

Transnational exchange platform for the management of large carnivores in the Dinaric region

Status report and plan for next steps



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RESEARCH



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Federal Agency for
Nature Conservation

More information: <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/en/topics/sustainability-strategies-international/cooperation-eeca-centraleastern-european-states/project-database-advisory-assistance-programme/a-transnational-exchange-platform-for-the>

Background

The Dinaric Region in the Western Balkans is one of the most biologically diverse regions in Europe. It is also home to the three large carnivore species: bear, wolf and lynx (Balkan and Eurasian lynx), shared between EU and non-EU member states.

Given the extensive ranges of these species, transnational coordination for their management is desirable to enable a long-term basis for their conservation. To date, only few transboundary initiatives on the project topic exist between the governments concerned.

In 2018, the EU Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores¹ - a grouping of organisations representing different interests concerned with large carnivore conservation and management - jointly organised a workshop with partners in Budva, Montenegro². At the end of the workshop, participants agreed on a joint statement³ calling for the establishment of a transnational exchange platform for the management of large carnivores in the Dinaric region. This builds on the years of work of experts in the region to establish a transnational exchange/dialogue. It shows clearly the interest of state representatives, scientists, NGOs and stakeholder groups in a participative approach between countries.

In order to help meet these objectives a range of actors have been working together on a Dinaric Platform initiative. Starter financing has been provided by the German Federal Environment Agency's Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP) (Beratungshilfeprogramm)⁴. The main objective of this financing was to provide the human and financial capacity to establish a transnational exchange platform and set up guiding principles for future cooperation together with the national administrations in the region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*⁵, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia as well as with Greece and Bulgaria).

The initial funding helped establish management and exchange processes in order to:

- Increase the understanding of EU policy goals and practices regarding large carnivore management and better transposition of EU Environmental Acquis particularly the Habitats Directive;
- Increase the capacity of managing authorities to start to develop cross-border management processes and monitoring related to large carnivore populations;
- Increase the capacity of stakeholders from relevant sectors to be involved in such activities with the aim to reduce conflict related to large carnivore presence.

This report describes the situation at the end of the initial funding period and the plans for further collaboration and next steps to take the initiative further.

¹ European Commission Website: EU Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/coexistence_platform.htm

² European Commission Website: EU Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores: subpage events http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/events_sub_workshop_Budva.htm

³ European Commission Website: Budva Statement: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/181106Budva_LCP_Workshop%20statement-EN.pdf

⁴ UBA Website: Beratungshilfeprogramme: <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/en/topics/sustainability-strategies-international/cooperation-eecca-centraleastern-european-states/federal-environment-ministrys-advisory-assistance>

⁵ Any reference to Kosovo* in this text is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Baseline situation analysis

The report: *Large Carnivores in the Dinarides: Management, Monitoring, Threats and Conflicts*⁶ was produced to assess the situation regarding the current status of large carnivores in the Dinaric Region. Information was collected through 42 telephone interviews with experts across the region, to give an overview of the situation in each country. This was compared with existing literature and previous evaluations. Results were structured around comparisons of national management in the following topics: population status, legislation and hunting status, monitoring, management plans, main threats to LC populations, main conflicts, livestock protection and compensation, existing cross-border initiatives.

The overview showed a clear need for more capacity-building and exchange around LC monitoring and management. Slovenia and Croatia have generally (with some exceptions) well-developed management planning and monitoring. The fact that management plans have been developed in several countries but got stuck at the authorisation or implementation stage, suggests that the desire exists to coordinate the approach to LC conservation and management but that certain barriers such as relevant skills, clarities about competencies, concerns that costs will be too high and lack of political will, have been difficult to overcome.

This report was important to give a snapshot view on which to base further discussions within the framework of the platform. The interviews provided a valuable source of initial information. This was supplemented and verified through group discussions during the first meeting of the platform, allowing participants to reach general agreement on the contents and providing a basis for their future discussions.

The platform

The platform itself is the wider process of exchange on LC management across the region. To date, two **plenary platform conferences**, of 2 days long have been held in Ljubljana, Slovenia and Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina bringing together representatives of the administrative authorities (especially environment and agricultural ministries) of all participating countries as well as national and regional NGOs and representatives of hunting.

In addition, between the platform meetings, smaller-scale **thematic exchange meetings** address obstacles and difficulties around LC management that specifically occur in the respective countries (two have been held in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mavrovo National Park, North Macedonia). An online meeting between government representatives was also held to discuss the basis of an agreement on further cooperation.

To keep the activities going, a secretariat (adelphi and Carnivora Magna) was responsible for meeting organisation, document preparation and maintaining discussions between different interest groups. A project advisory board made up of experts across the region and beyond has been essential in providing information from the participating countries, expert input on the different topic areas and contacts for the various platform processes.

The platform therefore already exists but needs to cement its processes to have a long-term future. The work of the platform has progressed along two work streams:

⁶ <https://www.adelphi.de/en/publication/large-carnivores-dinarides-management-monitoring-threats-and-conflicts-background-report>

1. Practical examination of the activities on which governments and administrations can collaborate
2. Work on a formal collaboration agreement (legally binding or non-binding international agreement between the participating countries).

It is clear that the second work stream requires some additional time for discussions within the participating governments, further consultation with legal experts and other international agreements and examination of different working models. At the same time, the first work stream is already progressing, in particular through looking at the cross-overs with other projects and identifying funding streams for administrators to set in place necessary processes, build capacities and learn from one another.

Activities for governmental / administrative collaboration

In the second platform meeting, participants discussed three main areas where collaboration between countries is seen as essential and where capacity building with the responsible governments and administrators is needed. Since resources are low to address the topic and there are few dedicated, qualified staff, additional inputs from existing and new projects will be needed to give impulse to these activities. The role of the platform is to exchange information on ongoing activities and optimise their potential to be rolled out more widely in the region. Below is a brief summary of the topics discussed at the platform meetings.

Management planning

Management planning is a first essential step to understanding and bringing together all relevant activities on large carnivores. International guidelines already exist on transnational planning⁷. The platform members would encourage experts from each country to work together on defining a procedure for plan development and content which could be used as a basis for national planning.

National planning should involve a core group of experts to set up the structure of the plan. It should however, be a participatory process (a national platform should be established for discussing and adapting the plan). Plans should take account of activities in neighbouring countries. They should be evaluated at set periods and adapted if needed.

Monitoring

Platform participants acknowledge that monitoring in many countries is not sufficient and that population figures are estimates. The Scalp methodology is a generally accepted approach which brings the necessary range of surveying methods together to create a monitoring scheme. It could be applied across the region. Different institutions would be responsible in different countries for setting up the monitoring systems. Stakeholders need to support with data collection. Databases to share information between countries should be established based on existing models. The main reports on monitoring should be produced every 6 years, following Habitats Directive reporting requirements.

Connectivity

Fragmentation of habitat is caused by the construction of different infrastructure components including transportation routes (roads and railroads, pipelines, electricity lines); energy

⁷ Eg Boitani et al. (2015) Key actions for Large Carnivore populations in Europe: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/key_actions_large_carnivores_2015.pdf

production facilities (hydro, wind and solar power); touristic and sports infrastructure allowing increased access; as well as fencing to control human migration. Dealing with connectivity requires the involvement of new stakeholders e.g. planners and those in charge of road construction, forestry, tourism, mining. LC Management Plans need to consider connectivity and include the mapping of corridors. Cross-border collaboration is particularly needed in this area.

Other topics that were addressed are:

Reducing depredation of livestock

While this is dealt with mainly on a national level, few countries in the region have good monitoring, protection or compensation schemes in place and therefore exchange on approaches is seen as essential.

Reducing direct conflict with bears (damages to property / accidents / attacks)

There is potential for countries to learn from one another's approaches, particularly with regards to putting Bear Intervention Teams in place. This is regarded as an important, but fairly simple, first step for reducing conflict.

Stakeholder engagement

This is a topic relevant to the structure of the platform itself. The platform aims to bring stakeholders progressively into the process. At the same time, there is the potential for participating countries to learn from each other and from the EU experiences on the engagement of stakeholders nationally to locally.

In the second platform meeting, a session with a particular focus on the engagement of hunters was organised. Hunters are an important stakeholder in the region because they are numerous and active on the ground in areas where LC are present. In many countries, they input to existing survey schemes and their involvement and input is also needed for more sophisticated monitoring schemes. In some countries, hunters are enthusiastic collaborators with scientists, conservation organisations and governments, in other regions, relations are more strained. Hunters involvement depends on personal interest but also on the benefits including ability to hunt LC, profit from allowing hunting or involvement in other types of ecotourism.

Agreement for continued collaboration

The potential structure of an agreement was examined during a dedicated online meeting and refined at the second platform meeting. Below is the text as it currently stands. It needs further refinement through discussion with the individual countries and with legal experts.

Title

Transnational agreement supporting coexistence with large carnivores and their conservation and management at the population level in the Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos region

Preamble

The preamble should include mention of the following considerations.

Considering that the Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos region is one of the most biologically diverse regions in Europe and home to significant large carnivore populations.

Understanding that transboundary cooperation is essential and a population approach to large carnivore management is necessary to coordinate and target diverse local measures within a larger framework.

Recalling in this context, the action plan: *Key actions for Large Carnivore populations in Europe*

Understanding that the management of large carnivores should be determined by sound scientific evidence, integrating natural and social science, using the best available and reliable data.

Recognising the importance in this context of full implementation of the relevant international environmental agreements such as the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the EU Habitats Directive.

Noting that socio-economic and cultural considerations and concerns on a regional to local level need to be recognised in order to improve coexistence between people and large carnivores.

Recognising the joint vision and principles agreed at the EU Large Carnivore Platform Regional Workshop in Budva⁸ “To support information exchange among countries and encourage management practices which promote coexistence and minimise, and where possible find solutions to, conflicts between human interests and the presence of large carnivore species in the Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos region, by exchanging knowledge and by working together in an open-ended, constructive and mutually respectful way.”

Acknowledging the value of building upon and collaborating with regional agreements such as the Alpine Convention and Carpathian Convention for transboundary exchange, coordination and management including their working groups and action plan specifically on large carnivores.

Overarching aim

General agreement on the following aim

Pursue a comprehensive policy and cooperate for the transboundary conservation and sustainable management of large carnivore species in the Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos Region with a view to inter alia reaching favourable conservation status and conserving natural values and cultural heritage.

Geographic coverage

Coverage was discussed. The means of making changes to the area covered was more controversial

The agreement covers the ranges of the Dinaric-Pindos brown bear population, Dinaric-Balkan wolf population, Dinaric and Balkan lynx populations in the signatory countries as defined by the parties.

Each party is responsible for defining the geographic coverage within their own country and communicating the area to the [appropriate body]. Each Party may extend the application of

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/carnivores/pdf/181106Budva_LCP_Workshop%20statement-EN.pdf

this agreement to additional parts of its national territory by making a declaration to the [appropriate body].

Areas of cooperation

In order to reach the objective of the agreement the parties shall take appropriate measures in the following areas as identified in the Key actions for Large Carnivore populations in Europe:

- Institutional capacity building and law enforcement
- Management planning
- Standardisation of monitoring
- Improving coexistence
- Improving ecological connectivity

Work plan and action plans

The work and action plan will need to be adapted following further discussion on the type of agreement and most needed actions. The following structure was discussed.

In order to support the implementation of these measures, the parties agree to:

- Set specific national priorities based on the measures included in this agreement
- Establish a [bi-annual plan] coinciding with the presidency of the platform
- Establish a multi-annual work plan for the platform to be renewed [every 6 years]
- Develop specific action plans / protocols on the above topics as required to meet the overarching aim
- Share information and collaborate as described below
- Establish joint projects to support implementation of the above

Principles of collaboration

The parties agree to collaborate and share experiences in an open and supportive way respecting the following principles:

- the precaution and prevention principles,
- public participation and stakeholder involvement,
- transboundary cooperation,
- integrated planning and management of land and water resources, a programmatic approach, and
- the ecosystem approach.

Implementation

The section on implementation needs to be adapted to the type of agreement. The following structure was discussed, the terminology used may be altered.

- Permanent committee made up of parties
- Chair (s) from the parties (countries) or co-chairs
- Secretariat
- Advisory Board
- Decision-making process

Reporting and Financing

This section needs more consideration. Several different models of financing will be researched and costs estimated.

Financial contributions and external sources of financing

Collaboration with other actors / activities in the region

In order to continue the work of the platform, collaboration with a range of actors in the region will be needed. A first list of potential future collaborators is given below. This will be expanded upon over the course of future platform meetings and with the input of participants and the advisory board.

Organisation	Collaboration to date	Future plans
Alpine Convention	Participated in meetings	Discuss type of agreement and provide advice
Carpathian Convention	Participated in meetings	Discuss type of agreement and provide advice, potential for joint meeting in Serbia
WWF Adria	In advisory board	Look for cross-overs in activities, match and joint financing of activities
Euronatur	Supported first platform meeting, many projects in region	Look for cross-overs in activities, match and joint financing of activities
EU Large Carnivore Platform	Representatives took part in meetings, shared secretariat, initiative kicked off with regional platform meeting	Potential for joint meetings in future
IUCN	Involvement of LCIE / species specialist group members	Consult with regional office on input and future collaboration
CIC	In advisory board	Consult on further collaboration

Annex 1. Advisory Board members

Name	Organisation
Rok Černe	Forest Service Slovenia
Snježana Malić-Limari	WWF Adria
Duško Čirović	Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade, Serbia
Jelena Marojević Galić	Parks Dinarides, Montenegro
Aleksandër Trajçe	Center for Protection and Conservation of the Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA)
Haris Hadžihajdarević	Administration of the National Park Una, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Dejan Radošević	Republican Institute for the Protection of Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage, Republic of Srpska
Vlatko Trpeski	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MoEPP), Department for Nature within the Environmental Administration, Northern Macedonia
Valeria Salvatori	Istituto di Ecologia Applicata, Italy
Klaus Hackländer	Institute of Wildlife Biology and Game Management, Department of Integrative Biology and Biodiversity Research, University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna

Annex 2. Participants at the platform meetings

Country	Last Name	First Name	Position	Institution	Plenary Meeting Ljubljana	Plenary Meeting Sarajevo	Thematic Meeting Mostar	Thematic Meeting N.Maz
Greece	Agapitou	Kalomoira	Forester	Ministry of Environment and Energy	x			
N.M.K	Aleksandar	Trajchovski		Faculty of veterinary				x
NMK	Aleksandar	Pavlov		Macedonian Ecological Society				x
NMK	Aleksandar	Tosveski		Food and veterinary agency				
N.MK	Ana	Colovic		WWF Adria/Ekosvest				x
N.MK	Andon	Bojadzi		NP Galicica				x
NMK	Andrej	Gonev		Macedonian Ecological Society				x
NMK	Anela	Stavrevska		NATURA MK				x
BiH	Bahor	Muharem	Department of Forest Management and Hunting	Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	x		x	
Croatia	Bišćan	Antonija	Member of the National Brown Bear Management Committee in Republic of Croatia	State inspectorate		x		
Montenegro	Brajovic	Tamara	General Director of the department for nature	Ministry of Environment		x		
Croatia	Burčul	Barbara	Senior expert advisor	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development		x		

N.MK	Cane	Petevski		NP Mavrovo				x
Kosovo*	Çavdarbasha	Linda	Deputy Minister of Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure	Ministry of Environment		x		
Slovenia	Černe	Rok	Head of large carnivore project team	Slovenian Forest Service	x	x		x
Belgium	Cipriani	Marco	Policy Office	European Commission		x		
Serbia	Ćirković	Bratislav	President	Serbian Hunting Association	x			
Serbia	Cirovic	Dusko	Associate professor	University of Belgrade, Faculty of Biology		x		
Serbia	Ćirović	Duško	Assistant Professor	Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade	x			
Albania	Çobanaj	Antonela	Project Expert at National Agency of Protected Areas	National Agency of Protected Areas	x	x		
N.MK	Daniela	Kamceva		MOEPP				x
N.M.K	Darko	Blinkov		State environmental Inspectorate				x
Slovenia	Debeljak	Nika	Co-chair EUSALP	Institute for nature conservation of Slovenia,		x		
BiH	Dedić	Denisa	Coordinator	Canton Sarajevo	x			
N.M.K	Dejan	Dimidziewski		NP Galicica				
N.MK	Dime	Melovski		Macedonian Ecological Society				x
Bulgaria	Dineva	Nikoleta	Senior expert	Department of Hunting, Executive Forest Agency	x			
BiH	Dragomirović	Aleksandra-Anja	Vice-President	Center for Environment	x	x		

Serbia	Ducic	Jelena	Head of department for biodiversity	Ministry of Environmental Protection		x		
	Ekrem	Veapi		NP Marovo				x
Bulgaria	Galitionova	Radostina	Chief expert at Biodiversity Department	Ministry of Environment and Water, National Nature Protection Service Directorate	x	x		
BiH	Grabovac	Zlata	Expert on international cooperation on biodiversity	Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism	x			
BiH	Gušević	Naida	Coordinator	Canton Sarajevo	x			
BiH	Hadžihajdarević	Haris	Administration	National Park Una, Bosnia and Herzegovina	x	x	x	
Kosovo*	Hetemaj	Ismail	Chief of the Division for the Nature Protection	Department of Environmental and Water Protection		x		
Croatia	Huber	Duro	Director	Carnivora Magna	x	x	x	x
Slovenia	Humar	Maja	Nature Conservation Division	Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning	x			
N.MK	Ibrahim	Dehari		NP Shara Mountain				x
Montenegro	Jankovic	Milos	Head of the Hunting Department	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management	x			
Montenegro	Janković	Miloš	Head of the Directorate for Hunting	Ministry of Agriculture		x		
BIH	Jasmin	Omeragić	Prodekan za financije	Veterinarski fakultet UNSA			x	

Croatia	Jeremić	Jasna	Senior advisor - specialist	Institute for Environment and Nature Protection, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development		x	x	
BiH	Kadic	Kemo	Head of Department of Forest Management and Hunting	Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	x		x	
Germany	Kehl	Jan Philipp	Project Leader	Euronatur		x		
BiH	Klarić Soldo	Darinka	assistant	Veterinary Faculty UNSA	x		x	
N.M.K	Kristijan	Cokoski		Faculty of Forestry				
Austria	Kuras	Klaudia	Carpathian Convention Coordination Expert	Carpathian Convention	x			
Germany	Leschinski	Lisa	Project Leader Lynx for EuroNatur Foundation	Euronatur		x		
Croatia	Malić-Limari	Snježana	Interim Wildlife Program Manager	WWF Adria	x	x		
Montenegro	Maraš	Arina	Head Of Division For Protected Areas	Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism	x			
N.MK	Mare	Basova		National forest company				x
Montenegro	Marojevic Galic	Jelena	Communications officer	Parks Dinarides, Montenegro	x	x		
Germany	Marsden	Katrina	Senior manager biodiversity	adelphi	x	x		
BIH	Mirjana	Milićević		PMF, Mostar, FZO			x	

Serbia	Momirov	Radislav	Advisor	Ministry of Environmental Protection	x			
BiH	Muhamed	Brka	Dekan	Poljoprivredno prehrambeni fakultet UNSA			x	
BiH	Mujaković	Zineta	Head of Department for Biodiversity and Landscape Protection	Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism	x		x	
BiH	Naida	Kapo		VF, UNSA			x	
Austria	Novljan	Živa	Project Officer	Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention	x			
Germany	Otto	Sonja	Project Coordinator, Advisory Assistance Programme	German Environment Agency	x	x		
Slovenia	Pagon	Nives		Slovenia Forest Service		x		
Montenegro	Perovic	Aleksandar	Head of large carnivore conservation program	Center for Protection and Research of Birds		x		
Serbia	Radosavljevic	Aleksandar	Head of Department for Planning and Sustainable Management in Hunting	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management	x	x		
BiH	Radošević	Dejan	Head of Biodiversity Section	Republican Institute for the Protection of Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage, Republic of Srpska	x	x	x	

Croatia	Reljic	Slaven	Project officer	Carnivora Magna	x	x		x
Italy	Salvatori	Valeria	General Secretary	Istituto di Ecologia Applicata		x		
N.MK	Samir	Ajdini		NP Mavrovo				x
N.MK	Sasha	Jovanovic		Ministry of agriculture, forestry, and water economy				x
N.MK	Sasko	Jordanov		MOEPP				x
Germany	Schmidt	Julia	Manager Business Development	adelphi	x	x		
Croatia	Sindičić	Magda	Associate professor	Faculty of Veterinary Medicine University of Zagreb		x		
BiH	Škapur	Vedad	Professor	Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences, University of Sarajevo	x	x	x	
Croatia	Solić	Andrea	Project leader	Carnivora Magna	x	x	x	x
Serbia	Spasić	Marija	Expert	Serbian Hunting Association	x			
N.M.K	Stefan	Tekovski		Faculty of veterinary				
Germany	Steyer	Katharina	Scientific staff	German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation	x			
Albania	Trajce	Aleksander	Executive Director	Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania	x			
Albania	Trajçe	Aleksandër	Researcher	PPNEA		x		

North Macedonia	Trpeski	Vlatko	Head of nature department	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning		x		x
Albania	Vardhami	Edit	Expert	Ministry of Tourism and Environment		x		
N.MK	Vlatko	Aleksovski		National Hunting organization				x
N.MK	Vojo	Gogovski		Ministry of agriculture, forestry, and water economy				x
Bulgaria	Zlatanova	Diana	Associate professor	Faculty of Biology, Sofia University		x		
N.M.K	Zoran	Projchevski		NP Pelister				
BiH	Zubić	Goran	Assistant Minister	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management	x		x	
Croatia	Žuglić	Tomislav	Head of Service for hunting grounds and game management	Ministry of Agriculture		x	x	