

TRANSGREEN Kick-off event

Vienna, February 28th-March 2nd 2017

Report of Day 1

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All presentations you will find at www.interreg-danube.eu/transgreen/documents!

1. WELCOME SPEECHES

The first day of the TRANSGREEN Kick-off Meeting was about awareness raising and discussions on experience.

Altogether 55 participants from 9 countries of the European Union and different fields of experience gathered in the Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT) to listen to the introduction of the TRANSGREEN – Integrated Transport and Green Infrastructure Planning in the Danube-Carpathian Region for the Benefit of People and Nature – Project and to contribute to the fruitful discussions during the TRANSGREEN Kick-off Meeting on 28 February 2017.

Ms Viktoria Reiss-Enz, BMVIT

The host and Associated Strategic Partner – BMVIT – Ms Viktoria Reiss-Enz – welcomed the audience and emphasized the importance of cooperation for integrated transport infrastructure planning. Since early 1990ies BMVIT, ASFINAG (road construction financing company in Austria) and the Ministry of the Environment have been working together on the issues of integrated transport infrastructure planning. Guidelines on Wildlife protection were developed and extended. The Guidelines deal with the question of how to build new linear infrastructure in a safe and environmentally way in a still cost-efficient manner. To overcome the problem of barrier effects caused by roads that were built without consideration of possible negative effects on the environment, a Defragmentation Programme was launched in 2007 to equip roads with green bridges in the most crucial areas along the motorway network. A total amount of 20 green bridges will be built until 2027. Half of them already exist. Concluding, Ms Reiss-Enz highlighted the importance of the TRANSGREEN project, how important it is to share knowledge and to involve all relevant stakeholders in the process.

Mr Fedor Černe, Slovenian Ministry of Infrastructure

from the welcomed the TRANSGREEN project on behalf of Franc Žepič, European Strategy for the Danube Region, Priority Area 1b Rail and Road Coordinator. He emphasized the need of enabling conditions for cooperation between the various sectors involved, transport, nature conservation, science and NGOs. He wished the project good success and offered support whenever needed.

Mr Harald Egerer, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention

highlighted the importance of the TRANSGREEN Project at the Carpathian Convention level. It would encourage ratification of the Protocol on Sustainable Transport and prepare its implementation through the development of the Strategic Action Plan. The project consortium will cooperate with the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Industry, Energy, Transport and Infrastructure, in order to commonly develop the Strategic Action Plan. The Parties to the Carpathian countries will further on seek for the endorsement of the Action Plan and its implementation. Mr Egerer told us a story about him in the role of an ecological corridor when he helped toads to cross the street in spring time when he was a pupil of 10 years. Since that time some solutions have been found. For the Secretariat the Carpathians are the backbone of Green Infrastructure and the project an important one in terms of transportation. The SCC will stay strongly with the project.

Mr Andreas Beckmann, WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme

talked about the fact that Carpathians are very important region, as well for WWF. In 1998 WWF identified the 200 most valuable regions in terms of biodiversity, and the Carpathians is one of them. A lot of WWF's work in the region is about policy, including transportation. Sometime WWF have made their lives difficult. But TRANSGREEN would be step further due to its policy involvement – from the very beginning we will have greatest integration and cooperation from actors "from the other side", aiming at creating well-informed decision making in the early phase of planning, before bull dozers are at site. It is an excellent sign to have the transportation sector represented. Within this project WWF DCP is seeking to foster dialogues between the transport and nature conservation sector in the early phases of transport infrastructure planning rather than opposing projects in the very last minute. That would help respecting each other and finding good solutions for the sake of people and nature.

2. KEY NOTE SPEECH: Wildlife and Traffic

Mr Vaclav Hlaváč, Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic

In his key note speech "*Wildlife and Traffic – How to solve the problem between green and grey infrastructure*", Mr Vaclav Hlaváč, Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic and IENE representative, introduced the audience to IENE – Infra Eco Network Europe, a network of scientists working on the promotion of safe and ecologically sustainable Pan-European transport infrastructure. IENE organizes conferences on the topic of interest each second year where project results might be presented.

Transport infrastructure causes barrier effects, fauna traffic mortality, loss of wildlife habitats, disturbances and pollution, ecological functions of verges, and more that result in habitat fragmentation. In comparison to Western European countries, habitat fragmentation is still low in the Eastern European countries, especially in the mountainous area of the Carpathians. This is the last true wilderness area in Europe with thriving populations of large carnivores and many other species that are threatened in the Western European countries. Since the fall of the communism new transport infrastructure has being built and traffic intensity has increased. Rapid development causes habitat fragmentation and, with it, loss of large carnivore populations. As this rapid development can be expected in the Carpathian countries in the coming years, care needs to be taken not to lose the unique nature values. There is a lot of experience in Europe on how to minimize negative environmental impacts of transport infrastructure and it would help to avoid mistakes that have been made in other parts of Europe.

Mr Hlaváč presented a few examples from the border area Czech Republic – Slovakia in the Beskydy Mountains, where continuously built-up areas along roads create migration barriers for animals that are often tens of kilometers long causing irreversible interruptions of migration corridors for large carnivores. Bear, wolf and lynx populations are at risk in this area. Thus effective protection of migration corridors needs to be established. This can be done only in a concerted way involving transport infrastructure planners, nature conservationists and spatial planners.

3. Presentation of TRANSGREEN

Ms Hildegard Meyer, WWF DCP

Ms Hildegard Meyer introduced the audience to the context and content of the TRANSGREEN project. TRANSGREEN means a better connected Carpathian region with transport infrastructure taking nature conservation into account. It aims to contribute to safer and environmentally-friendly road and rail networks in the Carpathians.

The project started in January 2017 and will end in June 2019 which gives 2.5 years for implementing of the very ambitious activities. Ms Meyer introduced the project partner consortium by highlighting their active involvement during the project development which started back in 2014. The project is supported by Associated Strategic Partners that have great knowledge and experience to advise the project consortium, to collaborate in pilot areas and to multiply project outputs.

The project has been developed due to the fact that infrastructure is tremendously being developed in the Carpathians. The TEN-T (Trans-European Network of Transport) is planned to connect Western parts in Europe with Eastern ones, across borders to European neighbour countries. These developments will on one hand boost economic development, but at the same time there are many negative impacts like landscape fragmentation with impacts on wildlife and ecological corridors as elaborated by Mr Hlaváč in his key note speech. From the policy point of view there is awareness on the necessity for integrated transport infrastructure development. The need of integrated transport planning is reflected in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy, the EU 7th Environmental Action Plan, the EU Communication on Green Infrastructure, TEN-T and the Carpathian Convention Protocol.

The Project would work from three different angles, (1) fostering dialogue and cooperation among relevant partners from the transport, spatial planning and environmental sector, (2) improve scientific knowledge as base for sound decision-making, and (3) minimizing conflicts between transport planning and Green Infrastructure objectives. The Project will engage with national and regional public authorities, sectoral agencies, infrastructure providers, and interest groups including NGOs. Four pilot areas were chosen for that are all along TEN-T and have different focus of work, which will be presented later in more detail.

Expected outputs comprise a planning toolkit that will support implementers and policy makers: Guidelines and recommendations on integrated transport infrastructure; multipliers: EIA training package with a focus on ecological corridors, planners: Scheme for stakeholder participation process, and managers: tool for road kill registration. Catalogues of measure will be elaborated in each of the 4 pilot areas and actions implemented to minimize conflicts between transport infrastructure plans and nature conservation objectives. Scientific data will be collected on a web-based library, the Carpathian Countries Integrated Biodiversity Information System www.ccibis.org. At the political level the Draft text of the Carpathian Convention Strategic Action Plan for Integrated Transport Development in the Carpathians will be developed and multi-sectoral meetings and / or fora organized to foster the cooperation.

Concluding Ms Meyer emphasized the importance to act in a concerted way involving all relevant players to overcome conflicts of economic development and nature conservation for the sake of people living in the Danube Basin.

4. TRANSGREEN Pilot areas

4.1 Beskydy Western Carpathians Pilot Area (Czech Republic – Slovakia) – presentation by Martin Strnad

The pilot area is located along the border of Czech Republic and Slovakia in the Beskydy Mountains. Cooperating partners in the area are the Nature Conservation Agency, the Transport Research Centre and Friends of the Earth from the Czech Republic, and the State Nature Conservancy supported by WWF DCP in Slovakia. Activities in the pilot area are focused on the evaluation of migration permeability of existing transport infrastructures for animals and as there is a lack of monitoring mitigation measures, a handbook on how to mitigate impacts on existing and planned infrastructure development and a handbook for the establishment of monitoring will be developed. Activities include monitoring of road mortality. The road kill registration system developed by the Transport Research Centre will be tested, a database created. Further outputs are a map of transport infrastructure in relation to migration permeability and a report on the impact assessment of planned infrastructure as part of the Catalogue of Measures.

4.2 Miskolc-Košice-Uzhgorod Pilot area (Hungary – Slovakia – Ukraine) – presentation by Erzsébet Óhegyi

The pilot area is located in the triangle Miskolc-Košice-Uzhgorod comprising important protected areas of different levels (national parks, landscape protected areas, Natura 2000 sites). Project partners cooperating in the area are CEEweb and National Infrastructure Developing Private Company Ltd., Hungary, State Nature Conservancy with support from WWF DCP, SPECTRA and National Motorway Company, Slovakia, and Transcarpathian Regional State Authority and experts in Ukraine. The aim is to identify migration corridors for large mammals and other animals in Hungary in the area of planned prolongation of M3 highway in the direction of Ukraine and in the area of planned prolongation of M30 (E71) main road in the direction of Slovakia. In Miskolc area in the direction of Slovakia and Ukraine the V. corridor (The Mediterranean corridor) is concerned. Beside stakeholder involvement for awareness raising and involving in planning procedures, collecting data that support verification of ecological corridors adjacent to transport corridors, and the development of the Catalogue of Measures, awareness will be raised towards costs/benefits of Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services in relation to transport infrastructure. In the Slovak part the road kill registration system will be tested which has been developed by the Czech Transport Research Centre.

4.3 Tîrgu Mureş-Iaşi Pilot area (Romania) – presentation by Csaba Domokos

The pilot area is located in the Eastern part of the Carpathians in Romania, where according to the Romanian Transport Master Plan the construction of a road feeder is planned that would connect Moldova with the Rhine-Danube Corridor. Tîrgu Mureş-Iaşi-Ungheni planned highway and segments of interest with potential future fragmentation hotspots for large carnivore species were presented. The area comprises two important protected areas, Vânători Neamt Natural Park (European bison reintroduction) and Dealurile Târnavelor Mici Bîches (?), and a few more 2000 Natura sites. The main aim in the area is to collect field data for the large carnivores and map important migration routes in order to be prepared when it comes to concrete planning of the road infrastructure. The Association "Milvus Group" has been working on monitoring of large carnivores with a focus on brown bears. Csaba Domokos explained the methods that are

used for monitoring and demonstrated impressive data on the home range of brown bears. Additional scientific data would be important to argue the necessity of implementing fragmentation mitigation measures.

4.4 Arad (Radna) – Deva pilot area (Romania) – presentation by Cristian Papp

The focus area is Mureş Valley which is a critical area for connectivity between the South Western Carpathians and Apuseni Mountains in the north. It represents the last functional corridor for an isolated bear population in the Apuseni Mountains. In previous times a network of Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas was created to guarantee maintenance of the corridor. The first major threat was the construction of the Lugoj-Deva Highway. It was a lengthy but finally a successful process to agree on the implementation of mitigation measures, e.g. green bridges and under passes in the area. Current challenges are the development of regional species action plan for brown bear and wolf which is being implemented by Fauna & Flora International and Association “Zarand” (EU Life+ Connect Carpathians Project) and as the extension of the railway in the area is being planned, create mitigation measures for Arad (Radna) – Deva railway avoiding accumulative negative impacts on the corridor. Activities comprise the identification of critical connectivity, analysis of the potential impacts of the planned railway expansion project on the functionality of the critical connectivity areas species, and development of a set of mitigation measures to reduce the impact of the railway and the accumulative impacts in the area. Relevant stakeholders will be engaged in a participatory way on proper planning of infrastructure in the pilot area. Additionally, the road kill registration system developed by the Czech Transport Research Centre will be tested in the area.

5. Interreg Danube Transnational Programme: introduction to the donor & its expectations

Mr Antonios Melas, Danube Transnational Programme

Mr Antonios Melas introduced the audience to the Danube Transnational Programme which mission it is to integrate policy at regional level, to cooperate at the transnational level and to achieve the objectives outlined by the European Strategy for the Danube Region. The DTP consists of four pillar, one of which is “Better connected and energy responsible Danube region”, where TRANSGREEN is located. Key principles of the DTP projects are of transnational character, have an integrated territorial approach, have qualitative partners, are results oriented, produce durable and transferable results, work towards sustainable development and offer value for the money. Among others, DTP finances the development of strategies, action plans, policy frameworks and recommendations, tools and services, pilot actions, training and capacity building, and information, communication and dissemination. Expected results for Specific Objective 3.1: Support environmentally-friendly and safe transport systems and balanced accessibility of urban and rural areas are better connected and environmentally-friendly transport systems, better developed waterways considering the impact of transport activity on the Danube eco-system, development of multimodal hubs, terminals and links, safer transport network, better organised public transport, and promotion of sustainable modes of transport. Expectations towards TRANSGREEN which is embedded under SO3.1 in general is a valuable contribution to a safer and more environmentally-friendly road and rail network, more

specific an integrated approach in terms of transport planning, development of applicable solutions and methodologies, evident change in the selected pilot areas, establishing framework conditions for future improved policies with regard to transport planning by thoroughly considering the environmental aspects.

6. Solutions for integrated infrastructure development: statements & discussions

Moderated by Andreas Beckmann, WWF DCP

Good practice examples were presented - the development of the Rhine-Main-Danube canal in Germany, when technicians and ecologists sit together and found practicable, ecologically-friendly solutions; in Austria the good cooperation between the Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Spatial Planning authorities, Environment Agency Austria, research institutions and more. The good cooperation is a result of a long history fostering a culture of discussion and mutual understanding among the relevant players.

In general, the current processes related to integrated transport infrastructure development are considered as lengthy procedure when involving all stakeholders' perspectives, but even longer when adapting transport infrastructure in order to maintain or make again permeable wildlife corridors. Existing laws related to how to build integrated transport infrastructure considered fine, but there is a lack of knowledge, experience and political will to put them into practice.

In contrast, there is a lack of legal background for maintaining ecological corridors. For example, it has happened that hunters build their hunting hides adjacent to green bridges for easier trophy hunting. There is no legal process that would forbid the hunters to do so.

And there is a lack of cross-border cooperation, as experienced in the Hungarian Slovakian cross-border region. The routes of the roads are not compatible; there was no coordination of plans between the two countries.

From the discussion, the following suggestions can be taken:

- The earlier all stakeholders are involved, the better the solutions will be. In case the motorways are already build the extension of the transport infrastructure towards "greening" is very difficult. Many stakeholders are against these changes as experienced in Austria, where a plan exists to build 20 more green bridges until 2027.
- A few persons on the right place can move things in the right direction.
- Cooperation, finding common understanding across the sectors - the implementers and planners, technicians and ecologists, should sit on one table.
- Spatial planners would need concrete solutions, as transport planners know exactly how the transport infrastructure needs to be built, ecologists know where the wildlife corridors should be maintained, but there are landowners and other interest groups that need to be understood and integrated as well.
- Finally, as formal process can be very lengthy, it is all about talking, convincing and finding people on the right position that make the issue of their private interest they would fight for.



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