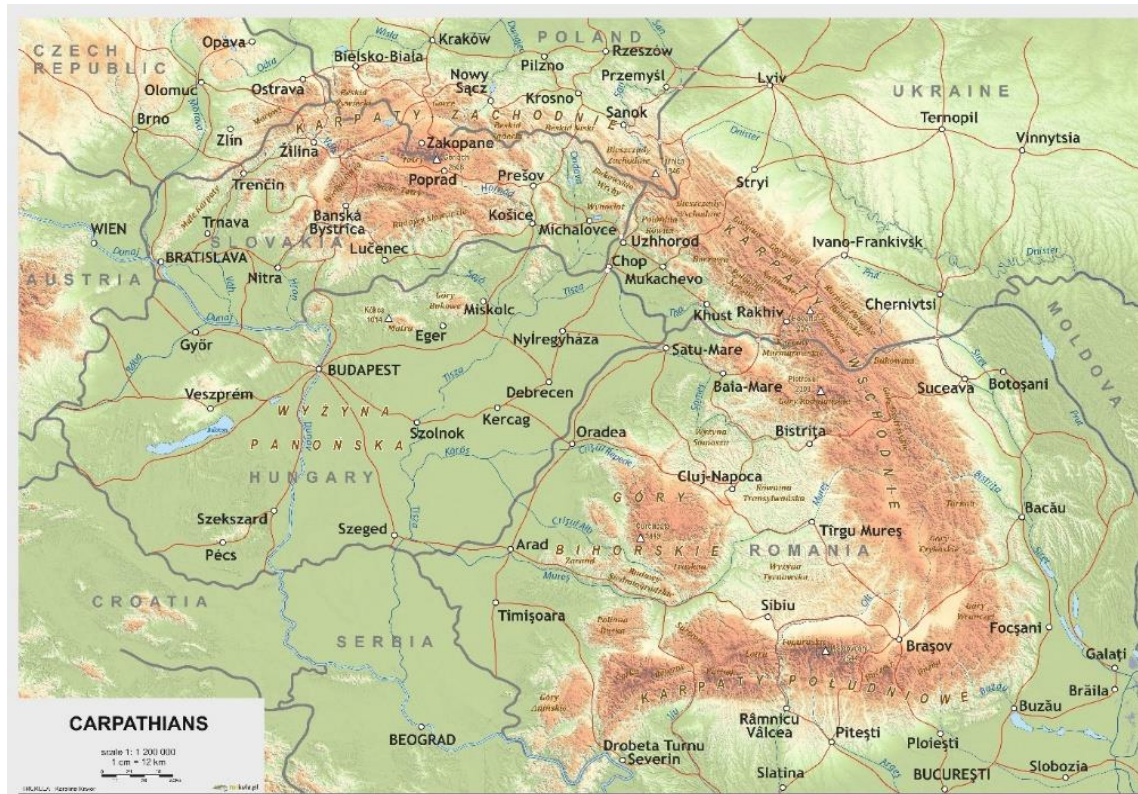
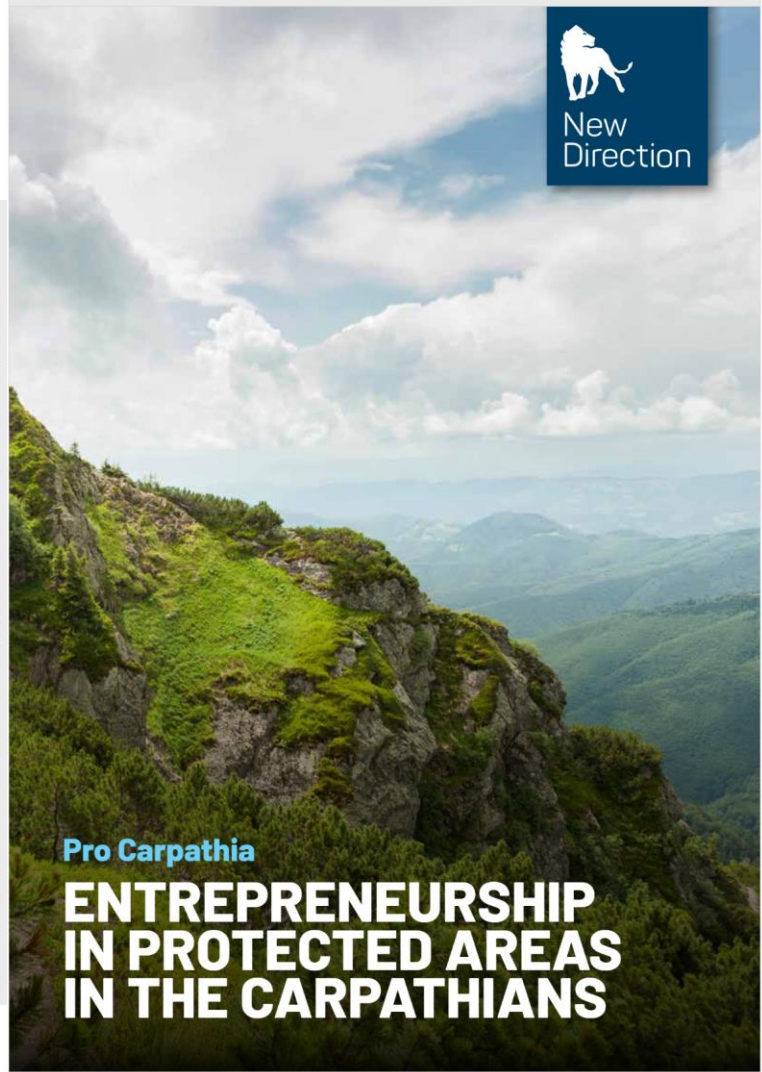


The background



Pro Carpathia

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN PROTECTED AREAS
IN THE CARPATHIANS**



Local entrepreneurship in protected areas of the Carpathians: cross-border insights from stakeholder dialogues

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Entrepreneurship under Environmental Protection: A Mindful Local Approach as a Path to Mutual Understanding?

Kaputa, Pieniążek, Stopa

The paper assesses entrepreneurial conditions in the protected areas of the Slovak Carpathians from the entrepreneurs' perspective.

Conclusions

- protected areas themselves are not the problem. The problem is the lack of systematic compensation mechanisms for entrepreneurs and the institutional barriers.
- Studies from the Carpathians, such as Janišová et al. (2020), show that low-intensity traditional land use (including mowing, grazing, manuring, and ploughing) supports biodiversity. Abandoning such practices is a threat.
- Policy should be designed with local people. Conservation and local development must be treated as complementary.

Project Management in the Carpathian Region

Issues and Challenges Affecting Locally Active Communities

Attila Rácz · Vladislav Kaputa · Agnieszka Pieniążek

Technical University in Zvolen · UNESCO Chair for Ecological Awareness and Sustainable Development

VEGA 1/0161/26: The Consumer as an Agent of Change – Research on Conscious Consumption in the Slovak Context

WoodEMA 2026

Research Framework and Methodology

Research Framework

"The Consumer as an Agent of Change" (VEGA 1/0161/26)

Active citizens making mindful, pro-social and pro-environmental decisions – conceptualised as change agents catalyzing social-ecological transformations (Pringle et al., 2026)

Interpretive scheme:



Theoretical anchors:

- Putnam (2000) – bonding & bridging social capital
- Smith (2006) – cultural heritage as social practice
- Lewicka (2011) – place attachment & regional identity
- Pringle et al. (2026) – change agents in sustainability

Methodology: Focus Group Interview

Format:

Online structured discussion (2023)
Purposive (expert) sampling of local leaders

Participants:

9 organizations: 6 civic OZs, 2 Local Action Groups (LAGs), 1 national park

4 thematic blocks:

- ① NGO role in Carpathians
- ② Good practices & projects
- ③ Cross-border cooperation
- ④ External communication & image

Analysis:

Verbatim transcript – sociological & managerial interpretation;
direct paraphrase quotations

Key Findings

1. PM between Values and Profession

- Value-driven identity — not merely administrative role
- "Doing things with heart" → trust and authentic reputation (Pringle et al., 2026)
- Structural paradox: volunteerism as strength and long-term vulnerability
- NGO sector rests on dedication without adequate conditions for reproduction

2. Social Capital: Networking vs. Fragmentation

- Bonding + bridging capital — decisive for regional development (Putnam, 2000)
- Fragmentation: organizations often unaware of each other's activities
- Organic trust-building: "The advertising takes care of itself"
- Cross-border asymmetry: Slovak vs. Polish institutional capacity

3. Cultural Heritage as Living Social Practice

- Heritage = everyday social practice, not museum work
- Intergenerational transmission: crafts, folklore, pastoral traditions
- Carpathian landscape as shared symbolic space transcending borders
- **Place attachment** as natural foundation of responsible behavior

4. Institutional Barriers and Sustainability

- INTERREG bureaucracy burdens smaller organizations with limited capacity
- Co-financing system favours financially stronger entities
- Grant schemes exclude personnel costs → structural fragility of NGOs
- "Mental barrier": NGOs perceived as aid recipients, not equal partners

Conclusions

1

Local leaders in the Carpathian region are paradigmatic change agents — their mindful, value-driven action produces measurable impacts on cultural heritage and regional development.

2

Effective project management presupposes personal commitment and community embeddedness — without these, the long-term trust necessary for genuine cooperation cannot be built.

3

Systemic conditions remain inadequate: grant schemes exclude personnel costs, bureaucracy burdens small NGOs, and civic organizations lack recognition as equal partners — sustaining structural vulnerability.

4

The identified organizations offer replicable models: authentic heritage promotion, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and linking tradition with modern tourism and land management.

Society draws freely on the social and cultural capital produced by local leaders — without investing in the conditions for its reproduction. True sustainability is fundamentally human.