

Education for Sustainable Development: Hybrid Session and Workshop

Forum Carpathicum 2023

26-28 September 2023 | Krakow, Poland

The 7th Forum Carpathicum conference, Carpathian Futures – Critical Transitions, brought together scientists, practitioners and stakeholders to share recent research and discuss the challenges and possible modes of adaptation to ongoing environmental, economic and socio-political crises in the Carpathian region.

During the conference, there was a session on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) where researchers and practitioners could present their own work, followed by a workshop where participants further discussed the vision for the Carpathian ESD Expert Network and joint activities.

This report presents an overview of the ESD presentations and discussions at the ESD Session and ESD Workshop¹.

Objectives

The overall objective of the ESD Session and Workshop was to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences on ESD initiatives in the Carpathians and other mountain regions, in order to inspire concrete ESD activities and collaborative opportunities among the participants, Carpathian Convention Secretariat and partners.

The objective of the ESD Workshop specifically, was to bring together ESD experts from the Carpathian countries to begin jointly developing a vision for the ESD Expert Network, developing a strategy for implementing ESD activities under the Carpathian Convention, and defining unique features of the Carpathian region to inform contextualized ESD work.

Key messages during the ESD Session and Workshop were brought to the attention of the Carpathian Convention at the upcoming 7th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP7) in October.

Session: Education for Sustainable Development

The ESD Session was an academic & practice-based session, where inter- and trans-disciplinary, applied, or participatory research related to ESD, Global Education and Learning in the Carpathian region was presented.

¹ The 7th Forum Carpathicum, and the ESD Session and ESD Workshop were co-funded by the German Federal Environment Ministry's Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP) for environmental protection in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and other countries neighbouring the European Union. It is supervised by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation and by the German Environment Agency as part of the project *Carpathian ESD: Strengthening the ESD network in the Carpathian Convention via science-policy-practice interface*.

The following contributions were submitted to and accepted by the Forum Carpathicum committee, and presented on Thursday, 28 September 2023 during the ESD Session. The hybrid Session included several presentations and a keynote presentation. Abstracts for each contribution (except for practice-based inputs, which did not undergo peer review process required for academic presentations) can be found in the Forum Carpathicum Book of Abstracts (Annex I).

ESD Session Moderators: Tamara Mitrofanenko, Elena Fischer

ESD Session Presentations

- Clius M., Vîrdol D.C., The Green Week - a step forward in education for sustainable development in Romania (oral)
- Sziva D. et al., Students on sustainability – first results of a V4 research initiative (oral)
- Mykhaylenko V. et al., The role of universities in the formation of global principles of sustainable development (oral)
- Piscová V. et al., Social and environmental education in the Tatra Biosphere Reserve as a task for the implementation of Agenda 2030 (poster)
- Torres M., Integrating Ancestral education into universities in Santiago of Chile (Input from another mountain region - video presentation)
- Shchoka I., European Wilderness Society's activities on Respect nature and Youth involvement (Practice-based input - online presentation)
- Ursu, L., The Carpathian Day – 26th of September (Practice-based input)



ESD Session Keynote

Fischer, D., Fostering Social Learning and Deliberation through Education for Sustainable Development (online presentation).

Dr. Daniel Fischer is the UNESCO Chair on ESD at Leuphana University Lüneburg, contributing to and advancing the work of UNESCO in peace building, intercultural dialogue and sustainable development. Dr. Fischer contributes to research, networking, policy development and capacity building in working specifically with Sustainable Development Goals 4, 12 and 16.

Dr. Fischer described ESD as a process that is less focused on individuals, and more on reflexivity: who we are, how we relate to the world and how we want to change the world. It is less learning about sustainability and more about learning for sustainability.



ESD: PROPOSITIONS

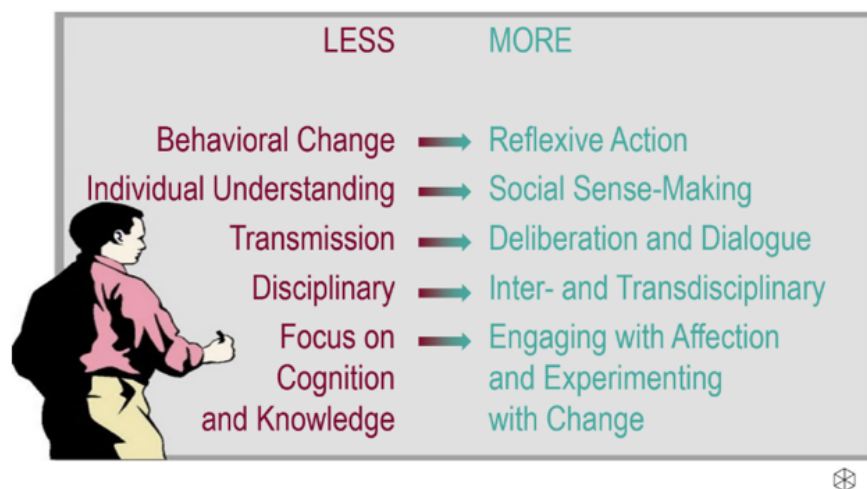


Image: PowerPoint slide from Dr. Fischer's presentation

Dr. Fischer then described four research areas or projects related to ESD that he is involved with at Leuphana University:

1. Politics for Future (P4F) - building political agency in youth teacher trainees for global citizenship learning, sustainability and social transformation. This project is developing an intercultural hybrid curriculum and has been implemented in several institutions. After the project is complete, the curriculum and Moodle online course will be available.
2. Sustainability Communication: Storytelling - how narrative communication, as opposed to fact-based communication, can stimulate learning for sustainability. This is an ongoing experimental study that involves focus groups to identify perceptions and effects of storytelling for sustainability. Free online, self-learning modules have been developed which describe the research project.
3. Sustainable Consumption and Production – how ESD can engage with consumption and production as a cross-cutting critical domain. Thus far, they have collected 57 examples of innovative teaching across the globe and created a guidebook with chapters introducing the basics of ESD and using storytelling.
4. ESD for 2030: learning FOR and IN resilient and sustainable communities. Using SDGs implementation as a real-world laboratory.

Dr. Fischer then introduced a couple research domains in ESD that will be a focus in the future:

- Needs-based ESD: reflexivity and deliberation. This research area looks into how to “design learning setting[s] and engage stakeholders in collective explorations on how needs satisfaction can be improved and made more sustainable.”
- Leading change: navigating resistance and leveraging change. Transformative ESD will need to identify and alter discourses that oppose transformative change, and empower change-leaders to persevere and counter resistance.

There are a few collaboration opportunities with Leuphana University that the Carpathian ESD Network can take advantage of, including publishing opportunities (there is a special issue on Eduration that was taking submissions until fall 2023); academic exchange through formal networks (MOE Fellowship of the German Foundation for the Environment, German Academic Exchange Service and more); and funding for proposals related to ESD, higher education or sustainable consumption through Horizon Europe.

Workshop: Strengthening the Carpathian ESD Expert Network - Vision, Aims, Role in the Carpathian Convention

Immediately following the ESD Session was an interactive workshop that accommodated both in person and online participants.

Objectives

To institutionalize ESD into the Carpathian Convention’s activities, the Carpathian Convention has been developing a Carpathian ESD Expert Network. To establish this network, there have been many efforts for

collecting inputs from Carpathian ESD practitioners and experts to develop a vision, strategy, and defining features of the network.



The ESD Workshop functioned as a follow-up to the Second Carpathian ESD Seminar and aimed to contribute to strengthening the Carpathian ESD Expert Network by requesting inputs on:

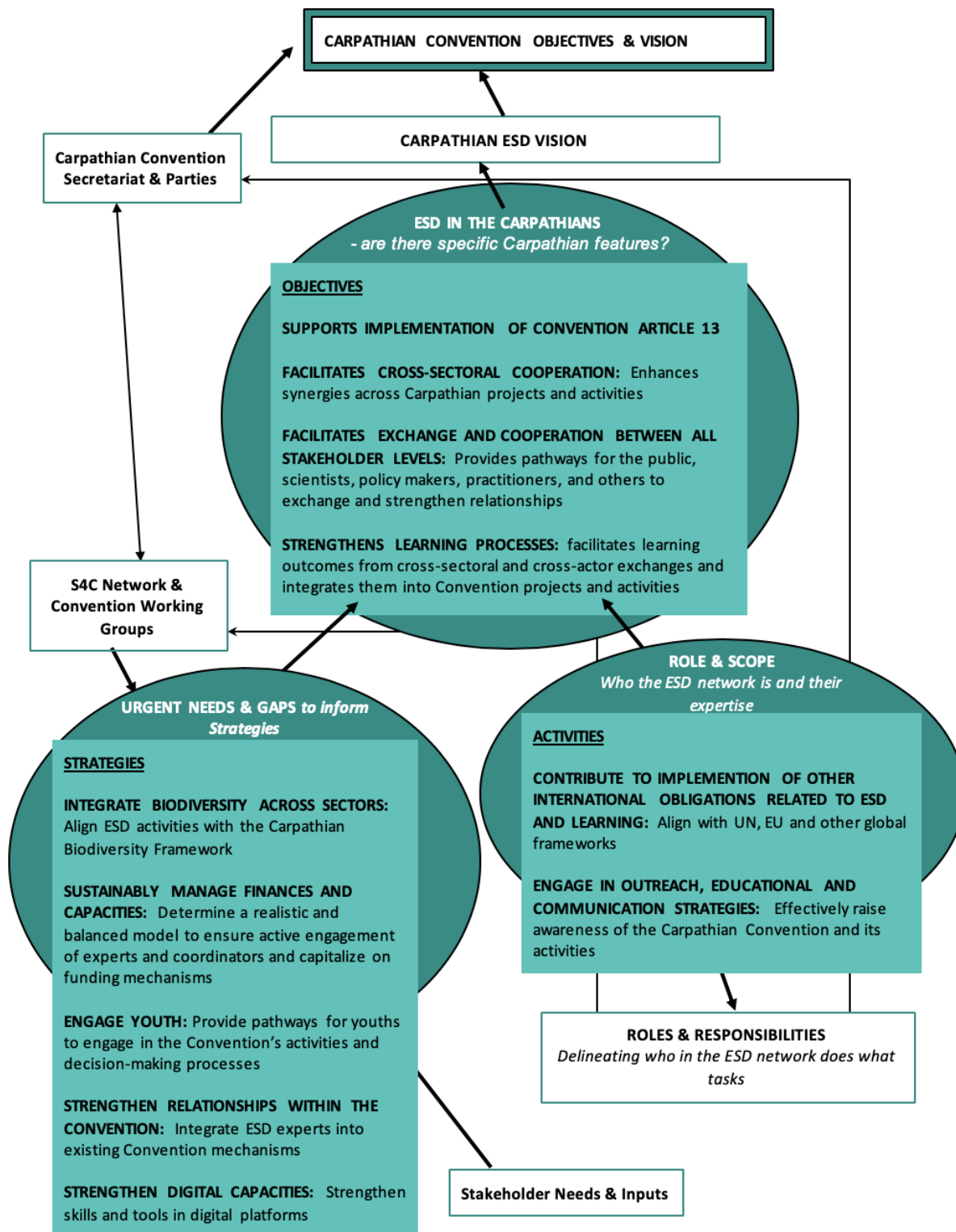
1. Understanding of ESD in the Carpathians
2. Carpathian ESD Vision
3. Strategies for Carpathian ESD Expert Network for 2023-2026

Programme

The moderator of the ESD Session and Workshop, Tamara Mitrofanenko, presented a brief illustration of the Carpathian Convention’s organizational structure and how the Carpathian ESD Expert Network could interact within the Convention. This was further expanded upon by the presentation of a working organizational structure of the Carpathian ESD Expert Network, displayed in the picture below.

This working organizational structure of the Carpathian ESD Expert Network was developed ahead of the Forum Carpathicum by synthesizing and organizing previous inputs and recommendations from previous reports, documents and sessions regarding ESD in the Carpathians.

As illustrated below, the Carpathian ESD Expert Network will directly serve and engage with the overall objectives of the Carpathian Convention under its own unifying vision. To realize this Carpathian ESD vision, overarching objectives will help guide the Carpathian ESD Expert Network as it determines its range of activities, individual responsibilities, strategies, projects and other functions of the network. Activities—the concrete tasks that the Carpathian ESD Expert Network continually does—are informed by actual members’ expertise and interests. Strategies are the short-term priorities that the Carpathian ESD Expert Network will address for the years 2023-2026, which are informed by urgent needs and gaps of the Carpathian region. Both activities and strategies are tools for accomplishing the Carpathian ESD Expert Network objectives and vision, as well as tools for addressing stakeholder needs and implementing projects on the ground.



After the ESD Workshop participants were introduced to the organizational structure, they were asked to provide feedback and specific inputs on (1) specific features of the Carpathian region that should inform how ESD is contextualized to the area, (2) a Carpathian ESD vision and (3) strategies. Their feedback and inputs were elicited in a structured way in three parts:

1. *Understanding of ESD in the Carpathians*

Participants were asked the following questions: Any special features of the Carpathian region that make ESD in the Carpathians distinct? What are the gaps specific to the Carpathian region, which ESD should address?

Participants who attended in person wrote their responses on sticky notes and online participants wrote their responses in a collaborative Google Slide document. After some individual reflection, participants posted their responses and verbally shared what they wrote.

2. *Carpathian ESD Vision*

This was addressed by asking the questions: What is the big ambitious change we want to make in the Carpathian region, given the Carpathian Vision 2050²? What are the vital components of our ESD efforts to frame implementation of the Carpathian Vision 2050? What do you see as opportunities and aspirations for Carpathian ESD?

The same process was followed as before: after individual reflection, participants posted and verbally shared their responses.

3. *Strategies for Carpathian ESD Expert Network for 2023-2026*

This was addressed by asking the questions: Are there urgent needs that are not addressed in the current list? Which strategies would you edit or add to address identified gaps? What else do you think is missing?

The same process was followed as before: after individual reflection, participants posted and verbally shared their responses.

Results

Compiled below are the participants' responses (both in person and online) to each part.

1. *Understanding of ESD in the Carpathians*

Special features (biodiversity):

- Carpathians are a biodiversity hotspot! (large carnivores, old growth forests) ESD can not only teach this but also create sense of pride/ownership
- unique nature

² CARPATHIAN VISION 2050:

By 2050, the Carpathians is a thriving and sustainable region where people live in harmony with nature. The biodiversity and natural beauty of the Carpathians are conserved, restored, and wisely used providing a healthy environment and essential ecosystems services for all people of the region and beyond.

- safety place
- deep connection of the rural areas to nature, forest, mountains
- large amount of Carpathians' environmental assets are still untouched or sustainably managed
- great geographical diversity among the Carpathian countries (heritage, resources, landscapes)

Special features (culture):

- dedicated people
- traditions still exist (cultural, educational)
- Stronger relation between local communities and Carpathian environment (and traditional resource use) than in other mountain regions across Europe
- common/similar historical and socio-cultural background
- rich international experience in teaching ESD? diversity of ESD models. Therefore, we should take advantage from it.
- All the teaching tools are close and they are many: natural elements; people, traditions, food; specific ways to do, to build, to use

Special features (other):

- Climate change is already accepted - great foundation to build upon for action

Gaps that ESD can address

- creating a "Carpathian identity" that transcends national borders
- creating links \ cooperation between practices and theory of SD (SCP) - examples of sustainable lifestyle
- lack of understanding of the school teachers that the environment is also a sort of "classroom" where many topics of SD can be easily taught
- lack of valuing of local people of the value of biodiversity and uniqueness of the Carpathian nature for education, healing, etc.
- need to educate local people (parents through children) about the value of nature in the Carpathian region so that the development is not seen only through investments of big businesses
- dedicated people, but lacking proper knowledge to benefit and protect this nature
- need to address the waste issue, pollution of rivers across the borders
- Collaboration in common education programs
- Closer cooperation between people dealing with nature protection (all kinds of conservation) and people in other activities in this region (especially agriculture, tourism, etc) - mutual understanding of education is needed for sustainable development of this region

2. Carpathian ESD Vision

Humans and Nature:

- All people of the Carpathian region take ownership of the future and health of the Carpathians: including people and the more-than-human world
- A Carpathian identity is created, where people identify first as being from the Carpathians and their respective country second
- Wild landscapes should be wisely used for education, their value, sustainable tourism, and economy.
- (Re)connect with nature: understand and feel the place of humans in nature

Building capacity:

- Peer to peer cooperation (starting with online) of the members of this network on topics of common interest
- Citizens of all ages in the Carpathian countries continuously learn and have better knowledge of this unique region to better conserve, restore and wisely use the resources for the sake of future generations.
- Creating sub-sections in our further ESD communication for those who wish to work with different ages(kindergarten, school, university) and types of education (formal and informal)
- “Building” an effective FORUM of the Carpathians by attracting more collaborative research and educational experiences oriented towards fostering ESD exchange and a greater sense of belonging.

Carpathian ESD Opportunities or Aspirations:

- Understanding of the value of teaching programs and tourism for (1) cultural heritage and (2) nature
 - Connect countries with the achievement of the goal (above)
- Green education: active green network from kindergarten age in all kindergartens and schools in the Carpathian region like the successful initiative in Hungary (Green Kindergarten Network, Eco-School Network)
- coordinated effort for the Carpathian Day in 2024 - to be organized in all/most of the countries - the preparation shall start ASAP

3. Strategies for Carpathian ESD Expert Network for 2023-2026

Ukraine:

- Support rebuilding Ukraine: the war is changing demographics throughout the Carpathians
- rethink future development of Ukrainian Carpathians, taking into account lessons of the big war; recovery should be based on SD approaches
- Promote research and education to enable sustainable rebuilding of Ukraine, its natural and social environment
- Build back better
- Rebuild Ukraine and build capacity

Exchange:

- Promote deliberation
- Strengthen inter-collaboration
- Promote dialogue/poly-logue

Network building:

- How to return our human resources
- Build up a NETWORK of stakeholders involved in ESD: NGOs, local authorities, administrative staff at local level, experts
- Identify local/regional stakeholders which could be interested in offering their input about their actions or needs to be better correlated with the research of educational objectives

Key Messages of the ESD Session and Workshop

The following key messages were presented to the Science for the Carpathians Network (S4C) and at the Carpathian Convention at the COP7 meeting (see Annex II for the full document listing each topic's recommendations from the Forum Carpathicum 2023).

- Education, awareness and capacity building is highly relevant, as evidenced from all Forum sessions
- Specific features of Carpathian ESD were identified
- Inputs to the Carpathian ESD vision were given, which will contribute to the Carpathian Vision 2050
- Urgent gaps and needs were identified, including capacity building for Ukraine to “build back better”
- There are opportunities for collaboration within the Carpathians and with Leuphana University in Germany

Concluding Remarks

The ESD Session and Workshop organized at the Forum Carpathicum 2023 was supported by the project Carpathian ESD: Strengthening the ESD network in the Carpathian Convention via science-policy-practice interface.

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