The ecosystems of the Komi Republic and Nenetsky Autonomous Okrug (NAO) are rich carbon pools of forest and peatland permafrost, and are a valuable source of global biodiversity with high economic significance. The 29.2 million hectares of pristine boreal ecosystems in the Komi Republic represent almost 35% of the total pristine forest carbon pools remaining in Russia. NAO is known as a jumping off point for the Euro-African and Eurasian migratory bird routes, and it hosts the main portion of frozen or permafrost peatlands in the Russian North-East. The 1.63 million hectares of forests in the Komi Republic contain around 100 million tonnes of carbon. In an undisturbed state, these forests annually sequester over 3 million tonnes of carbon.
To preserve these ecosystems and their valuable role in mitigating climate change, the EU-funded, UNDP-supported project, Protection and restoration of forest and peatland permafrost carbon pools in Komi Republic and Nenetsky Autonomous Okrug, is working to demonstrate effective approaches to conserving, restoring and managing these carbon-rich forests and permafrost areas of the Russian North.

The project is working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve climate change mitigation measures. In Northern Russia the project has enhanced the protected area system, and has supported the future establishment of a new regional protected area (more than 20,000 ha in the Inta Region). It also strengthened Komi’s largest National Park — the Yugyd Va - with its extensive permafrost forests.

The project has also equipped staff of the national park “Yugyd-va” and the regional protected area management authority with the tools and training to implement conservation and patrol activities in the PAs, including prevention of fires and illegal logging. Local and indigenous communities have been involved in these efforts – including forest fire-fighting, nature protection, and adaptation measures.

Working with local communities, the project team has also developed plans for the sustainable use of rehabilitated land to avoid future degradation of these restored ecosystems. This includes the purchase of equipment to improve the ability to safeguard virgin forests and mountain tundra areas when roads are impassable. Forest guards have been provided with an all-terrain vehicle and a fireproof forest tractor for the National Park to improve park protection.

For Northern Russia, this co-ordination within the Clima East programme includes collaborating on practical and policy issues with additional countries in the Caucasus and the Eastern Partnership (i.e. Ukraine and Belarus) that are also working specifically on peatland restoration, as well as quantitative assessment of carbon storage and fluxes of the forest and peatland ecosystems on permafrost.

Clima East is a European Union funded project package assisting the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia in approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The seven countries involved, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine, are working to complement the ecosystem-based climate change mitigation and adaptation activities of UNDP, the Global Environment Facility, and regional partners.

For more information please visit the Clima East website: www.climaeast.eu