

Report

TRANSGREEN Final Conference “Pathways to Greener Transport Infrastructure. Solutions and Policy Options for Sustainable Road & Rail Networks in Europe”

Bucharest, Romania, 25th of June 2019

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The TRANSGREEN project consortium brought together the key voices in sustainable transport planning in one event, "Pathways to greener transport infrastructure. Conference on solutions and policy options for sustainable road & rail networks in Europe" organized under the aegis of the Romanian Presidency to the EU Council and to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Altogether 114 participants from different fields of experience gathered in Bucharest for the TRANSGREEN - Integrated Transport and Green Infrastructure Planning in the Danube-Carpathian Region for the Benefit of People and Nature – Project Final Conference on the 25th of June 2019.

Agenda – [Annex 1](#), List of Participants – [Annex 2](#)

Moderator of the day: Florin Ghindă – Romania Pozitiva.ro, Romanian Training Institute

Key messages of the Conference

- ✓ There is a need to act: in the last 40 years 60% of wildlife disappeared, fragmentation of habitats is very high caused especially by transport infrastructure.
 - ✓ We must go away from the economic focus. Ecosystem thinking should be the ultimate driver for sustainability; we need to keep an open mind to the alternatives and to look at the big scale. The key will be in your spatial planning. You would need to know what you want for your community and how to integrate it.
 - ✓ Transport and environment need to go together and solutions should benefit both, people and nature.
 - ✓ Lack of communication between stakeholders led to delays implementing projects, damages to the environment and increased costs.
 - ✓ Developing the Romanian adaptation of the "TRANSGREEN Wildlife and Traffic Guidelines" improved communication and dialogue between stakeholders.
 - ✓ With TRANSGREEN trust has been built between the sectors.
 - ✓ TRANSGREEN supported activities within the Carpathian Convention, especially the development of the Joint Strategic Action Plan for Sustainable Transport Development.
 - ✓ TRANSGREEN fostered cooperation and raised awareness on the problems and, finally, measures were elaborated and handed over to the responsible authorities.
 - ✓ Exchange of knowledge and discussions in the project consortium were important for finding good recommendations. But the end of the project is not the end of the cooperation. The project was the engine but we will continue.
 - ✓ People from the infrastructure sector are not experts in nature conservation, so I am happy that the DTP Programme gave us the chance to get together.
 - ✓ Cost/benefits analysis should be considered. So far it is a lack of tradition and of know-how to do so.
 - ✓ Tools are essential for encouraging the implementation of avoidance and mitigation measures; the TRANSGREEN Planning Toolkit is a valuable contribution!
- Cooperation between the European Mountain Regions on information and best practice exchange on ecological connectivity, as well as on climate change will continue!

Welcome & purpose of the event

Mr. Andreas Beckmann (WWF CEE, Austria)



Mr. Andreas Beckmann, Managing Director of WWF CEE, Austria, welcomes the audience in the name of the TRANSGREEN Lead Partner. He appreciates the EU and EUSDR Presidencies for supporting the TRANSGREEN Final Conference. He briefly raises awareness on wildlife and biodiversity loss, as well as habitat fragmentation happening across the Planet over the past decades: "our world is in crisis; in the last 40 years we have lost 60% of our wildlife species – most of the wildlife when I was 10 does not exist anymore". Therefore, we need to take care of nature locally and across our region, the Danube-Carpathians ecoregion. The so-called "Green Heart of Europe" still harbours wolves, bears and lynxes. One reason for losing them is the habitat fragmentation caused by regional development. At the same time extension and upgrading of transportation infrastructure is very much needed. Transport and environment need to go together and solutions should benefit both, people and nature. This Conference is about getting together actors from different disciplines, different countries and experiences. We have the chance to hear about the project outputs. This conference indicates the end of the TRANSGREEN Project, but let us continue the initiated journey of cooperation and partnership to optimize transport infrastructure that takes nature conservation into account.

Mr. Robert Dobre (Ministry of Transport, Romania)

Mr. Robert Dobre has attended different local and regional TRANSGREEN project meetings, has been close to the project from the beginning and supports nature-friendly transport infrastructure. The Ministry of Transport participated in TRANSGREEN implementation as Associated Strategic Partner. One instrument resulted from the project is the "Romanian Guidelines on Wildlife and Traffic" that Mr. Dobre hopes will help in doing things better, faster and, ideally, cheaper. The Guidelines are helpful for those involved in the process of transport infrastructure development. Mr. Dobre passes a message from Mr. Ion Iordachescu, State Secretary in the Romanian Ministry of Transport: "This Conference is a contribution to reducing environmental impact of transport infrastructure. We need to find solutions to protect our environment. There is a need for an integrated approach that will lead to sustainable development of the transport sector. For example, within TRANSGREEN solutions have been identified for infrastructure projects in pilot areas. Recommendations derived from the Guidelines and the Catalogue of Measures we wish to apply in the transport projects."



Mr. Catalin Costache (Ministry of Transport, Romania)



Mr. Catalin Costache, Director of European Funds Accession Unit, from the Romanian Ministry of Transport, declares, "In the Romanian society, a conflict has been created between those who want to protect the environment and those who want motorways. Since 2005, we decided to reconcile these two "camps" and submitted a grant application for the TRANSGREEN project. I am very pleased that environmental organizations are reaching out to us and say, "We too want infrastructure, but only under certain conditions. You have our support". I hope that in the future our society will change its perspective and see that both sides want to develop infrastructure."

Mrs. Doina Cioacă (Ministry of Environment, Romania)

Mrs. Cioaca is pleased to have the Romanian Guidelines developed within the TRANSGREEN Project – they are understandable and easy to apply. We would like to have them approved by a common order between the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Environment.



Mr. George Sabin Cutas (EUSDR Counsellor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Romania)



Mr. Cutas passes greetings from the EUSDR and underlines the importance of continuing the work. "We are living in a world in crisis, it is important to change our behaviour and, through a healthy attitude, we will be able to change the world. The change must come from us", he says.

Setting the scene

Transport: Integration of nature conservation in linear infrastructure development; history of collaboration and development in Europe



Mr. Vincent O'Malley (Head of Environmental Policy & Compliance Section, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, representative of Conference of the European Road Directors, Ireland)

Mr. O'Malley is representative of the Conference of the European Directors of Roads and has been involved in many activities to improve transportation infrastructure development in the light of nature conservation. Through his presentation, Mr. O'Malley stated that a proper

infrastructure development documentation goes from the macro down to the micro scale giving the example of Ireland where they followed, (1) EU legislation including EIA, (2) plans, projects and guidance for habitat protection, and (3) transport infrastructure legislation. The EU developed Directives on Strategic Environmental Assessment, on Environmental Impact Assessment and on Habitats and Birds. He touches upon the hierarchy of environmental assessments and introduces guidance documents thereof. Development should respect the limits of our planet. He mentions the importance of the UN Sustainability Development goals and highlights the importance of compliance with existing environmental policy and regulatory. He introduces the many planning and construction standards the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (transport infrastructure and service provider) was involved in the development. He states that people need to move away from the economical focus. International cooperation through CEDR Working Groups and Transnational Research resulted in CEDR's (Conference of the European Road Directors) second strategic plans 2009-2013, research programmes (projects HARMONY, SAFEROAD and SAFEbatPaths) and guidelines on road safety and more. Currently, CEDR collaborates with IENE on the revision of the "Wildlife & Traffic. A European Handbook for Identifying Conflicts and Designing Solutions", a handbook that supports road authorities how to reduce impact on wildlife. Ecosystem thinking should be the ultimate driver for sustainability.

[Annex 3](#) Presentation.

Green Infrastructure: Green Infrastructure and transport infrastructure: towards mutual synergies



Mr. Stefan Leiner (Head of Unit Biodiversity, DG Environment)

Mr. Leiner starts his presentation by underlining that biodiversity is in crisis. One 1 million species are at risk if nothing is be done about it. The EU takes action in response to this situation and has developed the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020, the EU Pollinators Initiative, and the Alien Invasive Species Response. Among activities, the Review on EU Green Infrastructure Strategy

implementation review, Guidance on a strategic framework supporting the deployment of EU-level green and blue infrastructure, and Guidance on integrating ecosystems and their services into decision-making have been developed.

The flow of benefits from nature to people implies our critical dependence on nature (life-support system, well-being and prosperity). Blue and green infrastructure¹ are the basic spatial and functional structures that deliver benefits to people. The Guidance on EU-level green and blue infrastructure projects encourages investments in EU level Green Infrastructure, restoration and better connection of habitats and Natura 2000 sites, stimulates a more strategic integrated approach for development and contributes to the establishment of a strategic framework for Green and Blue Infrastructure in Europe. Numerous activities work towards the New Deal for Nature and People, an ambitious and pragmatic plan to transition to zero greenhouse gas emissions and transform Europe in the process (EU Green Week, Multi-financial framework, new Commission, G7 etc.).

[Annex 4](#) Presentation.

Question & answer session:

Question: What is the relation between the strategic effect of assessment and the cumulated effect of getting more projects together?

Answer: Vincent O'Malley: We need to put the ecosystem services at the base of our thinking; we need to keep an open mind to the alternatives and to look at the big scale. The key will be in your spatial planning. You would need to know what you want for your community and how to integrate it.

A: Stefan Leiner: You need to look into your communities' aspects when you do your plans. At the same time, you should have the bigger picture.

Q: Biodiversity is an important topic but stakeholders and people do not see the importance of it, not to mention climate change. How do you see this?

A: Stefan Leiner: This is changing. Media raise awareness on biodiversity and disappearance of species. In the same way, we'll reach awareness on the climate change.

A: O'Malley: Climate change – we have to be sustainable. The message needs to be local; the communication between the sectors, biologists and engineers needs to be fostered.

Q: What can the Commission do to enforce the Directives implementation? What can the Commission do in case we have a corridor and the Commission finances a road that cuts the corridor?

A: Stefan Leiner: There is enforcement; those main responsible are the countries. The EU cannot intervene in little problems – the authorities in the member states should solve such problems based on EU legislation.

¹ A strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver wide range of ecosystem services (in terrestrial, aquatic, coastal & marine environments)

First panel discussion. The TRANSGREEN project

The TRANSGREEN project. Experiences made & results, benefits for stakeholders from different perspectives (pilot area actions, Guidelines on integrated transport infrastructure development, the Carpathian Convention Joint Strategic Action Plan for Future Sustainable Transport Development of the Carpathians).



The TRANSGREEN Project

Mrs. Hildegard Meyer (WWF CEE, Austria)

Mrs. Meyer is the project manager of the TRANSGREEN project and she starts by thanking the project consortium for the good collaboration and the Carpathian Convention that supported the project implementation in the planning phase and throughout the project's lifetime.

The Project was meant to build bridges – for animals, between people and nature, and between sectors (nature conservation, transport infrastructure development, policy).

Most important project outputs among many others are “Wildlife and Traffic in the Carpathians. Guidelines how to minimize the impact of transport infrastructure development on nature in the Carpathian countries” and the “Catalogues of measures”, recommending measures for four pilot areas to include in the current transport infrastructure development plans. More details will be presented in the following sessions.

There is hope to continue the collaboration within the ConnectGREEN Project and in the SaveGREEN Project, currently in the pipeline.

[Annex 5](#) Presentation.

TRANSGREEN – Benefits for the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic

Vaclav Hlavac (Nature Conservation Agency, Czech Republic)

Mr. Hlavac says that the Carpathians have a small share in the Czech Republic, but the country has great interest in this biodiversity rich area still harbouring wolves and bears (Beskydy). Natura 2000 sites were designated for the protection of natural treasures. Human activities like transport infrastructure development and housing have caused fragmentation of wildlife habitats and migration barriers. Beskydy became almost isolated from the core area of the Carpathians. To solve these problems an international cooperation is needed. TRANSGREEN fostered cooperation and raised awareness on the problems and, finally, measures were elaborated and handed over to the responsible authorities. The measures are based on scientific studies. TRANSGREEN supported monitoring fauna along already existing transport infrastructure and its surroundings. Exchange of knowledge and discussions in the project consortium were important for finding good recommendations. But the end of the project is not the end of the cooperation. The project was the engine but they will continue.

[Annex 6](#) Presentation.

TRANSGREEN – Benefits for the Carpathian Convention

Ms. Stanislav Trcik (Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic, Institute of Transport Policy)

Mr. Trcik presents himself as Member of the Working Group on Sustainable Transport of the Carpathian Convention that was supported by TRANSGREEN developing the “Draft Joint Strategic Action Plan 2021 – 2023 for the Implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Transport (Mikulov, 2014) to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Kyiv, 2003)”. The Joint Action Plan will be up for adaptation at the next Conference of the Parties in autumn 2020. In that role, the Ministry participated in project activities and shared information and advice. The Institute deals with the environmental issues related to transport infrastructure development supported by their research department. TRANSGREEN was an important project to find the critical zones, and apply the mitigation measures in Slovakia and beyond. The Carpathian Convention has a good Strategy for sustainable transport development. The Strategy is to be filled in the Strategic plan for transport in Slovakia that will integrate environmental needs. Transport infrastructure needs to be built in the Carpathians. There is positive support of the Carpathian Convention in all the countries to include environmental measures for all the strategic plans.

TRANSGREEN – Interdisciplinary cooperation

Mrs. Cristina Cuc (Ministry of Transport, Romania)

“There is hope for nature and for people’s education,” said Mrs. Cuc based on her recent experience: the forest near Bucharest she used to visit in her childhood is much cleaner than it was at that time.

In terms of transport infrastructure development, she said that lack of communication between stakeholders led to delays implementing projects, damages to the environment and increased costs. Transparent communication would be needed for mutual support and integrated approaches/solutions. Developing the Romanian adaptation of the “TRANSGREEN Wildlife and Traffic Guidelines” improved communication and dialogue between stakeholders. The discussions were open and constructive. The Guidelines will be

used for planning and preparing the future transport projects in Romania. The cooperation must continue. The Ministry is also involved in the “European Strategy for the Danube Region” that currently revises the Action Plan. The Ministry submitted suggestions for improvements and added the term “environmentally sustainable” for any activities related to transport infrastructure development and highlighted the importance of cooperation with other Priority Areas.

[Annex 7](#) Presentation.

Question & answers

Q: In your experience, what is the greatest challenge to find the solutions we need for environmentally friendly transportation?

A: Vaclav Hlavac: The Guidelines developed within TRANSGREEN describe various problems that can occur during the lifetime of developing a transport project and propose solutions. The next challenge is to implement these Guidelines. There is hope that the responsible authorities use the Guidelines for environmentally friendly transport infrastructure development. The ongoing ConnectGREEN project will continue work on the identification and mapping of ecological corridors. Together with the results of TRANSGREEN, there is a good base for reducing impacts on nature in relation to transport projects.

A: Cristina Cuc: The biggest challenge at the beginning was to get trust from the parties – there is a lack of trust between the sectors (transport, environment) –but this has changed through the years. This is no longer the case and I am happy for that.

Q: We have Guidelines and tools. What are the challenges for actually using them, from the authorities’ perspective?

A: Cristina Cuc: I am looking forward to the time when there is no need for legislation to do things properly and in a sustainable way. Unfortunately, we still need to force people to act in an environmentally friendly way. The Guidelines should be used taking into account solutions and recommendations thereof, as well as for tender procedures of transport projects in the early phase. The consultants should analyse integrated solutions beginning with the feasibility phase; the consultants should organise meetings with all the parties: ministries, NGOs, experts because they all have a lot of information/knowledge that can be used.

A: Stanislav Trcik: It is important to incorporate ecological corridors into spatial planning.

A: Meyer Hildegard: The mind-set is changing at the ministerial level and this is very welcome. It is a challenge to work with landowners or farmers in the countryside. How can you explain them the importance of changing the management of a certain area in order to contribute to the functionality of an ecological corridor? Stakeholders need to be involved from the very beginning, they need to know and understand that they contribute to society’s and nature’s wellbeing. Authorities need to compensate for their economic losses.

Q: Ionut Ciurea (ProInfrastructura): In Romania, we have specific problems. During the workshops, we discussed a lot, but putting measures into practice is problematic. So, what does come after TRANSGREEN? How can the EU force Romanian authorities, constructors and designers to respect the TRANSGREEN Guidelines and measures? Last month we signed the contract for elaborating the feasibility study for A8 Tirgu Mures – Iasi highway. I asked the NGOs to be involved (Milvus, WWF, ProInfrastructura) because they have many data. The duration of the contract is some months only. The period is not enough to get data on the ground.

A: Cristina Cuc: For the revision of the feasibility study there are already meetings organised between the construction company and the experts that have information from the field.

Q: Peter Olajos, CEEweb: You mentioned fauna mortality monitoring. What is your experience in your country using mortality data for infrastructure planning?

A: Valav Hlavac: Mortality studies from the ground provide the basic information and you have to analyse it according to the species. This is useful information for infrastructure planning. When planning a road, ecological corridors, especially for large carnivores, have to be respected.

A: Stanislav Trcik: In Slovakia there is an annex to the Law for hunting saying that hunters have the obligation to give their information to the state.

Q: Vincent O'Malley: The greatest success is to buy in the building contractor. How do you translate the Guidelines to the contractor to ensure that the contractor will deliver, to make sure that the measures will be implemented? How are engineers being involved?

A: Cristina Cuc: It is too early to speak about the building contractor because we do not have the common ministerial order to use the Guidelines in place. In another project, we circulated the Terms of Reference before the tender, so that the NGOs had the opportunity to add/comment on the ToRs. The best moment to come with ideas is the early stage, when the feasibility study is being done. We can implement the Guidelines and even adjust it in the feasibility stage. The contractor has to build the bridges and all the mitigation measures according to the plans. The question is whether the Commission will finance expensive transport projects including expensive environmental measures. I think so, because in other countries it was possible.

A: Stanislav Trcik: The political goal is that innovation and environment need to go together.

A: Manuela Badea (Romanian Railway Company): I have been involved in developing the Guidelines to help my colleagues in the feasibility studies phase. The Guidelines are a tool to train colleagues who are currently working on feasibility studies. The Guidelines are very well structured and contain all important steps and the legislation in force. For the Railway Company, these Guidelines are very important especially for the people directly involved in the actual planning work and I thank those who had this wonderful idea.

Q: The Guidelines encourage cooperation. Cooperation alone will not ensure good decisions in case legislation is not properly done. How can we legalise them?

A: Lazaros Georgiadis (IENE Governance Board Member): The Guidelines are not telling you the best solution. You need to work on a project based on the challenge that "any project is a unique project".

A: Cristina Cuc: The Guidelines can be used by the expert to prepare the project. They cannot describe all the cases and all the solutions. Solutions need to be found according to the problem. In particular, we need experts from the construction sector, experts from the environmental sector and altogether. All need to look at the best solutions for other cases and whether these solutions are applicable in our cases. People from the infrastructure sector are not experts in nature conservation, so I am happy that the DTP programme gave us the chance to get together.

Key message: Hildegard Meyer: I am very glad for the lively discussion and feedback! NGOs can bring together representatives of different sectors and mediate the discussions. We will carry on with ConnectGREEN and another project on this topic that is in the pipeline at the Danube Transnational Programme.

Key message: Vaclav Hlavac: I thank to all that have contributed and hope to protect the Carpathian Nature together.

Key message: Stanislav Trcik: The prioritisation of the project must be done from many perspectives; the Ministry of Transport wants to build infrastructure; the Ministry of Finance cares about financial aspects, and the Ministry of Environment has an eye on environment protection.

Second panel discussion. Looking into the future.

How can environmentally friendly transportation development be fostered in the region and how can financial instruments support a better integration?

Moderation: Marius Nistorescu (EPC Mediu Consulting, Romania)

Panellists: Fidanka Bacheva-McGrath (Bankwatch, #SaveKresna Coalition, Bulgaria) & Irene Lucius (Conservation Director, WWF-Central and Eastern Europe, Austria)



Introduction

Marius Nistorescu (EPC Mediu Consulting, Romania)

Mr. Nistorescu introduces the main topic of the panel discussion to the audience, the question how to balance costs and benefits in the frame of transport infrastructure development, which is needed in the area. The main principles should be

- (1) Avoidance of green infrastructure (GI) sensitive areas,
- (2) Maintaining critical mass of GI, and
- (3) Maintaining ecological connectivity and favourable conservation status for species and habitats.

Guiding questions for the discussion following are:

- ✓ How can we improve project preparation at the national level? What is needed?
- ✓ How to integrate better environmental externalities into cost/benefit analyses?
- ✓ How to improve data availability/transparency?
- ✓ Can we do "business as usual" in a changing climate and a declining biodiversity?

[Annex 8](#) Presentation.

Video message: Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA)

Cristóbal Millán de la Lastra (INEA Head of Unit in charge of Romania)



The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) is a key EU funding instrument to promote growth, jobs and competitiveness through targeted infrastructure investment at European level. It supports the development of high performing, sustainable and efficiently interconnected trans-European networks in the fields of transport, energy and digital services. CEF investments fill the missing links in Europe's energy, transport and digital backbone.

Since January 2014, INEA is the gateway to funding under the CEF. INEA implements most of the CEF programme budget, in total €28.7 billion out of €30.4 billion (€23.7 billion for Transport – TEN-T network realisation, €4.7 billion for Energy, and €0.5 billion for Telecom). INEA manages 688 grant agreements that contribute to the development and upgrade of 3000 km freight and railway lines in Europe. Environmental protection is at the heart of INEA's interventions. To avoid delays in delivering projects, three principles are applied, (1) public participation, (2) sound cooperation between various stakeholder groups including environmental groups upfront and during project implementation, and (3) encouraging pilot phases for testing new approaches before decision making. Collective efforts are needed to deploy legal, technical, environmental and financial requirements. Mr Millán de la Lastra calls for joining forces to realise EU's vision for robust and integrated transport infrastructure.

[Annex 9](#) Video message

"Kresna Gorge – An alternative is possible", a case study of Struma Highway, Bulgaria

Fidanka Bacheva-McGrath (Bankwatch, #SaveKresna Coalition, Bulgaria)



Mrs. Bacheva-McGrath presents a case study from Bulgaria, Kresna Gorge, which is part of the newly developed Struma Highway. Kresna Gorge is a biodiversity hot spot and due to its narrowness, it is a bottleneck for the completion of the Struma Highway. Traffic congestions are regular during summer, when people travel south or stay in the valley for holidays. Since the highway was built in 2011, populations of protected bats, birds and snakes have declined. In 2008, alternative routes were recommended by the European Union (EIA/AA Decision and Bern Convention): one to bypass the gorge East or West, another to build a tunnel. In 2017, an infringement complaint was sent to the European Court of Justice, because of ongoing unauthorised work on the highway in the gorge. Around 165.000 people supported the petition for the alternative. The tunnel was considered too expensive, but still the western or eastern bypass of the gorge would be a good option and would leave room for alternative regional development in the valley (ecological tourism development).

[Annex 10](#) Presentation.

Questions & answers

Q: Lazaros Georgiadis: Are there mitigation measures planned for the gorge?

A: Fidanka Bacheva-McGrath: The biodiversity study was made – anywhere you build you will do damage. The constructions (bridges for the animals for example) will not be sufficient or will be very difficult. For the alternative solution east of the valley, compensation measures are foreseen and there are 2 natural parks. But there is a need for local community development, as well: valorising the natural sparkling waters, the landscapes etc. It is a long history; we do not have an ideal alternative. The bottleneck for traveling to Greece is there. We started discussing alternatives in 2008, when the decision was taken to build the highway outside the gorge. In 2017, the decision was taken to build the highway in the gorge. Meanwhile unauthorised construction work is going on in the area.

Q: Marius Nistorescu: What can a NGO do to get involved into infrastructure project preparation?

A: Irene Lucius: Authorities and other responsible entities should give space to NGOs to get involved. In the process of sitting together, trust can be built from the concept stage of a project. Openness and transparency with the NGOs are needed. They will happily share their knowledge.



Q: Marius Nistorescu: Do you think that Eastern EU countries have something to learn from the Western ones?

A: Irene Lucius: Yes, learning from mistakes made and from good practices as well. Now many Western EU countries invest a lot of money in defragmentation programmes in order to re-establish ecological connectivity. Capacity needs to be built. Here, the EU Danube Region Strategy has a role to play – workshops were organised by Priority Area 1B supported by authorities and decision makers with nature conservation. They need to be prepared for planning. Not to forget about solutions towards climate change and biodiversity crisis. We need to think forward.

Stefan Leiner (Head of Unit, DG Environment): I think one of the issues in Eastern EU is to ensure the independence of the assessments for projects. The governmental authorities have to be in charge and make sure that the legislation is respected. Another problem is that many transport infrastructure plans are old; they should be revised and modernised.

Fidanka Bacheva-McGrath would like to have the opportunity to be part in a project such as TRANSGREEN, where authorities use dialog in a constructive way and try to find the solutions.

Mihai Pop (Association for Biodiversity Conservation, Romania): The problem in the Eastern countries is that they are continuously reinventing the wheel. Many projects on connectivity have been done on the local, regional and national level, but very often, a project starts without having searched for existing information and/or results. Plans often change. Authorities are not able to include the database that is already available on connectivity and species distributions. Authorities do not ask NGOs and research institutions for data. This problem should be overcome.

Q: Marius Nistorescu: Is it so expensive to include environmental measures in transport infrastructure projects?

A: Irene Lucius: Cost/benefits analysis should be considered. So far it is a lack of tradition and of know-how to do so. Ecosystem services should be taken into consideration. Discussions with relevant stakeholders are needed to raise awareness on what are the real costs and benefits of such large infrastructure projects.

Adoption of Conference Declaration

Mr. Andreas Beckmann presents the Conference Declaration ([Annex 11](#)) including important suggestions for improvements received from the participants prior to the Conference.

Final Conference Declaration

TRANSGREEN Final Conference

"Pathways to Greener Transport Infrastructure"

Bucharest, June 25th 2019

The TRANSGREEN Final Conference, organized in Bucharest on the 25th of June 2019, under the aegis of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the Presidency of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, brought together representatives of national authorities, the EU Commission, the Carpathian Convention Secretariat and other international institutions, academia and NGOs working in the fields of transport, spatial planning, and nature conservation. They are united by the wish to make linear transport infrastructure development more sustainable, safe and resilient by avoiding landscape fragmentation, particularly in the Danube-Carpathian region.

The Conference concluded that minimizing and mitigating conflicts between linear transport infrastructure and nature protection not only is of high importance, but also possible if a science-based and pro-active cross-sectoral approach is applied at the local, national, regional and EU level. The Carpathian Convention and its Protocol on Sustainable Transport was acknowledged as a key promoter of this approach.

We, the conference participants, accepting the need for development of sustainable transport infrastructure in the Danube-Carpathian region, herewith call on the European Commission, the European Parliament and the national governments of the Danube-Carpathian region to preserve the biodiversity and ecosystems functionality of the region and to

*** Foster interagency and international coordination for the systematic integration of biodiversity objectives into transport policy/projects and conditionalities for financing.

*** Encourage cross-sectoral collaboration and stakeholder involvement right from the concept stage of each linear transport infrastructure project in order to find best solutions for the harmonization of transport development needs with biodiversity on the level of planning, construction, operation and maintenance.

*** Build an accessible common database consisting of high quality data, tools, information and knowledge on biodiversity, spatial planning and transport infrastructure development in order to support good planning and decision-making processes.

*** Acknowledge that proper integrated (multi-sectoral) spatial planning is the only approach that will support sustainable transport infrastructure and can prevent progressive isolation of wildlife populations and the decrease of their contribution to the production of ecosystem services.

*** Emphasize the need for adequate strategic environmental assessments in the early (pre-feasibility) planning phase, environmental impact assessments throughout the entire planning of programs/projects.

*** Support the basic philosophy of the Mitigation Hierarchy that prevention is better than cure – avoiding the negative effects of habitat fragmentation and traffic operations on wildlife is better than repairing or minimizing the damage.

*** Emphasize the need for reflecting not only social and economic costs and benefits in the option analysis of linear infrastructure plans, programs or projects, but also values of the natural capital, cultural capital and ecosystem services.

*** Underline that adjustments of national legislative tools may be necessary to effectively implement these principles.

*** Draw the attention to the importance of an integrated monitoring framework as part of the SEA and EIA processes and of monitoring the state of the biota in the defined territory before and during construction as well as in the operation phase for assessing the effectiveness of measures applied and supporting the science based solutions on mitigation, and

*** Emphasize the need to invest in the maintenance of ecological corridors and mitigation measures to ensure their coherence and functionality long after the construction phase is completed.

We welcome the results of related projects such as ConnectGREEN, AlpBioNET, Austria-Slovakia cross border Alpine–Carpathian Corridor, CEDR's Road & Wildlife transnational research and others, and express our willingness to sustain and apply the findings of those projects in the framework of future collaborative efforts towards harmonizing grey and green infrastructure in the Danube-Carpathian region.

Moderator Florin Ghindă invites the participants to access www.menti.com: "What is your feedback/idea/comment on Conference Declaration?"

What is your feedback/idea/comment on Conference Declaration?

 Mentimeter

Very much appreciated	Go for it	Should be promoted thoroughly among public stakeholders/authorities
Challenging but should achieve results	I agree with the declaration	Let's put the declaration into clear actions!
Way to go!	I fully agree!	Onward to implementation!
I agree	Totally agree	Very interesting panek discussion
Great start for future cooperation	Very good	Well done..
I agree.	I fully agree	I agree Important statements that must be implemented
I agree. Lets go to introduce declararion on life.		

Parallel workshops

How EU institutions can enhance implementation and how Member States can make better use of the TRANSGREEN Guidelines on integrated transport infrastructure development.

All Workshop Leaders shortly presented the content of their workshops.



Workshops' summary and key messages

Workshop 1 "How to develop sustainable linear transport infrastructure. TRANSGREEN Guidelines."

Led by Lazaros Georgiadis (IENE Governance Board Member, Greece) with contributions by Vaclav Hlavac (Nature Conservation Agency, Czech Republic) and Diana Cosmoiu (WWF Romania)



The Workshop started with the introduction of the "Wildlife and Traffic in the Carpathian. Guidelines how to minimise impact of transport infrastructure development on nature in the Carpathian countries" ([Annex 12](#)) developed within TRANSGREEN by Vaclav Hlavac (Nature Conservation Agency, Czech Republic) and continues with the presentation of Romanian case study – adaptation of the Guidelines to Romanian conditions ([Annex 13](#)) by Diana Cosmoiu (WWF Romania).

Break out groups elaborated a list of target groups to be addressed in the Carpathians and measures on how to implement the Guidelines.

Conclusions: It is agreed that it is very important to continue working at the technical level with people in relevant institutions in order to continue trustful collaboration between sectors and experts from different sectors. At regional level, continuing working in already established groups and platforms (such as the working groups of the Carpathian Convention) is key for ensuring implementation at national level in the Carpathian countries such as for example elaboration of standards that can be included in the procurement and contracting documents. In this sense, procurement procedures need to be simplified but also more flexible, in order to allow integration and adjustments of ecological measures, when needed.

The Carpathian countries should adapt and finally adopt the Guidelines nationally, through broad stakeholder engagement processes. Furthermore, it is expected that the Guidelines will be adopted by the Carpathian Convention COP in 2020.

[Annex 14](#) for further reading on WS1.

Workshop 2 "Supporting tools for sustainable linear transportation infrastructure development and monitoring."

Led by Marius Nistorescu (EPC Media Consulting, Romania)



The workshop was dedicated to present and discuss practical tools developed under the TRANSGREEN project, the Carpathian Countries Integrated Biodiversity Information System presentation by Milan Husar, SPECTRA, Slovakia; CCIBIS functions, presentation by Daniel Starczewski, GRID Warsaw, Poland), the Animal-Vehicle Collision Tool (AVC tool, online at <https://road-kill-registration.green-web.eu> and embedded in CCIBIS), and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) training package, respectively.

Key messages

- Tools are essential for encouraging the implementation of avoidance and mitigation measures;
- All tools involving data collection / data sharing require maintenance in the following years (particularly on updating data);
- The Roadkill App has the potential to collect data that cannot be found elsewhere and the utility of such data is crucial for the SEA and EIA processes;
- The CCIBIS Geoportal has the capacity to support planning and SEA in a more integrated approach throughout all Carpathian Convention Countries. Efforts should be

made in the following years on updating and completing the information available on the geoportal;

- Despite being a public participation process, EIA is still considered a preoccupation for few experts. Tools that are more practical are required in order to involve stakeholders in the identification of best solutions for mitigation measures. Such tools should support a unitary approach throughout the Carpathians, particularly on quantifying the impacts and proposing efficient avoidance and mitigation measures.

[Annex 15](#) Presentation by Milan Husar.

[Annex 16](#) Presentation by Daniel Starczewski.

[Annex 17](#) Presentation by Ivo Dostal.

[Annex 18](#) Presentation by Marius Nistorescu.

[Annex 19](#) for further reading on WS2.

Workshop 3 “Local actions – experiences made during project implementation in the 4 pilot areas.”

Led by Cristian-Remus Papp (WWF Romania)

The workshop was dedicated to the experiences made during the project implementation in the 4 pilot areas. The project partners worked in four different pilot areas at different stages of linear infrastructure development, ranging from early stages of planning to monitoring, including activities on ecosystem services. This included stakeholder engagement, fieldwork and assessments of wildlife crossing structures, registration of road-kills, etc.

There was a presentation of the main results of each pilot area from the TRANSGREEN Project:

- Beskydy-Kysuce (Czech Republic – Slovakia) by Martin Strnad, Nature Conservation Agency, Czech Republic ([Annex 20](#))
- Miskolc-Kosice-Uzhgorod (Hungary-Slovakia-Ukraine) by Tereza Thompson, State Nature Conservancy, Slovakia ([Annex 21](#))
- Arad-Deva (Romania) by Radu Mot, Association Zarand, Romania ([Annex 22](#))
- Tirgu Mures-Iasi (Romania) by Csaba Domokos, Association Milvus Group, Romania ([Annex 23](#))



Key messages

- It is important to properly assess the cumulative impacts of different projects and human activities on wildlife and their movement. There are cases when linear transport infrastructures alone do not represent a total barrier in the movement of wildlife across the landscapes, but combined with other projects, human activities or works, the ecological connectivity can be interrupted if proper mitigation measures are not planned and considered.
- The biodiversity-related field studies should start far in advance, before performing the environmental impact assessments, so that the best alternatives can be selected based on robust sets of data, with minimum impact on wildlife activity and movement.
- The impact of linear transport infrastructures is not always evaluated as a whole. Evaluating impact at segments' level can lead to overlooking important aspects at the broader landscape level. This way, large carnivore populations can be isolated from each other (e.g. by interrupting ecological connectivity between two mountain ranges).
- There is a need to adapt the learning curricula in the case of transport and environmental related faculties. A new practical field is emerging, road ecology, which is not accessible in the regular learning systems. This is something that should be considered seriously not only in the Carpathians, but also in Europe.
- It is crucial to have an open dialogue and to collaborate with the key stakeholders. Public engagement and participation in the development of linear transport infrastructure is key in order to reduce the pressure on natural habitats and on wildlife. In addition, an international consortium or set up, like the TRANSGREEN project, can facilitate the transfer of know-how and experiences between the different categories of stakeholders and countries.

[Annex 24](#) for further reading on WS3

Workshop 4 "What does TRANSGREEN recommend towards policy makers."

Led by Ana-Maria Seman (WWF Romania)



The workshop was structured as follows: (1) introduction into the main policy best practices and recommendations that came out of the project (link on DTP TRANSGREEN website [here](#)); (2) group discussion on the key recommendations and experiences; (3) group discussion on the potential next joint steps focused on follow-up actions from the project, as well as key

opportunities in the near future (such as work on the EU funding programmes, the EU Biodiversity strategy).

Conclusion

Policy recommendations coming out from the project and the discussions range from long-term needs that require consistent efforts (such as the work on spatial planning, improving impact assessments etc.), to short-term efforts that need to be continued (the adoption of the Guidelines at the national level and Carpathian Convention level, the work on the EU Funding programmes). Priority should be given to the opportunities and momentum created in countries, which consist of adopting the guidance document and streamlining funding needs in the next EU Operational Programmes while developing follow-up projects with strong and specific policy components (such as work on national standards, work on spatial planning legislation).

[Annex 25](#) Presentation.

[Annex 26](#) for further reading on WS4.

Plenary session: The European Mountain Regions Cooperation

The European Mountain Regions Cooperation plenary session aimed at fostering cooperation and sharing knowledge across different mountain ranges in the field of ecological connectivity and related topics such as transportation infrastructure development, climate change adaptation and resolving conflicts between green and grey infrastructure. Representatives of the Alpine, Carpathian and Caucasian regions and the Pyrenees presented their work on ecological connectivity related to transportation infrastructure development from their perspective and discussed common problems and solutions.

Contributors from the regions:

Alpine Region: Filippo Favilli, Federico Cavallaro, EURAC Bolzano, Italy

Caucasus: Jernej Stritih, EcoCorridor Programme in the Caucasus, Georgia

Pyrenees: Idoia Arauzo, Observatory for Climate Change in the Pyrenees, Spain

Moderated by Mr. Florin Ghindă, RomaniaPozitiva.ro, Romanian Training Institute



ALPINE REGION

Filippo Favilli presents ALPBIONET 2030 (Interreg Alpine Space), a project that facilitates an Alpine Ecological (Connectivity) Network and aims for integrating wildlife management and defragmentation approaches into sectoral policies. At the same time, the network extends its spatial focus to the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) perimeter, which helps to tackle main connectivity barriers towards the Alps.

[Annex 27](#) Presentation.

Federico Cavallaro adds information on transport infrastructure in the Alps, its bottlenecks and calls for a modal shift towards railway transport infrastructure to cope with freight and passenger transport across the Alps with a focus on Brenner Pass between Austria and Italy.

[Annex 28](#) Presentation, [Annex 29](#) Video clip about transport corridors in the Alps.

CAUCASUS

Jernej Stritih presented the initiative “Partnership for Living Landscapes in the Caucasus” which is a collaboration of GTZ, KFW and WWF with local stakeholders in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The initiative aims at securing conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the ecological corridors in South Caucasus, securing fair income to the local rural population, and helping the rural communities (beneficiaries) of selected eco-corridors to manage their land in an ecologically sound way. The “Ecoregional Corridor Fund” (ECF) has been established as an instrument for promoting sustainable land use practices in ecological corridors. Beside its cultural and natural treasures, biodiversity rich landscapes the Caucasus is a transport/transit corridor with emerging infrastructure. Dialogue and cooperation with people in the area is important not to lose their cultural and natural heritage.

[Annex 30](#) Presentation.

PYRENEES

Idoia Arauzo highlights similar circumstances in all mountain regions across Europe, namely rich biodiversity and cultural heritage, natural water resources, ecosystems services, natural hazards, low population density, challenges for infrastructures and economic activities, and last but not least climate change. She highlights the importance of protecting ecological connectivity to preserve animal and plant species. In the Pyrenees a new Strategy 2018-2024 has been created that addresses climate change, the importance of ecological connectivity and promotes initiatives that develop nature based solutions.

[Annex 31](#) Presentation.

Discussion

Comment: The problems do not seem to be not solved in the Alps. You want to connect ecological areas and in the same time, you cause fragmentation.

A: Filippo Favilli: As there is no strategy on mammals for the entire Alps, we can work case by case. In Italy, the highways were built in the last century with no consideration for nature. The impact has become clear only recently and also what can be done about it. There are conflict areas that are huge and under so much pressure that it is not possible to connect ecological corridors across an infrastructure.

A: Jernej Stritih: Animals have bridges in the Alps, but not many are using them. People are used to live with large carnivores, especially in the Carpathians.

A: Federico Cavallaro: The creation of new tunnels will not create so many conflicts like new or extended terrestrial infrastructure. There is a contradiction between these plans – we are lucky that we need to build tunnels for trains in the mountains, but this is for economy purpose and not for nature.

Q: Fidanka McGrath: Jernej, you presented good work with the local population. How are the discussions with local stakeholders on the topic of ecological corridors? In terms of climate change and collapsing roads, how do you manage these circumstances?

A: Jernej Stritih: We could establish good cooperation in communities from the 3 involved counties. We avoid political discussions and focus on the villages. In terms of climate change, in the Caucasus there is little infrastructure in this remote area.

Q: Ionut Ciurea: Are you considering only missing parts in the Alps?

A: Federico Cavallaro: There is a proposal to build a railway but nothing concrete so far; there are no other projects in the Alps at the moment.

Q: Lazaros Georgiadis: Jernej, is there any kind of political agreement between the Caucasus countries?

A: Jernej Stritih: Work is carried out with experts and local authorities in the three countries, but there is no hope for a treaty such as the Carpathian or Alpine Convention.

Q: Andreas Beckmann: What are the lessons learned in the Alps regarding climate change; we try to optimize things – do we take climate change into account?

A: Filippo Favilli: There are some connections between climate change and accidents.

A: Federico Cavallaro: Climate change adaptation measures are under development. In Italy, there is a national adaptation planner in place.

Message from Idoia Arauzo: I see many opportunities to balance local economy, tourism and nature conservation.

Message from Jernej Stritih: I worked in other mountains, too, and finally I realized that people in the mountains themselves are responsible to find good solutions to the problems!

Message from Filippo Favilli: From my experience, I see that people want to be more involved into projects and decision processes.

Message from Federico Cavallaro: Every case is a unique case.

Wrap up

Closing key message: Hildegard Meyer – TRANSGREEN project manager

“A long day with a lot of information! Thanks to project partners and participating experts that we came to viable results that were presented today! We hope for continuation of the consolidated collaboration that will support finding better decisions for sustainable, integrated transport infrastructure projects.”

[Annex 32](#) – Impressions of the conference

