output	Number of projects having a significant direct positive influence on the environment	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	5
Output	Number of partnerships established in order to develop the economy of the CE	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	20
Result	Improved quality of environmental indicators in the CE esp. quality of river water and air	Statistical Offices, Eurostat	%	0	20
Result	Improved environmental responsibility of CE citizens	Survey, Statistical Offices	%	0	50
Priority 3: Well-connected Carpathian Euroregion & effective border regime					
Output	Number of elaborated studies on joint cycle-routes in the CE	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	2
Output	Number of established new connections between regions (created cross-borders, water and railway connections)	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	4
Output	Number of border crossing points with increased throughput capacity	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	2

Output	Total length of newly built, reconstructed or upgraded roads, cycle-routes, hiking paths	CE Int. Secretariat	ks	0	100
Result	Increased accessibility of the regions, esp. for cyclists	Statistical Offices, Eurostat	%	0	10
Result	Acceleration of passenger and car border clearance	Statistical Offices, Eurostat	%	0	50
Priority 4: Innovative, skilled and well-educated Carpathian Euroregion					
Output	Number of new partnerships between educational, R&D institutions & businesses	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	50
Output	Number of projects having a significant direct positive influence on the enhanced innovation capacity of the CE	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	7
Result	Increase in quality of R&D and education services in the EU	Statistical Offices, Eurostat	%	0	5
Priority 5: Natural heritage, local culture and history					
Output	Number of stakeholders involved in the preservation and promotion of the heritage, local culture and history	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	100
Output	Number of new services and products developed	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	10
Output	Number of promoted and/or preserved natural sites	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	10
Result	Increased number of visitors to the historical, heritage and cultural sites	Statistical Offices, Eurostat	%	0	15
Priority 6: CBC community development, health, employment and social development of the CE					
Output	Population benefiting from the newly created or improved community services	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	200 000
Output	Number of shared CBC experiences with other Euroregions (esp. with Central and Eastern Ukraine) via joint activities	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	5
Output	Number of cross-border community-based events organized	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	20
Output	Number of projects directly contributing to a more balanced spatial development of the CE area	CE Int. Secretariat	Number	0	6
Result	Enhanced access to health care and social services	Statistical Offices, Eurostat	%	0	30
Result	Increase in usage of ICT in community development and local public administration	Statistical Offices, Eurostat	%	0	30
Result	Increased visibility of the CE	CE Int. Secretariat, Survey	%	0	100

6.1.5 Criteria for project selection

Measures and Actions carried out to fulfil the Strategy's Priorities must be selected on the basis of the following key principles:

- 7 Cross-border additionality: operations should have a clear focus on delivering joint cross-border actions and must demonstrate the additionality of the cross-border approach compared to regional, national, interregional or transnational approaches;
- 8 External coherence: operations building on the results generated by e.g. EU or national programmes are welcomed;
- 9 Cross-sectoral relevance: partnerships must involve a diversified mix of innovation stakeholders (for example enterprises, researchers, education institutions, training organisations, policy-makers, private investors, end users);
- 10 Result-based approach: operations should be geared towards a specific innovative product, service, process or cross-border tool;
- 11 In addition, operations should demonstrate that they contribute to one or more key social, economic or environmental challenges of the CE area;
- 12 Excellence (quality, innovation aspects, clarity and comprehensibility of objectives and expected results, quality of know-how transfer among involved partners, quality of cross-border interaction, etc);
- 13 Impact (impact on: border region, target groups, strengthening existing facilities, utilising the border region's potential, initiatives towards policy changes for the benefit of improving cross-border development conditions, increasing the potential and capacity at regional, national and European levels, effectiveness and scope of communication and expected results dissemination, higher number of various common information products, and the like);
- 14 Implementation (general coherence and effectiveness of work /activities, adequacy of management structures and activities plan, sustainability, effectiveness of the project budget, and the like);
- 15 Capacity (competence of partners, previous experiences from their interaction, partners' complementarity, institutional capacity and engagement, involving a higher number of partners, transferability of other border regions' good practices, and others);
- 16 Readiness for implementation (including formal and legal investment completion, complete and thorough assignment of tasks and responsibilities to specific CBC partners).

6.1.6 Communication and dissemination plan

The overall goal of the Communication and dissemination plan will be to create a uniform public image and visibility of the Strategy, but also the CE. It is necessary in the early stages of the Strategy's implementation to develop an overall system for public relations and elaborate a Strategy identity to be used in all means of communication, to develop informational materials for dissemination (both electronic and hard copies), to maintain necessary public relations with the media, organize a major

information campaign publicizing the Strategy, and possibly start to create a joint database from projects.

The aims of the Communication and dissemination plan must be:

- to spread information on the opportunities of the CBC in CE and to ensure transparency for the target groups of the Strategy;
- to make the general public more aware of the results and benefits achieved by cross-border projects;
- to support the participants / cooperating stakeholders to acquire comprehensive knowledge and skills in implementing and managing cross-border cooperation projects;
- to promote the establishment of a wide-range communication network among the potential partners and networks, the implementing bodies (at CE, national, regional and local levels) and the general public;
- to create a coherent picture of the Strategy and its implementation across the region.

Several communication tools will be used:

- A major event per year – there should be at least one major information activity each year to promote the achievements and highlight key messages and best practices of the Strategy and the functioning of the CE;
- Regional and local information events, seminars, workshops, technical conferences and round table discussions – they especially help increase involvement by other stakeholders into the projects and mobilise people for new actions;
- Website – a joint CE website providing ongoing information to the general public is needed. The site must be updated regularly;
- E-bulletins (e-zines) – electronic newsletters which will inform the target groups about the latest CE news, projects achievements and developments;
- Direct mail – direct mail offers the opportunity to convey current and direct information to the specific target groups;
- Promotional and information materials, media tools to be used, such as leaflets, fact sheets, and brochures, advertisements, press media, television, radio information, and others.

6.2 Overview of financial possibilities

Because the Carpathian Euroregion has only limited financial resources, the implementation and the feasibility of the Strategy is principally influenced by the available financial grants and supports. The following sections describe these potential cross-border and transnational programmes.

6.2.1 Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine European Neighbourhood Instrument Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020

The programme area includes 7 core regions (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County – HU, Košický and Prešovský Region – SK, Maramureş and Satu-Mare County – RO, Ivano-Frankivska and Zakarpatska Region – UA) and 3 adjoining regions (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County – HU, Suceava County – RO, Chernivetska Region – UA). Altogether, more than 8 million inhabitants of nearly 83 000 km² are covered by the programme containing 10 counties/regions. The people affected represent 9.7% of the inhabitants of the participating countries.

The Programme is financed by the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) with 73, 952, 000 EUR, and the total budget with national co-financing is 81, 347, 200 EUR. Based on the preliminary needs assessment, stakeholder interviews and workshops, and according to EU regulations, the following thematic objectives were selected following a decision by the Joint Task Force.

Figure 22 – Overview of the thematic objectives of the Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENI Cross-border Cooperation Programme

Thematic objective	ENI allocation (EUR)	ENI allocation, %	ENI + national co-fin
TO3 Promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage	11, 855, 430	17.81	13, 172, 700
TO 6 Environmental protection, climate change mitigation and adaptation	14, 018, 526	21.06	15, 576, 140
TO 7 Improvement of accessibility to the regions, development of sustainable and climate-proof transport and communication networks and systems	21, 339, 774	32.06	23, 710, 860
TO8 Common challenges in the field of safety and security	19, 343, 070	29.06	21, 492, 300

Priorities

- **Promoting local culture and historical heritage along with tourism functions** – Objective: to develop the eligible area as a joint tourism destination based on its cultural, historical, and religious values with the preservation of historical buildings.
- **Sustainable use of the environment in the cross border area – preservation of natural resources, actions to reduce GHG emission and river pollution**– Objective: to support the preservation and sustainable use of common natural values in the border area, to initiate actions for energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources as well as to reduce the risks caused by waste on water quality.
- **Development of transport infrastructure to improve the mobility of persons and goods** – Objective: to improve the cross-border mobility of persons and goods, create the basis

of economic co-operations and reduce the disparities of regions via the development of a transport and border crossing infrastructure and services.

- **Development of ICT infrastructure and information sharing** – Objective: to increase the usage of info-communication tools and help the share of information among the citizens, institutions and businesses of the border region.
- **Support joint activities for the prevention of natural and man-made disasters as well as joint action during emergency situations** – Objective: to create a technical background, strategies and cooperation platforms in order to prevent and handle natural and man-made disasters.
- **Support health development**– Objective: to improve preventive activities, the availability and level of health care services and health related social programs for the citizens of the border area.

The programme document is available at <http://www.huskroua-cbc.net/>.

6.2.2 CBC Programme Poland - Belarus - Ukraine 2014-2020.

The area of the Programme is divided into core and adjoining regions:

Poland: core area subregions: Krośnieński and Przemyski (in Podkarpackie voivodeship), Białostocki, Łomżyński and Suwalski (in Podlaskie voivodeship), Białski and Chełmskozamowski sub-regions (in Lubelskie voivodeship), Ostrołęcko-siedlecki sub-region (in Mazowieckie voivodeship); **adjoining regions:** Rzeszowski and Tarnobrzski subregions (in Podkarpackie voivodeship); Puławski and Lubelski subregions (in Lubelskie voivodeship);



Ukraine: core area: Lvivska, Volynska, Zakarpatska oblasts; adjoining regions: Rivnenska, Ternopil'ska and Ivano-Frankiv'ska oblasts. **adjoining regions:** Rzeszowski and Tarnobrzski subregions (in Podkarpackie voivodeship); Puławski and Lubelski subregions (in Lubelskie voivodeship);

Belarus: core area: Grodno and Brest oblasts; 6 adjoining regions: Minsk Oblast (including the city of Minsk) and Gomel Oblast;

Poland/Belarus Ukraine 2014 – 2020 Programme allocations for the period 2014 – 2020 are in total 175, 799, 304 EUR.

The overall aim of the Programme is to support cross-border development processes in the borderland of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine. The Programming document 2014-2020 sets out three ENI CBC strategic objectives for CBC activities:

- Promote economic and social development in regions on both sides of the common borders
- Address common challenges in environment, public health, safety and security
- Promotion of better conditions and modalities for ensuring the mobility of persons, goods and capital.

The Programme contributes to all of the above mentioned strategic objectives and to the identified regional needs by financing the implementation of non-commercial projects referring to the following four TOs and devoting to them priorities:

1. Promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage (TO3)
 - Priority 1.1 Promotion of local culture and history
 - Priority 1.2 Promotion and preservation of natural heritage
2. Improvement of accessibility to the regions, development of sustainable and climate-proof transport and communication networks and systems (TO7)
 - Priority 2.1 Improvement and development of transport services and infrastructure
 - Priority 2.2 Development of ICT infrastructure
3. Common challenges in the field of safety and security (TO8)
 - Priority 3.1 Support for the development of health protection and social services
 - Priority 3.2 Addressing common security challenges
4. Promotion of border management and border security, mobility and migration management
 - Priority 4.1 Support for border efficiency and security
 - Priority 4.2 Improvement of border management operations, customs and visas procedures

More information can be found in the official web-site: <http://www.pl-by-ua.eu/>

6.2.3 CBC programme Poland – Slovakia 2014-2020 (Interreg V A)

Territory

The Programme support the area on the Polish side of the border covering the following territorial units: subregions (NUTS III): Krośnieński, Przemyski, Nowosądecki, Oświęcimski and Bielski, as well as Pszczyński district (powiat) in the Subregion Tyski, Rzeszowski district (powiat) and Rzeszów city in the Subregion Rzeszowski and Myślenicki district (powiat) in the Subregion Krakowski. On the Slovak side of the border the support area covers: Prešov Self-Governing Region, Žilina Self-Governing Region and the district (okres) of Spišská Nová Ves in Košice Self-Governing Region.

The supported area on the Polish side covers a total of 22,798 sq. km and its population amounts to 3,548,264 (62.8% of the entire population of the supported area). On the Slovak side, in turn, the area included in the Programme covers 16,369 sq. km, with a population of 1,598,923 (37.2% of the entire population of the supported area). In the supported area on the Polish side of the border, the city with the largest population is Rzeszów, followed by Bielsko-Biała, Nowy Sącz, Przemyśl and Krosno. In the Slovak part of the Programme area, the settlement network and the cities of greatest significance in the northern part of the country create a settlement chain that runs along the West-East axis with its main links including Žilina, Martin, Poprad and Prešov.

Problems of the CBC area identified

- **Strong diversification of settlement structures** – the unfavourable settlement structure and the area's incomplete connection with other external units come from the mountainous character of the terrain.
- **Poor connection** - in the whole CBC area there are no good road or railroad connections on the north-south axis.

- **Industrial advantage over other branches of the economy** throughout the whole CBC area. On the Polish side there is a noticeable predominance of industrial and agricultural economy, while services have a significantly smaller participation than the Polish average. The Slovak side has a dominant industrial economy, while the number of services is lower than the Slovak average.
- **The share of employment is lower than the national averages** both in Polish and Slovak sub-regions and regions covered by the support.
- **The innovation indicator (e.g. no. of patents, expenses for R&D etc.)** is much lower than for the whole of Poland and Slovakia, respectively
- Almost the whole support area has a **negative migration balance**.

The **main aim** of the CBC Programme is to reinforce the partner-based Slovak-Polish cooperation focused on continuous development of the border area”.

The total **allocation** for the Programme will amount to EUR 154.99 million. The highest amount of funds has been earmarked for activities supporting the protection of the natural environment and cultural heritage of the Programme area, as well as the development of existing cultural and natural resources (50%). The rest of the allocation was allocated to Axis 2, related to activities supporting the development of transport and providing easier access to TEN-T network and multimodal connections (36%), Axis 3 Investing in education, skills and lifelong learning (8%) and Technical Assistance (6%).

Figure 23 – Overview of the priorities of the CBC programme Poland – Slovakia 2014-2020

Priority	ERDF allocation (in EUR)	Thematic objective	Investment priorities
1. Protection and development of the cross-border area's natural environment and cultural heritage	77, 500, 000	Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage (6c)
2. Sustainable cross-border transport	55, 800, 000	Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures	Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes (7b)
			Developing and improving environmentally-friendly (including low-noise) and low-carbon transport systems, including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility (7c)
3. Development of cross-border education and lifelong learning	12, 400, 000	Investing in education, training and vocational training for acquiring skills and lifelong learning	Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning by developing and implementing joint education, vocational training and training schemes (10)
4. Technical Assistance	9, 288, 723	Technical assistance	Good management of the Programme (5)

The programme document is available at http://pl.plsk.eu/news/?lang_id=3&id_news=1626 (in Polish and Slovak only).

6.2.4 Interreg V-A Slovakia-Hungary Programme

The Hungarian-Slovak border is one of the longest internal land-locked borders of the European Union, with a total length of 679 km. The programming region is extremely heterogeneous considering its economic and social situation. The area covered by the NUTS 3 level regions (8 'megye' in Hungary, 5 'kraj' in Slovakia) is 61, 496 km². The number of inhabitants is almost 8.8 million.

The overall ERDF support for the Programme is 155, 808, 987 EUR, the total amount with the national public funding is 183, 304, 694 EUR. The strategy includes 4 priority axes and 5 investment priorities (Ip).

Figure 24 – Overview of the priority axes of the Interreg V-A Slovakia-Hungary Programme

Priority axis	IP	Objective	ERDF allocation (EUR)	ERDF allocation, %	ERDF + national co-fin
PA1 Nature & Culture	IP6c	To increase the attractiveness of the border area	55, 427, 808	35.58	65, 209, 186
PA2 Enhancing cross-border mobility	IP7b	Increasing the density between BCPs along the Hungarian-Slovak border	34, 608, 080	22.21	40, 715, 389
	IP7c	Improving cross-border public transport and logistics services			
PA3 Promoting sustainable and quality employment	IP8b	Decreasing employment inequalities among the regions with a view of improving the level of employment within the programming region	34, 608, 080	22.21	40, 715, 389
PA4 Enhancing cross-border cooperation between the public authorities and people	IP11a	Improving the level of cross border inter-institutional cooperation and broadening cross border cooperation between citizens	21, 816, 480	14.00	25, 666, 448

The programme document is available at <http://www.husk-cbc.eu>.

6.2.5 Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme

The Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme is a co-financed CB cooperation in 8 counties (NUTS III regions) in Romania and Hungary: Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad and Timiș in the former; Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Békés and Csongrád in the latter. The eligible counties combine an area of over 50 thousand km², representing 15.2% of the two countries' territory (23.7% of Hungary and 11.9% of

Romania, resp.). According to the latest census, the counties of the eligible area have a total population of almost 4 million people, representing 13.1% of the two countries' inhabitants.

The overall ERDF allocation to the Programme is €189,138,672.00; the total budget of the Programme – together with the national co-financing – thus amounts to € 231,861,763.00. The strategy will be implemented through a pool of 6 thematic objectives – reflected in 6 priority axes – with 8 Ip.

Figure 25 – Overview of the priority axes of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Programme

Priority axis	IP	Objective	ERDF allocation (EUR)	ERDF allocation, %	ERDF + national co-fin
PA1 Cooperating on common values and resources	IP6b	Improved quality management of cross-border rivers and ground water bodies	10, 750, 000	5.68%	12, 647, 059
	IP6c	Sustainable use of natural, historic, and cultural heritage within the eligible area	30, 477, 417	16.11%	35, 855, 785
PA2 Cooperating on accessibility	IP7b	Improved cross-border accessibility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure	13, 925, 083	7.36%	16, 382, 451
	IP7c	Increased proportion of passengers using sustainable – low carbon, low noise – forms of cross-border transport	15, 821, 167	8.36%	18, 613, 138
PA3 Cooperating on employment	IP8b	Increased employment within the eligible area	46, 810, 155	24.75%	55, 070, 771
PA4 Cooperating on health-care and prevention	IP9a	Improved preventive and curative health-care services across the eligible area	48, 479, 323	25.63%	57, 034, 498
PA5 Cooperating on risk prevention and disaster management	IP5b	Improved cross-border disasters and risk management	8, 115, 835	4.29%	9, 548, 042
PA6 Cooperation of institutions and communities	IP11a	Intensify sustainable cross-border cooperation of institutions and communities	3, 411, 372	1.80%	4, 013, 379

The programme document is available at <http://huro-cbc.eu>.

6.2.6 Joint Operational Programme Romania – Ukraine 2014-2020

The program area consists of: **Romania:** counties Satu Mare, Maramureş, Botoşani, Suceava, Tulcea. **Ukraine:** oblasts Ivano-Frankivsk, Zakarpatska, Chernivtsi, Odessa.

The core regions encompass a total of 100,860 km², out of which 32,760 km² represent the Romanian territory, and 68,100 km² the Ukrainian territory. The total length of the border is 649.4 km: land – 273.8 km, river – 343.9 km, sea – 31.7 km.

The general objective of the Romania-Ukraine Joint Operational Programme is to enhance the economic development and to improve the quality of life of the people in the border area through joint investments in education, economic development, culture, infrastructure and health.

The EU financial allocation is EUR 60 million, the minimum co-financing to be ensured by the two countries is 10% of the EU contribution. Projects shall be selected mainly following a call for proposals. However, 30% of the programme funds shall be granted through direct award (Large Infrastructure Projects).

Figure 26 – Overview of the priority axes of the Joint Operational Programme Romania – Ukraine 2014-2020

Thematic Objective	Priority	Indicative activities
TO2 Support for education, research, technological development and innovation	1.1 Institutional cooperation in the educational field for increasing access to education and the quality of education	Joint planning and joint development of educational strategies; Exchanges of experience, teacher exchanges, transfer of good practices between institutions from both sides of the border for increasing the effectiveness of education; Developing specific joint programs of entrepreneurship education, programmes that stimulate creativity, innovation and active citizenship; Rehabilitation/modernization/ extension/ equipment procurement for the educational infrastructure to provide the necessary material preconditions of a quality educational process and increase the participation in the educational processes; Development and implementation of partnerships between education institutions from both sides of the border; Development and implementation of joint actions in support of disadvantaged groups; Joint support actions for youth for the prevention of drug use, human trafficking, alcohol abuse.; Development and implementation of cross border actions for enhancing/improving/facilitating job qualifications and competences
	1.2 Promotion and support for research and innovation	Development of partnerships/networking between universities for joint development of theoretical research; Joint research actions and studies (including related equipment procurement) in the field of environment (climate change challenges, preservation of biodiversity, renewable energy and resource efficiency, etc.);Promotion and support for research and innovation through rehabilitation/modernization/extension of the specific infrastructure including the procurement of related equipment
TO3 Promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage	2.1 Preservation and promotion of the cultural and historical heritage	Restoration, conservation, consolidation, protection, and security of cultural and historical monuments, archaeological sites (including the corresponding access roads), museums, objects and art collections and their joint promotion based on relevant cross-border strategies/concepts; Preservation, security, and joint valorisation of cultural and historical monuments and objects; Cultural institution networks aimed at the promotion of cultural and historical heritage Support for specific and traditional craft activities, important for preserving local culture and identity; Promotion of specific and traditional activities in the eligible area (including cross border cultural events); Preserving, promoting and developing cultural and historical heritage, mainly through cultural events with a cross-border dimension; Valorisation of the historical and cultural heritage through developing joint promotion strategies, common tourism products and services.
TO7 Improvement of accessibility to the regions, development of transport and communication networks and systems	3.1 Development of cross border transport infrastructure and ICT tools	Reconstruction, rehabilitation, modernization of cross-border transport systems; Development of environmentally friendly (carbon-proofed) cross-border transport initiatives and innovative solutions; Improvement of multimode transport (road/water) facilities of cross-border interest; Reconstruction, rehabilitation, widening of cross-border (segments of) roads connecting settlements alongside the border with the main roads which lead to the border; Improvement/restoration/construction of (segments of) access roads to centres of cross-border interest; Elaboration of joint strategies/policies/plans for improving cross-border transport infrastructure; Development of cross-border connections, information and integrated communications network and services; Upgrading existing facilities to enable linkages between communities and public services which promote co-operation on a cross-border and wider international basis
TO8 Common challenges in the field of	4.1 Support for the development of health services and access to health	Joint activities meant to enhance access to health in the border area through construction / rehabilitation / modernization of public health service infrastructure; Developing labs and mobile labs for screening / clinical monitoring of diseases and prevention of cross border epidemics; Equipping specific public

Thematic Objective	Priority	Indicative activities
safety and security		medical services; Joint training programs and exchange of experience, networking to support the functioning of specific public medical services, telemedicine; Exchange of experience, joint activities in order to ensure the compatibility of the treatment guidelines, joint diagnosis programmes; Awareness campaigns concerning public education on health, diseases and the prevention of epidemics
	4.2 Support for joint activities for the prevention of natural and man-made disasters, as well as joint actions during emergency situations	Common measures for preventing land slides and flooding in the cross border areas; Joint integrated systems for efficient monitoring and disaster prevention and for the mitigation of consequences; Common strategies and tools for hazard management and risk prevention including joint action plans; Elaboration of joint detailed maps; Exchanging experience and knowledge, including raising awareness in the field of efficient risk prevention and management in the cross-border area; Development of integrated and common standards for urban planning and risk management; Investments and the development of common, integrated, emergency management systems; Planning co-ordinated actions by the authorities in emergency situations caused by natural and man-made disasters (floods, fires, heat waves, earthquakes, storms).
	4.3 Prevention and fight against organised crime and police cooperation	Common actions for increasing the mobility and administrative capacity of police units (including border police); Creating collaborative working platforms in order to increase the efficiency of police, border police and customs structures in the exchange of data and information; Joint trainings of police, customs, border police, gendarmerie, exchange of best practices on specific areas of activity (analysis, criminal investigation, organized crime). Investment in construction, renovation or upgrading of police and border crossing infrastructure and related buildings; Investments in operating equipment and facilities specific for the activity of police/customs/border police/gendarmerie (e.g. laboratories, equipment, detection tools, hardware and software, means of transport); Developing common policies and strategies, experience exchange for fighting organised crime

The programme document is available at www.ro-ua-md.net/romania-ucraina-3/.

6.2.7 Other programmes

6.2.7.1 EU Strategy for the Danube Region and Danube Transnational Programme 2014-2020



The area covered by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region stretches from the Black Forest (Germany) to the Black Sea (Romania-Ukraine-Moldova) and is home to 115 million inhabitants.

The programme will invest **EUR 202,3 million** from the **ERDF** and **EUR 19,8 million** from **IPA II** for transnational projects in the Danube basin territory. Eligible partners will, therefore, come from 9 EU countries - **Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany** (only *Baden-Württemberg* and *Bayern*), **Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia**; and 5 non-EU countries - **Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova,**

Montenegro, Serbia, part of Ukraine.

The **Danube Transnational Programme** (2014-2020) is built around **four thematic priority axes**:

1. Innovative and socially responsible Danube region:

- 1.1 Improve framework conditions for innovation;
- 1.2 Increase competences for business and social innovation;

2. Environmentally and culturally responsible Danube region:

- 2.1 Strengthen transnational water management and flood risk prevention;
- 2.2 Foster sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources;
- 2.3 Foster the restoration and management of ecological corridors;
- 2.4 Improve preparedness for environmental risk management;

3. Better connected and energy responsible Danube region:

- 3.1 Support environmentally-friendly and safe transport systems and balanced accessibility of urban and rural areas;
- 3.2 Improve energy security and energy efficiency;

4. Well-governed Danube region:

- 4.1 Improve institutional capacities to tackle major societal challenges;
- 4.2 Support for the governance and implementation of the EUSDR.

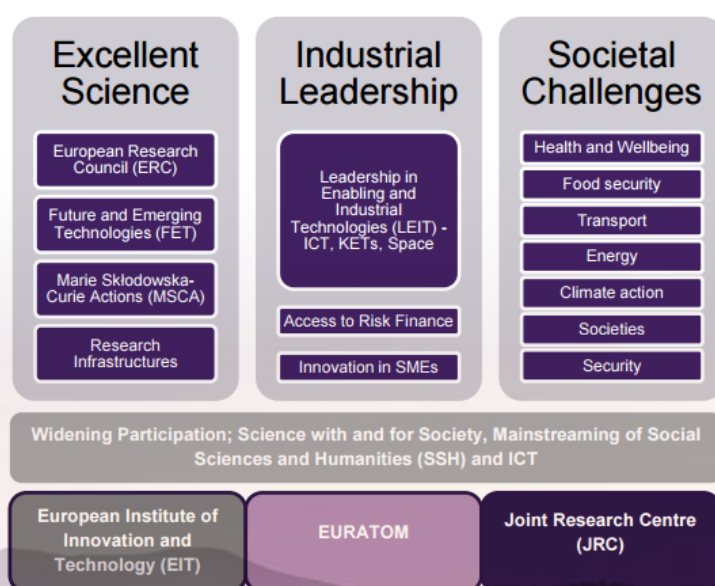
More information about the EUSDR can be found at the official website: <http://www.danube-region.eu/>

6.2.7.2 Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 - The EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, has replaced the Framework Programme (FP7). Running from 2014 to 2020 with a €70 billion budget, Horizon 2020 is intended to form a key part of the overall drive to create new growth and jobs across Europe, combining research and innovation in a unique programme.

Horizon 2020 is the financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union, a Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness.

Horizon 2020 structure



The support for research and innovation under Horizon 2020 will have the following main goals:

- Strengthen the EU's position in science with a dedicated budget of € 24, 598 million. This will provide a boost to top-level research in Europe, including an increase in funding of 77% for the very successful European Research Council;
- Strengthen industrial leadership in innovation with € 17, 938 million. This includes major investment in key technologies, greater access to capital and support for SMEs;
- Provide € 31, 748 million to help address major concerns shared by all Europeans such as climate change, developing sustainable transport and mobility, making renewable energy more affordable, ensuring food safety and security, or coping with the challenge of an ageing population.

For further information, please visit the European Commission's Horizon 2020 web pages: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/>.

6.2.7.3 Erasmus+ programme

The new Erasmus+ programme aims to support actions in the fields of Education, Training, Youth and Sport for the period 2014-2020.

Erasmus+ replaces seven programmes, bringing together

- the Lifelong Learning Programme (Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius, Jean Monnet and Grundtvig) "bringing together"
- the Youth in Action programme
- five international cooperation programmes (Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink, the programme for cooperation with industrialised countries)
- the new sport action.

Erasmus + provides grants for a wide range of actions and activities in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. The programme gives opportunities to students, trainees, staff and volunteers to spend a period abroad to increase their skills and employability. It supports organisations to work in transnational partnership and to share innovative practices in the fields of education, training and youth. The new sport action will support grassroots projects and cross-border challenges such as combating match-fixing, doping, violence and racism.

ERASMUS+ will provide **opportunities for over 4 million Europeans** to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad. ERASMUS+ will support **transnational partnerships** among Education, Training, and Youth institutions and organisations to foster cooperation and bridge the worlds of Education and work in order to tackle the skills gaps we are facing in Europe.

It will also support national efforts to modernise Education, Training, and Youth systems. In the field of Sport, there will be support for grassroots projects and cross-border challenges such as combating match-fixing, doping, violence and racism.

Programme Countries: 28 EU Member States, including **Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania**; Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway; Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Partner Countries: Eastern Partnership countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, **Ukraine**; Southern Mediterranean countries - Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia; Western Balkans - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo,

Montenegro, Serbia; Russian Federation; Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan; Latin America; South Africa; ACP Countries; Industrialized Countries.

See all countries in Erasmus+ Programme Guide: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf

ERASMUS+ Programme Web-site: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm

Details on calls at the web-site of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) responsible for management of the Programme: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus_en.

6.3 Monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring activities shall aim at improving the quality of the design and implementation of a strategy, as well as assessing and improving its consistency, effectiveness, efficiency and impact. The findings of the monitoring shall be taken into account in the programming and implementation cycle.

In the case of the Carpathian Euroregion Strategy a different approach shall be applied. The monitoring system of the Strategy is influenced by the following conditions:

- lack of own financial background,
- specific organisational structure of the Carpathian Euroregion,
- detailed list of priorities and measures,
- list of planned projects to be implemented,
- action plan.

Based on the above factors, the following specific objective can be defined: the **monitoring of the implementation of the planned cross-border projects and the action plan** in the frame of the Carpathian Euroregion – using the table below.

Figure 27 – Table on monitoring of the projects' implementation

Project title	Partners involved	Source of funding	Total budget (EUR)	Own contribution (EUR)	Related priority of the Strategy	Related measure(s) of the Strategy

The Council will evaluate the progress of the implementation at its regular meeting. The International Secretariat is responsible for coordination of the monitoring activities. Each National Office shall fill in the tables with their own information regarding the projects and activities, and send them to the International Secretariat one month before the upcoming meeting of the Council. After summarizing the national data, the International Secretariat will forward the common tables as a progress report to the National Offices and the Council. The latter will discuss the progress of the implementation, and makes decisions on the necessary interventions and modifications.

6.4 Dissemination of the Strategy

A consolidated Strategy has been developed by the project partners aimed at ensuring **visibility and coordinated action**, which are key to the successful operation of the Carpathian Euroregion.

Communication is one of the key actions that can contribute to the successful achievement of the project objectives. A number of aspects influence the way the target audience is receiving the message, such as their foreknowledge and motivation, the simplicity, clarity and timing of the message, so these are important issues to take into consideration when communicating.

The project partners are the primary group for the project activities. Within this target group, the priority must be focused on the politicians responsible for supporting and promoting the Carpathian Euroregion in their regions, and the relevant civil servants. Another primary group are the regions of the Carpathian Euroregion which are not directly involved in the project. They should be kept informed and involved in joint activities.

The secondary target group is much broader. First of all, other politicians and civil servants who are not familiar with the activities of the Carpathian Euroregion should be involved. Other target groups are: local/regional self-governing regions (regional councils) and authorities from border regions, related departments of regional development and cross-border cooperation, development organisations functioning in different legal/organisational forms (regional development agencies; local development agencies; business centres; business incubators; R&D parks; industrial parks; innovation centres; chambers of commerce; informational, consulting centres; credit funds), non-governmental organisations, especially those whose activities are aimed at promoting CBC development (national societies of the representatives of the ethnic groups divided by the border from their “mother” nations; associations of businessmen/farmers; tourism associations, etc.), international organisations.

During the project’s implementation, communication was ensured through activities such as workshops, round-tables, and training sessions, which were organised to spread information and knowledge about the Association, and bring together the political factors and stakeholders from the member regions to create opportunities for re-establishing contacts and networking.

Newsletters were developed and distributed, press conferences were organised.

Social media and websites are important resources which can ensure continuous and extended visibility. Therefore, the partners' websites will maintain sections dedicated to the Carpathian Euroregion. Links to these websites are as follows: www.uprec.ro, www.ker.sk, www.di.if.ua, www.carpathianeuroregion.org, www.iardi.org.

The project was presented at the Cross-Border AEBR Award "Sail of Papenburg 2015" (details at http://www.aebr.eu/en/sail_of_papenburg/region_award.php). The motto of this event was *The Future of Cross-Border Cooperation in Europe*. AEBR stands for the Association of European Border Regions.

The Strategy itself is published in English and in all partner region languages (Romanian, Hungarian, Slovakian and Hungarian). There are printed copies and an electronic version of the Strategy. A leaflet with key information about the Strategy was elaborated and distributed.

The project partners commit to present and promote the project results and the Carpathian Euroregion Strategy at various events, such as the European Cooperation Day or the Europe Day.

Not least, implementation of the Action Plan will generate other projects, which will make references to the Strategy, thus showcasing the concrete and sustainable results of the Carpathian Euroregion's activities.



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8 Electronic Annexes

Following Annexes to the Strategy are available in electronic format for download at this webpages:

www.uprec.ro, www.ker.sk, www.di.if.ua, www.carpathianeuroregion.org, www.iardi.org.

Annex 1 – Country profiles (Analytical part of the Strategy)

Hungary
Poland
Romania
Slovakia
Ukraine

Annex 2 – Public & Experts Survey on the Future Functioning of the Carpathian Euroregion

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The Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENPI Cross-border Cooperation Programme is to be implemented in the period of 2007-2013 on the external border of the participating EU Member States with Ukraine. The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument supports cross-border co-operations on the external borders of the EU. The overall objective of the Programme is to intensify and deepen cooperation in an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable way between Zakarpatska, Ivano-Frankivska and Chernivetska regions of Ukraine and eligible and adjacent areas of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. The Joint Managing Authority of the Programme is the National Development Agency, Hungary. The website of the Programme is www.huskroua-cbc.net.