



## **Science for the Carpathians**

A networking initiative enhancing Global Change research in the Carpathian mountains

The consequences of global environmental changes, such as climate change, do not halt at natural or national boundaries but affect larger areas such as whole mountain systems. Similarly, the science community strongly relies on trans-boundary cooperation, be it for accessing regional datasets, for modeling future scenarios, or simply for obtaining EU funds for the region. In brief, facing the challenge of Global Change in the Carpathians, both nature and science require the conception of the Carpathian system as one entity. This is of particular importance for the Carpathian area since the region is experiencing rapid economic, social and political transitions since 1990s, which affect the mountain system, its functions and services in various ways.

The Carpathian Convention provides a unique opportunity for science to seek international collaboration, close cooperation with stakeholders and policy makers, and to expand inter- and transdisciplinary research activities in the Carpathian region. In early 2007, the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (ISCC) at the UNEP Office in Vienna and the European Academy (EURAC) in Bolzano signed a memorandum aiming at fostering research communication and research programs in the Carpathians. This led to the idea of the "Science for the Carpathians" (S4C) initiative that was officially launched during a first international workshop hosted by the Institute of Geography and Spatial Management, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, on May 27-28, 2008.

More than 70 workshop participants set the basis by defining priority research themes for the Carpathians, as there are: (1) Climate change and meteorological data; (2) Sustainable development; (3) Landuse change; (4) Forestry; (5) Biodiversity and nature conservation; (6) Water; and (7) Tourism development. Based on these research priorities, scientists and stakeholders discussed rationales and specific activities to be included in the first draft of a Carpathian research agenda.

The Mountain Research Initiative (MRI), a multidisciplinary scientific organization that addresses Global Change research in mountain regions, supported the process of developing the research agenda based on the experiences gained within the EU-funded FP7 project "Global Change and Mountain Regions" (GLOCHAMORE) that resulted in a research strategy at the global scale. The MRI closely collaborates with the International Scientific Commission for Alpine Studies (ISCAR) Office and thereby provides a node linking the research-related activities in the context of the Alpine Convention (e.g., research structures, funding schemes, networks), the recent endeavors of the Carpathian Convention, and future S4C activities.

The establishment and maintenance of a strong and competitive S4C research network requires long-term financial and legal support from the ministries of the Carpathian countries. To facilitate national and local stakeholders and policy-makers in informed decision-making, concerted actions from the Carpathian countries are needed; actions allowing participation in Transcarpathian projects to all interested parties from all countries of the region on equal terms. This would help to develop appropriate management and adaptation plans on a sound scientific basis.

The S4C initiative, presently consisting of more than 250 scientists and stakeholders, makes a plea to the representatives of the 2<sup>nd</sup> COP Meeting in Bucharest (17-18 June 2008) to:

- officially support the S4C network as an important instrument to provide the scientific support to the aims of the Carpathian Convention;
- search for possibilities to institutionalize and finance the network from national and international funds with a long-term perspective;
- make use of the network by seeking for specific expertise, if needed in the frame of the Carpathian Convention;
- support future events organized in the frame of S4C, in particular "Forum Carpaticum", a meeting of scientists and stakeholders, tentatively scheduled for 2010.

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S4C: <http://mri.scnat.ch/content/view/220/51>

MRI: <http://mri.scnatweb.ch>

GLOCHAMORE: <http://mri.scnat.ch/content/category/3/10/31/>

ISCAR: <http://www.alpinestudies.ch/iscar/>

EURAC: <http://www.eurac.edu/>

ISCC: <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/framework/secretariat.htm>