

# Summary report of Output 5.2 Multi-sectoral meetings and/ or fora activities

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## 1. Introduction and background

The Danube-Carpathian region is one of Europe's last remaining strongholds for the large carnivore species: gray wolf, Eurasian lynx and brown bear, protected under EU law. Unfortunately, the planned infrastructure developments threaten to cut through the movement corridors of large carnivores and increase the fragmentation of their habitats.

Very few trained spatial planners there are in the region possessing the knowledge and experience to ensure that conflicts between development and nature conservation are minimized as they develop new plans. More importantly, legally binding mechanisms taking into consideration the requirements of functioning ecological corridors is poorly implemented, mainly because of the lack of reliable data. These effects require a coherent transnational approach in issues such as the large carnivores frequently move across state borders in search of food, mates or other needs, or connecting Natura2000/Emerald network through borders.

The recognition of this regional challenge led to the launch of the ConnectGREEN project.

This paper aims to be a collection of best practice examples for integrated ecological corridor planning including action plan for a joint cooperation on securing ecological connectivity between the adjacent regions, so serve as a transferability strategy for the ConnectGreen project implementation.

### The ConnectGREEN project

Started in June 2018 and running through May 2021, ConnectGREEN (Restoring and managing ecological corridors in mountains as the green infrastructure in the Danube basin) is an Interreg Danube project aiming at increasing the capacity of ecological corridors identification and management and overcoming the conflict between infrastructure development and wildlife conservation. ConnectGREEN brings together 23 partners from multiple countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine, Montenegro, France, and Serbia) and various fields of activity and expertise (spatial planning, research, government, biodiversity conservation) to address the challenges of ecosystem fragmentation and degradation affecting the conservation of large carnivores in the Carpathian ecoregion.

The **main objective** of ConnectGREEN project is to maintain, respectively improve the ecological connectivity between natural habitats, especially between Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas of transnational relevance in the Carpathian ecoregion, namely in Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine. More specifically, the project aims at:

- Developing innovative solutions and guidance to identify ecological corridors and connectivity gaps in a harmonized way across the Carpathian ecoregion to maintain long-term, cross-border wildlife movement, associated ecosystem services and a high level of biodiversity in the region.
- Engaging protected area and Natura 2000 site managers, conservationists, spatial planners and other key stakeholders in an integrated approach for strengthening the capacity for identifying and managing ecological corridors.
- Reconciling nature conservation and spatial planning and development in ecological corridors and Natura 2000 sites by identifying and implementing strategic directions and instruments and practices.

## **Transferable outputs through multi-sectoral events**

- Methodology of identifying ecological corridors
- State of the Art Report on the existing planning systems and their application for ecological corridor identification and management
- GAP analysis report on the identification of the needs for improving the planning processes and tools
- Set of recommendations developed together with spatial planners to avoid/ minimise fragmentation of ecological corridors and Natura 2000 sites
- Ecological connectivity related database under the CCIBIS
- Database with all relevant spatial information in each pilot site
- Maps with the distribution of target species, core areas, ecological corridors and critical barrier sites in each pilot areas
- International Action Plan on Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ensuring Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians
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## 2. Objectives of outputs for the capitalization process

ConnectGREEN has created and made available a corpus of valuable knowledge and experience in order to help decision-makers, spatial planners, and other stakeholders to find the best ways to develop infrastructure and other plans in order to secure ecological connectivity in the Carpathians. However, in order to accomplish this objective, this body of knowledge has to be distributed and shared with the relevant stakeholders, who in turn have to build ownership on it and are ultimately responsible to put it into practice. Thus, this document has the objective of setting a roadmap for the diffusion and transfer of ConnectGREEN's generated knowledge, including the methodology, strategies, roadmaps and other project outputs. It is worth highlighting that, when discussing the transfer of outputs of the ConnectGreen project, we do not just aim at concrete policy changes (although these are a key objective indeed) but also wish to see the society and start fundamental changes within the awareness and act by all actors of the society by the means of societal transition.

**A societal transition** is a “fundamental, systemic shift in structures, cultures, and practices in a society.” These processes are typically non-linear and disruptive. Institutional and incremental processes which focus on optimization fail to adequately anticipate and adapt to such chaotic, non-linear patterns of change. Dealing with emergence through anticipation is a key capacity in order to deal with transitions. Controlling transitions is impossible, we hence rather speak of navigating on the edge of disruption. Regular policy and planning are often focused on improving the existing, rather than facilitating transformative changes towards desired futures. Transition governance is about developing the capacities, networks, and tools to achieve this structural systemic change towards sustainable futures. With this strategy, we want to make progress in future transfer of the project results.

After the adoption of the **project outputs** (and its associated knowledge products), the countries will be able to integrate this into national-level policies, strategies, and frameworks related to:

1. Biodiversity conservation
2. Construction-related obligatory concerning Evaluation of Influence on Environment documentations – such as wind farms investigation and proposals with avoidance environment damages, variations decision
3. Environmental Impact Assessments
4. Grey infrastructure planning – green bridges construction + landscape architecture around the linear infrastructure
5. Human-wildlife conflict
6. Hunting
7. Natura2000
8. Protected Area designation and management
9. Spatial planning processes

## Levels of capitalization of the ConnectGREEN outputs

We can identify three differentiated levels of capitalization for ConnectGREEN outputs: local, national, regional (Carpathian-level), and international. In turn, at each of these levels, we can identify two main kinds of stakeholders to target: those that can capitalize on this knowledge directly, and those who will be affected indirectly. Table 1 offers a summary of the different groups identified:

Level \ Type	Direct	Indirect
International	International conventions (CBD, IPBES)	European Union decision-makers and stakeholders
Regional (Carpathian)	Carpathian basin countries (Carpathian Convention Member States), Carpathian Network of Protected Areas	Regional NGOs, regional infrastructure and biodiversity conservation projects,

## 3. Main activities

### 3.1 Contribution to international discussions and policy processes (Annex 1)

The body of knowledge built by ConnectGREEN has the potential to provide valuable input to relevant international processes regarding biodiversity conservation, climate action, and other aspects of environmental protection. One clear example is the upcoming new Global Biodiversity Agreement to be approved at the UN 2020 Biodiversity Conference (the COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity), scheduled originally in Kunming (China) in 15-28 October 2020, though due to COVID-19 most likely to take place at the end of 2021.

- CBD - IPBES
  - o leading Sustainable Production and Consumption WG and taking part in Smart cities WG, Biodiversity WG.
    - The activity was implemented in the “Transformative Change in the global post-2020 Biodiversity Framework” activity organized by the Eclipse Expert Working Group in 27 March – 27 August 2020, by taking part of the proposal writing of the background document of the 23-25 June 2020 workshop
  - o “Putting Beyond Growth advocacy into action” - FinGO process

Both activities’ recommendations were embedded to the IPBES Global Assessment and channeled into the CBD final documents.

### 3.2. Contribution to regional (Carpathian ecoregion-level) policy making processes

ConnectGREEN was a region-oriented project, and its outputs concern directly all countries of the Carpathian ecoregion. Hence, the knowledge generated can be transferred to and capitalized by regional organizations working in the fields of biodiversity conservation, spatial planning, and infrastructural development, through:

#### 3.2.1. Carpathian Network of Protected Areas of the Carpathian Convention (Annex 2)

- o In order to enhance the revitalization process of CNPA ConnectGreen project partners organized shared activities with Centralpark Interreg-CE project, which aims to create and foster a common platform for Central-Eastern National Parks in order to provide common activities and capacity building within the region. To make sure the success of the cooperation the following activities taken place:
  - Meetings with the CNPA Secretariate in 06/10/2020, 16/11/2020, 19/04/2021 and 22/03/2021.
  - Over these meetings the partners agreed on the following roadmap:
    - Organizing events
      - o 1st round table for the Steering Committee of CNPA in November 2020.

- 2nd round table: 21-25 June 2021, Forum Carpaticum, Brno if applicable
- CNPA Conference: 28-30 Sept 2021, Visegrád, Hungary
- Social media activities:
  - Newsletter
  - Facebook community organization by CNPA
  - share members' news on new website
  - Webinar series

All activities aiming a well progressing, own managed CNPA revitalization process.

### 3.2.2. Working Group Meeting of the Carpathian Convention (Annex 3)

- Biodiversity Working Group
  - The work within the Biodiversity WG aimed the preparations of the International Action Plan on Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ensuring Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians and embedding its recommendations to national processes. To reach this aim the following activities were implemented:
    - 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity, in Ostrava, Czechia, 30-31 May 2019, where the general idea of the Action Plan was discussed.
    - 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Biodiversity in Coltesti, Romania, 25-28 November, 2019. Over the meeting the first drafts of the Action Plan was presented and discussed together with the EuroLargeCarnivores Life Project.
    - 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Biodiversity, on-line, 10 March 2020. over the meeting the content was presented and discussed.
    - 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Transport, on-line, 11 March 2020. The event joint to the meeting above to discuss the potential common understanding and planed activities of the two Working Groups.
    - COP6 - Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians in November 2020. Adopted the International Action Plan was adopted.

The 3.1 output of ConnectGREEN was adopted by the COP6 of Carpathian Convention, so its recommendations are embedded directly to the work of the Biodiversity and Transport Working Groups of the Carpathian Convention.



### 3.3 Integration into regional cooperation action projects and consortia (Annex 4)

The project aimed a multi-sectoral cooperation involving the following institutions and projects to common discussions of the ecological connectivity, large carnivores and common topic:

- Alparc projects
- Park Dinarides projects
- Carpathian Parks (carpathianparks.org)
- Central Parks project
- Carpathian Primary Forest

In order to reach and deepen the targeted groups the project organized and took part in the following activities:

- Centralparks Kick-off event, 16 April 2019.
- Green Carpathians webinar on transnational cooperation to address the biggest threats to the biodiversity of the Carpathian Mountains, within EU Green Week, 25 September 2020.
- Carpathian Primary Forests Protection, International Meeting of the Activists, 4 October 2020.
- EU eco-corridors: a mountain to climb, within European Week of Regions and Cities, 13 October 2020

Over all events the strategic aims and potential activities were discussed with potential supporters from the neighbouring Conventions to the academic representatives, field worker biologists, nature protection experts and NGOs.

Annexes:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1G18me2hBDYuk1WqowoM73Aqdi6rJT53E?usp=sharing>