



Proceedings

Conference on Large Carnivores' Protection in the Carpathians

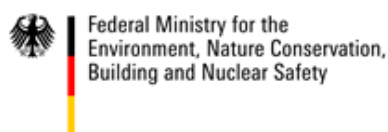
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The responsibility for the content of this document lies with the authors.



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1. Foreword

The Carpathian region harbours one of the most important large carnivore populations (the Eurasian lynx, the Brown bear, and the Grey wolf) in Europe. In addition to suitable habitats, the above mentioned mammalian species require extensive, non-fragmented habitats to establish their large home ranges and to allow long-distance movements. Despite their long-term protection in some countries within the region and their functional role as ecosystem keystone species these top predators are still considered to be conflict species there.

Thus, the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (The Carpathian Convention), namely its Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity, together with the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity (The Biodiversity Working Group) pay special attention to effective large carnivores` conservation.

One of the main priorities of the Czech Presidency to the Carpathian Convention (2014-2017) has been to reduce landscape fragmentation, particularly caused by uncontrolled development of settlements and transport and other linear infrastructure. The issue is also closely related to the EU`s Green Infrastructure, dealing with landscape permeability and connectivity, and it uses, *inter alia*, the BioREGIO Carpathians Project outputs (Common Integrated Management Measures for Large Mammals) and experience of the sister Alps Convention.

The Conference was organised to enhance the necessary co-operation within Carpathian countries in large carnivores` protection and to support the debates on the reasonable coexistence of large carnivores with humans. Experts from state organisations, universities, academia and NGOs from Carpathian countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine) were present and also a number of other foreign experts took part in. The Conference offered a suitable platform to share knowledge and to exchange experience and was a kick-off for further common dialogue on large carnivores` successful survival within the Carpathian region. The 8th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity (WG Biodiversity) took place back to back to the Conference on October 20th.

1. Conference Objectives:

- To share and to exchange information on large carnivores` (LC) monitoring and protection within the Carpathian region;
- To establish an informal expert panel for large carnivores within the Carpathian Convention which will focus on developing and implementing future common large carnivores` management plan in the Carpathians;
- To establish a formal partnership between the Carpathian Convention and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC).

2. Results of the Conference:

- The representatives of the Member States of the Carpathian Convention gained knowledge on large carnivores' protection in other Carpathian countries;
- The representatives from EU accession countries (Ukraine, Serbia) gained knowledge on EU legislation on protection of large carnivores;
- Transnational network was established for further common Carpathian dialogue on large carnivores' protection;
- Memorandum of Cooperation between the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation was signed;
- Common Declaration of the Conference participants and the members of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity (WG Biodiversity) on the Management and Protection of Large Carnivores in the Carpathians was adopted.

2. National situations

1. Status of large carnivores in the Czech Republic

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In the Czech Republic, large carnivores belong among specially protected species (No. 114/1992 Coll.). While brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) and grey wolf (*Canis lupus*) are listed among the critically endangered species, Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) is listed as an endangered species. All three species are listed in these categories also in the Red List of Threatened Species in the Czech Republic (Vertebrates) and are listed also in the Hunting Law as a game with a year round protection (No. 449/2001). As their population numbers cannot be regulated legally, all damages caused by large carnivores on the human health, domestic animals (defined species of domestic animals including guarding dogs) and bee colonies are paid by the state (No. 115/2000 Coll.).

Protected Landscape Area (PLA) and Site of Community Importance Beskydy are the only place in the Czech Republic where all three species of large carnivores can be found. Their existence here depends on the status of all three species in Slovakia. At present the only species with permanent occurrence in PLA Beskydy is lynx (approximately 7-10 individuals), while wolves and bears occur only occasionally (migrants). The population numbers given before 2010 were rather different – 15 - 25 lynxes, 5 - 17 wolves, and 2 - 5 bears. These numbers were based solely on the field monitoring, while those after 2010 are based on the combination of genetic analyses, camera-trapping and field monitoring. However, the decrease in population numbers does not result only from the changed approach. Also largely negative attitude of target groups (hunters and breeders) to large carnivores persists, despite the long term efforts to change it. Illegal hunting, car collisions and changes in large carnivore management in neighbouring countries certainly contribute to the overall decrease.

The most abundant lynx population in the Czech Republic lives in its south-western part, in the National Park and PLA Šumava. It has been established by reintroduction in 1980s and increased during the 1990s up to 100 – 120 individuals. After the year 2000 the population started to decrease and at present it is expected to contain approximately 60 – 70 individuals. The reasons believed to be behind this decrease are the same as in PLA Beskydy. However, just like in the PLA Beskydy, the population numbers from the period before the year 2000 were based solely on the field monitoring. Thus it is possible, that the real numbers in 1990s were in fact lower and the following decrease not so distinct.

At present, the grey wolf is the only large carnivore whose population in the Czech Republic increases. The first information about the presence of wolves in northern Bohemia (PLA Kokořínsko) emerged in 2013. The first cubs were born in 2014, followed by 2 others litters in 2015 and 2016, which bring the number of wolves in PLA Kokořínsko up to 10 individuals. Genetic analyses confirmed that this fledgling population is related to the Central-European lowland population in Germany and north-western Poland. The origin of wolves living in the PLA Broumovsko and Šluknovsko area has yet to be confirmed, even though it can be expected that they are of the same origin as the wolves in PLA Kokořínsko.

2. Status of large carnivores in Hungary

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Wolf, lynx and bear disappeared in XIX-XX century from Hungary. Due to spontaneous recolonization from the Slovakian parts of the Carpathians increasing number of individuals were observed in North-Hungary. All the three species are strictly protected.

Permanent occurrences and breeding of wolves were detected in Bükk Mountains and Aggtelek region and several sporadic occurrences were observed on other areas. The numbers have increased in the last decade, now it could be 25-30 individuals to a maximum. Lynxes show sporadic occurrences in Northern Mountains, where 5-10 individuals live. The population trend is doubtful. Bears were observed more frequently last decade than earlier, but at low numbers, 1-5 individuals. As the population densities are very low human-LC conflicts are rare.

Hungary is in special situation of LC conservation. We are on the edge of the distribution area where spontaneous recolonization is in progress since the eighties, but it still has not resulted in stable populations. Consequently the main goal of LC conservation in Hungary is to stabilize the occurrence and form breeding populations. The causes of the failure are still not known. The most popular explanation is the illegal killing, but very few cases were proved. The habitats are concerned good and similar to Slovakian ones, but detailed habitat suitability analyses are still lacking. The influences of the management and status of source populations and the permeability of corridors are also not known. To promote the recolonization more intensive transboundary cooperation, synchronisation of different management activities and more focused conservation plans on appropriate space and time scaling are necessary.

The legal and administrative background of LC conservation exists since 1996, when the act on nature conservation was codified. A Life Nature project gave LC conservation a stimulus in 2001-2006. Conservation plans for wolf and lynx were accepted in 2004 (but not for bear), and multilevel countrywide monitoring system was elaborated. The

conservation plans must be updated in the next years. The monitoring does not function on whole country nowadays, but NPs along the Slovakian border carry out different ways of monitoring. Methodology has been improved with analysis of genetic markers and automatic cameras in the last years. Countywide monitoring for LCs, unified up-to-date methods and more equipment are needed.

3. Status of large carnivores in Poland

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Large carnivores (hereinafter LC) are strictly protected in whole Poland – brown bear since 1952, lynx since 1995, and wolf since 1998. They are listed among species requiring active protection; e.g. a seasonal protection zone from the 1st April to 31st August, with a radius of 500m, may be established around breeding places of the wolf and lynx. Similar zones may be established around winter lair of the brown bear, between 1st November and 30th April. This protection of breeding sites is ineffective as the sites are discovered *a posteriori* and almost no sites have been subject to specific legal protection.

Poland ratified the Bern Convention in 1995, but the wolf was excluded from Appendix II. Similarly, according to a derogation obtained by Poland, the wolf has been left in Annex II of the Habitats Directive, but also has been moved from Annex IV to Annex V. Implementation of the Habitat Directives allowed the creation of Natura 2000 sites, which protect LC habitats. Poland has also adopted Council Regulation (European Commission) No. 338/97 which stipulates special procedures for the regulation of the trade of LC trophies and body parts within Poland and from abroad. All permits for the import or export of LC trophies must be accepted by the National Council of Nature Conservation – an advisory body of the Ministry of Environment.

There is no nation-wide system for LC monitoring in Poland. Official information on the population size is published by the Central Statistical Office. However these estimates are made on the basis of annual reports provided by the Regional Directorates of Environmental Protection, which are based on information obtained from local NGOs, scientists, environmentalists, forest divisions and hunters. In some areas, the population numbers are based on data collected in well-conducted censuses or monitoring or scientific projects, while in others the numbers are based on guesstimates or simply by the summing up of numbers estimated by forest divisions or hunting clubs, usually without following any methodology. In contrast to the lack of national monitoring schemes organized by governmental bodies, research projects on LC in various parts of Poland have been conducted very intensively resulting in numerous peer-reviewed papers published. Consequently, knowledge about the biology, ecology and genetics of the LC species is quite good.

According to official data provided by the Polish Central Statistical Office, in 2014 there were 1,276 wolves, 309 lynx, and 163 brown bears, recorded in the entire country. These

statistics do not provide any measure of the accuracy of the number estimates (as they are done not scientifically) and do not consider the transboundary character of many of the LC populations in Poland. There is also not any officially established system or procedures for interventions in emergency situations. Poland has not implemented yet management plans for any of the three LC species.

4. Status of large carnivores in Romania

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The presentation gave an overview of the Romania's large carnivores' populations and the main conservation and management challenges and obstacles around them.

Romania hosts most of the large carnivores in terms of numbers not only in the Carpathians but also in Europe. However, there are several management issues emerging from this fact and several debates between the conservation actors and hunters especially. One major discussion for instance is around the estimation of the number of large carnivores, which is primarily done by hunters. The accuracy of this estimation and the methodology that stays behind is questioned by most of the conservation organisations and actors, considering that any management decision and measure in the end should be based on sound and reliable data collected in the field.

Although the large carnivore species are strictly protected in Romania, the hunting of these species has been allowed until October this year (when the Ministry of Environment took the decision to ban hunting and to reform the whole management system of large carnivores) based on a derogation system from the conservation measures aiming to reduce the damages caused by these animals and the conflicts with them. This approach has not been (fully) justified considering that the number of conflicts with large carnivores does not decrease.

Main threats the large carnivores face in Romania and their effect on the populations were highlighted. The mitigation of these threats is not an easy task and should involve inter institutional communication and cooperation.

Other items covered by the presentation included: types of conflicts with large carnivores, compensation scheme for damages, its implementation and consequences on the whole management system, perception of carnivores by the humans, conservation challenges and achievements.

5. Status of large carnivores in Serbia

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Grey wolf, Eurasian lynx and Brown bear are the three large carnivore (LC) species in the mammal fauna of Serbia. Each species has a different legal status and population trends. The lynx and bear are strictly protected species. The grey wolf in majority part of its distribution (southern from Sava and Danube rivers) is game species, protected with the close season (which is open whole year!), but in fact without any protection. In the northern Province of Vojvodina (north from Danube and Sava rivers) it is strictly protected species, protected by the close season whole year.

Grey wolves from Serbia belong to two European populations: Carpathian and Dinaric-Balkan populations. General population trend is stable/slight increase. Eurasian lynx also belongs to two populations: Carpathian and Balkan populations. Carpathian population has slight increasing population trend, while Balkan population is in decrease. Serbia is only European country with three Pan-European Brown bear populations. Bears from Serbia belong to Dinaric-Pindos, Carpathian and Eastern Balkan populations. Such presence of different LC trans-boundary populations at the territory of Serbia, situated at the edges of the country, make difficulties for their monitoring, management and conservation.

In 2007 National Strategic Plans necessary for conservation of all three LC species in Serbia have been produced. The distribution, abundance, population trend, habitat requirements, threat factors, proposed monitoring activities and management requirements for each species are elaborated and documented. These documents were supposed to be base for National Action and Management plans for all three species. Unfortunately Strategic Plans were never officially accepted and implemented and now have status of outdated documents. In the meantime, a couple of crucial research projects on all three LC species were conducted at the national level, trying to collect new facts on LCs bionomy, ecology, conservation and management. Since 2007, modern methods and techniques have been intensively used to study and estimate of present state, numbers of populations of all three LC species. In last 10 years monitoring based on genetics methods, camera trapping and telemetry (GPS collars) applied mostly at core population areas.

Future and further conservation of LCs need developing, drafting and implementation of national Action and National Management plans for all three LC species, as well as implementation of standard monitoring at whole state territory. Due to the connection of populations and habitats in Serbia with those in neighbouring countries there are numerous contacts and reciprocal trans-border cooperation in the field of research, conservation, protection, management and monitoring are priorities in further implementation of national Management and Action plans.

6. Status of large carnivores in Slovakia

Michal Adamec, Vladimír Antal & Ján Kadlečík, State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic

There are three large carnivore species which occur on the territory of Slovakia regularly.

Brown bear, lynx and wolf are protected or partly protected by national legislation, the Nature and Landscape Protection Act No. 543/2002 Coll. and its Decree No. 24/2003 Coll. As these are game species Act on Hunting No. 274/2009 Coll. applies as well.

Lynx (*Lynx lynx*) is listed in the Annex II of Habitats Directive and in accordance with the Nature and Landscape Protection Act No. 543/2002 Coll. it is protected all year round on the whole territory of the Slovak Republic.

Population number of lynx in Slovakia is reported to be 300 – 400 individuals in the Alpine biogeographical region and 2 – 10 individuals in the Pannonian region.

Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) is listed in the Annex II of Habitats Directive and in accordance with the Nature and Landscape Protection Act No. 543/2002 Coll. it is protected all year round on the whole territory of the Slovak Republic. Hunting permission can be granted under special circumstances by the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic to shoot a selected individual.

Population number of brown bear in Slovakia is reported to be 700 – 900 individuals in the Alpine biogeographical region. Brown bear is not reported in the Pannonian region.

DNA – sampling survey using a non-invasive method was carried out within the ERDF project "Research and monitoring of large carnivores population and wild cat in Slovakia". The population was estimated to 1 256 individuals.

Wolf (*Canis lupus*) is listed in the Annex II of Habitats Directive. Derogation from the Directive, related to the protection of wolf, was granted to the Slovak Republic by the European Commission. Permissions for wolf hunting is granted according to the Article 16 of the Habitats Directive. In accordance with the above mentioned law the wolf in Slovakia is protected all year round in the following selected areas - bordering regions with the Czech Republic (PLA Kysuce), Poland (almost along the whole border) and Hungary (Slovenský kras NP). The wolf is protected in the period between 16th January and 31st October on the rest of the territory of Slovakia. The hunting quota for each hunting region is set annually by a special commission consisting of experts and relevant organizations. The expert assessment is done prior to the decision.

Population number of wolf in Slovakia is reported to be 300 – 600 individuals in the Alpine biogeographical region and 2 – 10 individuals in the Pannonian region.

Management plans for protected species are developed by the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic and adopted by the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, in accordance with the legislation. The management plan for wolf was adopted in 2016, while other two management plans are in the process of consultations and expected to be adopted soon.

7. Status of large carnivores in Ukraine

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Our work includes estimation of state of large carnivore in Ukraine in general and Ukrainian Carpathians as well. We conducted our studies in frames of different local and international projects or personal initiatives of researchers. All period of studies of brown bear, wolf and lynx ecology by our working group took 16 years on present moment. Data were collected in Nature reserve fund – natural parks, reserves, on hunting grounds, in zoos and rehabilitation centers.

Aims of our studies include:

- Research the spatial distribution, ecological characteristics (diet, biotopical preferences, interspecies relationships of large carnivores groups) and behavioral features
- Estimate the rate of threats (level of human-predator conflict, illegal hunting, the changing of nature management) and to develop recommendations for the conservation of groups.
- Estimation of the helminth fauna of wild animals.

We use the wide range of methods in our research: Route accounting, tracking, biological signal field methods complex, mapping of den sites, phototraps accounting, collection and analysis of feces and prey carcasses, surveys, full or partial helminthological dissection of carcasses, MacMaster technique of helminth egg flotation of feces.

We collected and processed a huge massive of data about territorial distribution, diet, den sites, relations with human (problems of species image and attitude), human-predator conflict (bear-to-human, wolf-to-human especially), helminthology, breeding, sex-age structure, sizes of groups, illegal captivity problem and rehabilitation methods, disturbing factors *etc.* We have realized eco-education initiatives to improve attitude of local people living next to wild to carnivores and strong scientific support to stop the poaching and illegal exploiting of large carnivores (baiting bears, travelling zoos).

For all studied species a lack of previous studies was observed. We ascertain the high pressure of illegal hunting. For bears and wolves inadequately level of illegal captivity was also registered. Brown bear and lynx are characterized by the negative trend of number. Our estimation of bear population (230 specimens) is 2 times less than official. Territorial structure of large carnivores is weakly dependent on Nature reserve fund territories. Evaluation of geographical distribution of structural elements presented a weak correlation with regulatory assigned nature conservation areas (about 55-59 % of litter areas, winter dens locations and feeding sites are at least partially connected). All species actively use anthropogenic resources partially livestock and crops. Diet of bear is vegetarian mainly. Wolves in Carpathians have significant differences in diet and den sites features comparing with other populations. Analysis has shown that about 30% of prevailing in all Ukraine hunting methods are illegal. Key points for monitoring and protecting the carnivores population in Ukraine include namely the issues of harmonizing recordkeeping, lack of national monitoring programs, low public interest,

commercial exploitation of the species, limited number of shelters, rehabilitation centers, general issues of the legal framework *etc.* Country has no comprehensive strategy for examining and managing the large carnivores populations. For future we have next points: providing of better illegal hunting control, ecological education (creation of positive image of species) and available system of population monitoring.

3. Summary of the national situations

WWF DCP together with the organisers of the conference prepared a questionnaire for the conference participants to be filled in before the conference. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the situation of large carnivores (brown bear, gray wolf, Eurasian lynx) in the Carpathian Ecoregion, as basis for discussions and analysis during the Conference. Since there was no comprehensive survey done in and for the region on this topic it was considered to be a good opportunity to involve experts, practitioners and others involved in the research and management of large carnivores to offer an updated overview on the conservation of these 3 species through a simple questionnaire to better address specific conservation and management issues and threats during the Conference. Representatives of institutions, authorities, organisations as well as individual experts have been targeted.

The questionnaire was made available to the target group via the SurveyMokey web-based platform to offer a user-friendly interface and the possibility to collect and analyse the data easier.

The questionnaire was sent to over 200 people from all the Carpathian countries, to collect data on e.g. existing monitoring systems, estimation of large carnivore numbers, population trend, management plans, nature of conflicts with large carnivores, prevention measures, cases of damages, compensation schemes, perception of carnivores by humans, projects implemented in the region, threat assessment. Totally 23 persons filled in the questionnaires.

The results have shown that there is hardly any agreement on the numbers of large carnivores within one country. The monitoring of large carnivores is missing in several cases, the number of damages caused by large carnivores to humans is increasing in the Carpathians, national management or action plans are often not developed or approved in the region and main conflict areas were poaching, hunters` interest and livestock depredation.

The discussion which followed after the presentations on national situations defined the following main threats:

- 1) Fragmentation in particular due to badly planned infrastructure (road, rail, sports) and climate change
- 2) Human-wildlife conflicts / low stakeholder acceptance

- 3) Data insufficient for basing sound management measures on compensation of the damages
- 4) Poaching / lack of law enforcement
- 5) Poaching stray dogs causing hybridisation and competition

As main possible solutions the following topics were proposed by the participants:

- 1) - integrated (transport) infrastructure planning applying the mitigation hierarchy;
 - fully exploiting possibilities under the Habitats Directive for securing LC migration habits between Natura 2000 sites
 - influencing allocation and spending of EU infrastructure funds (Cohesion Policy)
- 2) - effective compensation and conflict prevention schemes implemented
 - adjusting CAP funding programmes to reduce harmful subsidies and providing funding measures
 - education and awareness raising programmes for rural stakeholders
 - develop trustful collaboration between conservation and hunting communities
 - professional mediation / cooperation platforms long-term
- 3) - scientifically sound monitoring programmes applying meaningful measurement units (packs, reproductive units)
 - transnational management planning and implementation;
 - know-how transfer of good Natura 2000 development from EU to non-EU countries;
 - exchange experience of translocating individuals in line with Habitats Directive;
 - clear objectives and indicators
 - holistic approach (e.g. appreciating competition between LC species)
- 4) promoting law enforcement
- 5) programmes addressing problem of poaching guarding dogs (training, setting right incentives by rural development funds)

4. Objectives of Carpathian cooperation towards population level management

The participants formulated common ideas on objectives of the population level management of large carnivores within Carpathians as follows:

- Achieve full ecological functionality of LC in their ecosystem context (indicator: to be further defined; concept of favourable conservation status according to the Habitat Status applied to agreed set of criteria) and enhance resilience to climate change
- Prevent critical habitat loss and fragmentation and improve/maintain connectivity (indicator: landscape fragmentation over time)

- Achieve viable populations (indicators: # mother with cubs for bears, # of females with kittens for lynx, # of packs for wolves; genetic variability per population)
- Achieve coexistence (indicator: stakeholder acceptance; # damages)
- Science-based management (indicator: harmonised database and transparent monitoring used for management)

Principles and tools of population level management:

- Good communication and cooperation between units in country and cross-border
- Carpathian level stakeholder platform with regular meetings for experience sharing and discussion
- Common goal but national measures can differ
- Population level strategy and management plan
- Country specific measures science based and accepted by majority of scientific community and other stakeholders
- Harmonised monitoring techniques and analysis
- Common data base of projects and data
- Joint implementation of plans / joint projects
- Fully respecting national and EU / international legislation
- Principles of the Carpathian Convention and its working groups

5. Results of discussions on national levels – country teams

The last day of the conference a country groups were created to discuss common ideas on national level as follows:

- to identify 3 main problems in large carnivores protection on national level
- main gaps in knowledge
- mistakes, experience from preparation and/or implementation of management plans

Coming together – is a common Carpathian management plan the right solution?

- Carpathian management plan or another solution?
- main aim and topics of such a plan
- added value to national management plans
- who will be responsible for preparation and implementation?

8 country groups were created – 7 parties to the Carpathian Convention plus one mixed group created by representatives of Austria and Italy.

The results are summarised in the presentation named How to move forward toward Carpathians_summary_national_visions.

The problems and difficulties on national levels depends on the population numbers in each country, on the status in preparation or implementation on national management plans, on level of conflicts with humans. The participants expressed many similar views, experiences, opinions and finally a common approach on Carpathian level was recommended.

It was agreed that the terminology “Carpathian management plan” should be rather replaced by “international action plan for the conservation and sustainable management for the Carpathian populations of large carnivores“. Different solutions may lead to the same goal - it was mentioned several times during the conference, but all Carpathian countries share the same goal – a common international approach for the protection and management of large carnivores within the Carpathians is needed.

The participants together with the members of the Working Group on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity (WG Biodiversity) agreed on the text of the Declaration on the Management and Protection of Large Carnivores in the Carpathians which is annexed to this proceedings.

6. Memorandum of Cooperation between the Secretariat of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC)

Signing the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention and the CIC can be considered as one of the very crucial outputs of the Conference. The aim of the future cooperation is to join the efforts of the CC and CIC, to use their wide networks and to exchange experience and best practices in order to promote the conservation and sustainable management of wildlife resources and thus contribute to the conservation of biodiversity. In particular, the development of joint projects or the organisation of workshops and conferences is previewed. The text of the Memorandum is annexed in Annex II.

The organisers would like to thank to the German Federal Environment Ministry’s Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP) for the grant support for the project (project number: 71187) and the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and the German Environment Agency (UBA) for the supervision.

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7. Annex I – Declaration of the participants

Declaration on the Management and Protection of Large Carnivores in the Carpathians

We, the participants of the 8th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity (WG Biodiversity) and the Conference “Large Carnivores` Protection in the Carpathians”, are aware that the Carpathians harbour the largest population of bears, and some of the largest populations of wolves and lynx, within Europe.

We recognize that the Carpathian Convention Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity calls for harmonization, coordination of efforts and cooperation on the conservation and sustainable use of species of flora and fauna characteristic to the Carpathians, in particular on conservation of endangered or endemic species and large carnivores¹. We underline that the coordination of the population based management of large carnivores across national boundaries is needed to maintain viable populations over the long-term in the broader context of biodiversity conservation. For the management at the Carpathian level, intense, transboundary and regional cooperation will be required, including cooperation with other regions, such as the Alps

Furthermore, we note that strengthening the cooperation on issues related to landscape conservation, ecological connectivity and green infrastructure at local, regional and international levels is one of the priorities of the Czech Republic’s Presidency to the Carpathian Convention (2014–2017).

Inspired by the Key actions for Large Carnivore populations in Europe², we call for the development of an international action plan for the conservation and sustainable management for the Carpathian populations of large carnivores, which will implement the relevant provision of the Carpathian Convention and its Protocols, as well as the relevant Recommendations of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention³.

As the Carpathian Convention provides the framework, tools and mechanisms of transboundary and regional cooperation, and cross-sector integration necessary to prepare the international action plan for the conservation and sustainable management Carpathian Large

¹ Article 1 para 2 of the Carpathian Convention Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity.

² Key actions for Large Carnivore populations in Europe
Prepared for DG Environment, European Commission, by Istituto Ecologia Applicata, Rome under contract no. 07.0307/2013/654446/SER/B3 "Support to the European Commission's policy on large carnivores under the Habitat Directive - Phase Two", with contributions from the Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe (SSC/IUCN)

³ Recommendation No. 74 (1999) on the conservation of large carnivores, adopted by the Standing Committee on 3 December 1999; Recommendation No. 82 (2000) on urgent measures concerning the implementation of action plans for large carnivores in Europe, adopted by the Standing Committee on 1 December 2000; Recommendation No. 100 (2003) on conservation of large carnivores in the Carpathians, adopted by the Standing Committee on 4 December 2003 ; Recommendation No. 115 (2005) on the conservation and management of transboundary populations of large carnivores, adopted by the Standing Committee on 1 December 2005

Carnivores`, we invite the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention to consider and endorse this call.

We invite the European Commission to consider providing incentives to support the process of development of such international action plan, which will put into practice the relevant EU laws and policies, and the recommended key actions for large carnivores' populations in Europe.

Since large carnivores` management and protection requires cooperation among different sectors, we emphasize the importance of involving into this process representatives from the environment, agriculture, forestry, tourism, infrastructure/transport and spatial planning sectors.

We emphasize that this international process shall be conducted in parallel with internal national processes, closely linked with and based upon national planning processes, promoting cross-border cooperation and harmonization.

We recommend the following topics as being of great importance for the international action plan for the conservation and sustainable management for the Carpathian populations of large carnivores to be considered:

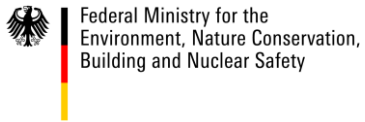
- Preventing fragmentation of habitat and reducing disturbance associated with infrastructure development;
- Encouraging the identification, development and implementation of ecological network for large mammals/carnivores (safeguarding the ecological connectivity, movement corridors);
- Evaluating social and economic relationship between humans and large carnivores;
- Evaluating damages, promoting preventive and other relevant measures to minimise possible conflicts, promoting effective compensation schemes;
- Improving transboundary cooperation on large carnivores' conservation and management;
- Agreement on and harmonization of sound monitoring procedures;
- Law enforcement with respect to illegal killing of large carnivores;
- Preparation of national management plans;
- Capacity building and information exchange;
- Increase resilience to climate change;
- Public involvement, awareness and education.

We thank the Czech Presidency of the Carpathian Convention for hosting the Conference. We thank the German Federal Environment Ministry's Advisory Assistance Programme for the support, and invite the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union to promote the dissemination of its outcome at the EU level.

20 October 2016, Rožnov pod Radhoštěm, Czech Republic

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The responsibility for the content of this document lies with the authors.



8. Annex II – Memorandum of Cooperation

Memorandum of Cooperation

between the

Secretariat of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention)

and the

International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC)

The Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention and the CIC (hereinafter referred to as "the Participants")

Considering that the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (hereinafter referred to as the "Carpathian Convention") is a sub-regional treaty to foster the sustainable development and the protection of the Carpathian region, signed by seven Carpathian States (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, and Ukraine) in 2003 and entered into force in 2006. The Carpathian Convention is the only multi-level governance mechanism which covers the entire Carpathian region. Its vision is to pursue comprehensive policies and cooperation to protect and sustainably develop the Carpathian mountain region.

Considering that the Carpathian Convention stands for the improvement of livelihoods in the Carpathians while conserving natural values and cultural heritage in part by providing assistance to its member states in the management and conservation of wildlife.

Considering that the Carpathian Convention has a high interest in issues related to the conservation, sustainable use, and restoration of biological diversity throughout the Carpathians with the Parties taking measures to ensure a high level of protection and sustainable use of wildlife and their habitats which are characteristic of the Carpathians and equally take measures to prevent the introduction of, or control and eradicate, invasive alien species.

Considering that the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (hereinafter referred to as "CIC") is a global organization, established in 1935 under the French Law on associations of 1st July 1901, then with the seat in Paris/France, recognized in 2003 according to the Federal Law of the Republic of Austria on granting privileges to international nongovernmental organizations (BGB1. Nr. 174/1992) as International Non-Governmental Organization, working in the public interest, and subsequently since then with legal seat in Vienna/Austria and its Headquarters in Budapest, Hungary is aiming at a world that values and supports sustainable hunting for the benefit of people and nature (Vision of the CIC) through promoting, on a global scale, sustainable hunting as a tool for conservation while building on valued traditions (Mission of the CIC).

Considering that the CIC has members (states, hunting associations and federations, research organizations, as well as individuals) in 81 countries and is a recognized inter-governmental observer organization of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The CIC also has concluded a partnership agreement with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) in 2005.

Recognizing that partnership between the Carpathian Convention and the CIC could be productive and systematic with the creation of a dynamic program embodying the visions and missions of both organizations, which would assist the Carpathian Convention and the CIC in their efforts towards the achievement the objectives of a number of International Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

Have reached the following understanding:

Section 1. Objective

The main objective of this cooperation is to enhance the capacity of countries in the Carpathian region in conserving and sustainably managing wildlife resources, thereby contributing to biodiversity conservation, food safety and nutrition (food security), wildlife, livestock, human health, and social and economic development.

Section 2. Scope of cooperation

With a view to attaining the above objective, the cooperation envisaged by this Memorandum of Cooperation may include collaboration within the framework of the work programs of the two Participants on the following types of activities:

- a) Identifying, documenting, and disseminating successful experience and best practices on management, conservation and sustainable use of wildlife;
- b) Promoting exchange of data and information on species;
- c) Mutually recommending experts upon request that could contribute to technical assistance programs in sustainable use, management and conservation of wildlife. It is understood that the respective Participant will keep the ultimate responsibility to select and appoint the experts;
- d) Promoting networks of professional experts in fields related to wildlife conservation, sustainable use of wildlife resources, veterinary health, food safety, combating and preventing wildlife crime, wildlife disease reporting, etc.;
- e) Developing joint projects within the scope of their collaboration, mainly (but not restricted to) demonstrating best practice, to test innovations, and to train human resources. Jointly identifying financial resources and execution modalities for the implementation of developed projects;
- f) Assisting the Carpathian Convention in organizing conferences, seminars, training workshops, outreach and other extension services, and technical meetings on matters related to sustainable use, the conservation of wildlife, wildlife monitoring, combating and preventing wildlife crime, disease surveillance and reporting, prevention of disease spread through hunting practices, invasive alien species, and veterinary public health at global, regional and country level;
- g) Demonstrating the collaboration through representatives of the Participants participating in the different fora at various levels of the other organizations;
- h) Communicating the results of their joint work through joint press releases, via internet postings, joint publications in public, and general and professional media.

Section 3. Annual work plan

Subsequent to this Memorandum of Cooperation, a work plan will be discussed annually for common areas of work and the concrete activities to be carried out in collaboration. The outcome of this discussion will be annexed to this Memorandum of Cooperation. Both the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention and the CIC will designate a focal point for the coordination of the communication with each other.

Nothing in this Memorandum shall create or imply a financial obligation by either Participant to this Memorandum. Any financial questions will be regulated by separate letters of arrangements related to possible future projects or joint activities. It is recognized that for certain activities to be implemented fully, additional resources may be required. Participants will endeavor to carry out joint fundraising for this purpose.

Section 4. Use of official logos

The Participants will not use in any press release, memo, report, website, or other published disclosure related to

this Memorandum of Cooperation any of the other Participants' name and logo without prior written consent by the Participant concerned.

Section 5. Disputes

1. Any dispute about the interpretation or application of this Memorandum will be resolved by consultations between the Participants, and will not be referred to any national or international tribunal or third party for settlement.

Section 6. Amendment

1. The Participants may amend this Memorandum by mutual written consent, which will be appended to this Memorandum and become an integral part of it.

Section 7. Termination

1. This Memorandum of Cooperation may be terminated by the Participants at a jointly approved time or by one Participant giving three months' notice in writing to the other Participant.
2. This Memorandum of Cooperation represents the understanding reached between the Participants upon its signature by the Carpathian Convention Secretariat and the CIC.

Section 8. Final provisions

1. Nothing in this Memorandum of Cooperation will bind any of the participants either jointly or severally.

Signed in duplicate at Rožnov pod Radhoštěm, Czech Republic on the 19 October 2016 in the English.

Signatures

On behalf of the
Secretariat of the Framework Convention on
the Protection and Sustainable Development
of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention)

On behalf of the
International Council for Game and
Wildlife Conservation (CIC)

9. Annex III – pictures from the Conference



Picture 1 – The meeting room



Picture 2 – Discussion after presentations



Picture 3 – Mr. Marghescu and Mr. Egerer – signature of the Memorandum between CIC and the Carpathian Convention



Picture 4 – Final group photo