



ConnectGREEN. Right of way for nature

The planned infrastructure developments in the Danube-Carpathian region threaten to cut through the movement corridors of large carnivores and increase the fragmentation of their habitats.

Very few spatial planners have the knowledge and experience to ensure that conflicts between development and nature conservation are minimized as they develop new plans. More importantly, legally binding mechanism taking into consideration the requirements of functioning ecological corridors is poorly implemented, mainly because the lack of reliable data. These effects require a coherent transnational answer as the large carnivores frequently move across state borders in search of food and mates.

Through the **ConnectGREEN project**, partners from different countries and various fields of activity (spatial data planning, research, government, conservation) joined forces to increase the capacity of ecological corridors identification and to overcome the conflict between infrastructure development and wildlife conservation.

Valuable knowledge and experience will be made available to spatial planners for adjusting their new infrastructure plans to the ecological connectivity requirements.

Maintaining or restoring ecological corridors will secure viable populations of the large carnivores in the Carpathians and maintain one of the largest biodiversity hotspots and functioning ecosystems on the continent.

Moreover, this new joint approach is meant to accelerate the implementation processes and put into practice much-awaited infrastructure developments that faces the risk of being delayed due to non-conformity with safety and environmental standards.

Long term solutions for wildlife movements

The main objective of the project for the next 3 years (2018 - 2021) 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 and Serbia.

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.

The ecological corridors will be identified in more detail by using the new Carpathian-wide methodology in 4 transnationally relevant pilot sites:

1. Piatra Craiului National Park (Romania);
2. Apuseni-SW Carpathians (Romania)/ National Park Djerdap (Serbia);
3. Western Carpathians (Czech Republic - Slovakia) and
4. Bükk National Park (Hungary)/ Cerová vrchovina Protected Landscape Area (Slovakia).

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ERDF Contribution: 1,920,592.41 Euro

IPA Contribution: 172,892.55 Euro

Project website: <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/connectgreen>

You can support this process by prioritizing biodiversity in the list of environmental criteria, by participating in consultations and by sharing the knowledge.