



# Carpathians Environment Outlook *2007*





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## Foreword

The Carpathian Mountain region is an excellent example of why the United Nations and its environment programme are of increasing relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Seven countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine – share the natural and nature-based resources found within this mountain range.

The region, including the surrounding lowland plains represents a centre of extensive biological diversity and at the same time a unique and well-preserved cultural heritage in a locale that, while in the heart of the European continent, remains relatively under-developed and ‘unspoiled’.

However, it is also inescapable that the Carpathian Mountains are increasingly coming under pressure from encroaching economic and infrastructural developments ranging from new roads, holiday homes and ski resorts, to the exploitation of the region’s abundant water, minerals and timber resources.

The challenge facing the countries and communities of the Carpathians is the challenge facing countries and communities world-wide: namely the delivery of sensitive, sustainable and intelligent management of the biodiversity and ecosystems upon which so much wealth, livelihoods and economic prosperity depend.

The Carpathian Mountain region also faces the other major and common challenge of our age – climate change – alongside the urgent and pressing need to “climate-proof” economies against the likely impacts.

The United Nations Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, in which UNEP and its Regional Office for Europe has played an important role, is designed to meet these challenges.

The Convention has been signed by all seven Carpathian countries and ratified by six, and is now moving into the implementation phase. In order to support the Convention and its various agreements or Protocols, UNEP in cooperation with the seven countries has developed the *Carpathians Environment Outlook* or *KEO*.

The Outlook brings the most accurate and up-to-date science available on the status of the environment in this region and has also helped initialise a “KEO database” developed by the UNEP/GRID-Warsaw Centre. The KEO report is a source of knowledge that can evolve to support the new and developing needs of the Carpathian countries and relevant organizations in their quest to deliver common and concrete solutions to the challenges and opportunities now and in the years to come.



*Achim Steiner*

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General  
and Executive Director United Nations  
Environment Programme (UNEP)

# About this Report

## Who can use KEO?

Given that the development of the Carpathians Environment Outlook (KEO) was initiated and requested by governments of the Carpathian countries, it therefore follows that one of the main **target audiences** (i.e. users and beneficiaries) of KEO should be decision- and policy-makers working for the governments, especially Ministries of the Environment, of the Carpathian countries. Governmental authorities at all levels within the Carpathian region are further considered to be key target audiences. This also includes regional environmental instruments such as the Carpathians Framework Convention, one of the main reasons for embarking on the KEO project.

Additional key target audiences include the European Commission, international organizations (e.g. UNEP, UNECE, Ramsar Convention Secretariat), international financial institutions (e.g. World Bank, EBRD), private sector business leaders and associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academia (e.g. professors, scientists and students at universities within the Carpathian region).

The producers of KEO also encourage all members of the public (especially in the Carpathian region) to use the KEO Report and become more informed about environmental trends, policies and solutions that may affect them and their communities, as well as their decisions and actions.

## How should one use KEO?

The KEO Report is divided into five main chapters that are preceded by a number of shorter sections.

KEO begins with a **“Foreword”** written by Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, highlighting

the relevance of KEO for future sustainable development in the region. The section **“About This Report”** presents the structure and main themes developed within KEO, and **“About the KEO Process”** explains how the Report was developed and by whom. An **Executive Summary** then summarizes the entire contents of the Report.

Following these opening sections, **“Chapter 1: Background and Introduction”** begins with a description of the Carpathian region’s main geographical attributes. This includes various interpretations of the region’s area and boundaries, altitudinal zones, water bodies, climate, geology and biodiversity. This is followed by an examination of human influences in the region, with a retrospective look at its historical-political background and cultural heritage. The Chapter ends with a brief overview of the main pressures impacting the Carpathian environment as well as current responses.

**“Chapter 2: Socio-Economic Driving Forces”** begins with an overview of macro-economic and structural policies affecting the region, including issues such as economic growth, employment and structural change. This is followed by a detailed look at the economic driving forces and pressures related to the following sectors: agriculture, forestry, energy and industry, transport infrastructure, tourism and traditional livelihoods. An examination of societal driving forces and pressures ends this chapter with analyses of population trends, rural de-population and land abandonment and environmental democracy.

**“Chapter 3: State of the Carpathians’ Environment and Policy Measures”** represents the longest chapter in KEO. It is divided into nine sub-chapters, each concentrating on one key environmental component or theme in the Carpathian region. These include: species, habitat and landscape diversity; forest resources; land

resources; mineral resources; water resources; atmospheric pressures; waste and hazardous chemicals; environment and security; urban development and cultural heritage. Within each sub-chapter, the state and trends of the environment, as well as human impacts and responses are analysed and described. The first sub-chapter on Species, habitat and landscape diversity has been given particular attention due to its high environmental significance for the Carpathian region, countries and UNEP.

**“Chapter 4: Outlook 2005 to 2020: Three Scenarios for the Carpathian Region’s Future Development”** is meant to help government policy-makers and other stakeholders identify key environmental challenges faced by the Carpathian region, and to understand the economic and environmental impacts of the policies that could be used to address those challenges. It develops three main scenarios of environmental, social and economic developments up to 2020 – “Business as Usual”, “EU policy first” and the

“Carpathian Dream” – as well as the underlying economic and social factors that drive these developments. The scenarios are roughly analogous to those developed for UNEP’s GEO process, beginning with the GEO-2000 report.

**“Chapter 5: Conclusions and Options for Action”** is divided into three sub-chapters. The first and longest presents KEO’s overall conclusions with a focus on the region’s unique characteristics, socio-economic considerations and environmental issues. This is followed by a survey of current policies in the region and policy gaps and limitations. Finally, based on the contents of the Report, some “options for action” are provided to strengthen the future policy framework affecting the Carpathian region.

References for each chapter are included within the chapter texts, as well as in a full list of references at the end of each chapter. The KEO Report ends with lists of **“Acronyms and Abbreviations”** and **“Acknowledgements”**.

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