Action Plan ALPS-DANUBE-CARPATHIANS cooperation

1

1) Introduction

The cooperation between ALPARC and the CNPA exists since 2001, the DANUBEPARKS network joint this cooperation later as the region constitutes a link between the Alps and the Carpathians. For this reason the three networks decided to strengthen their cooperation on the basis of a Memorandum of Cooperation and to focus primarily to the establishment of an ecological network in all three regions and between them.

Reasons for the cooperation on this topic:

- The three regions are hotspots of Biodiversity for Europe
- There are important migration movements linking more biogeographical regions (6) than in any other part of Europe
- Ecological connectivity is a part of a climate change adaptation strategy
- Hydrological and geological phenomena are linked between the regions (e.g. the water from mountains flowing to the Danube, gravel and sediments from the Alps and Carpathians are transported to the Danube)
- Seasonal migrations concern different regions
- The large carnivores migrate from the Carpathians towards the Alps
- Diverse species exist in respective regions whose population maintenance require joint efforts
- …

Numerous interfaces and interdependences exist from the ecological point of view between the three regions. The cooperation for the realisation of the ecological network for this reason is proved as logical and coherent and would be a major contribution to the preservation of Europe's Biodiversity.

2) Added value of the cooperation

1. Harmonisation of common procedures

For the issue of ecological connectivity it is crucial to work with comparable methodologies and analysis tools adapted to the different local or regional situation. A very sophisticated but pragmatic approach has been developed for the Alps and could be transferred to other regions by adapting it according to the needs.

2. Experience and knowledge exchange and common position

The three networks are exposed to common questions, chances and challenges. An experience exchange, sharing the knowledge and the constitution of a common position may help to strengthen each network facing supra-regional issues like EU programmes and EU policies, or policies linked to the implementation of the Alpine and Carpathian conventions and the macro-regional strategies (Alps and Danube).

3. Common team of competent experts for ecological connectivity

The three networks are willing to foster a team of experts for questions of ecological connectivity. The experts of the three networks will exchange their knowledge and experience regularly and work together in common projects.

4. Stakeholder and cooperation platform

This cooperation is an adequate platform for a well-structured cooperation between networks and associated partners. Further networks working together with one of the three protected area organisations may join for different projects and common positions like the Carpathian Wetlands Initiative (CWI) or national protected area networks. Raising capacity could take place also with other transnational protected area networks.

5. Analysing different funding possibilities

A common work and projects illustrate a stronger added value for European programmes. So coordinated projects or even joint projects for the three eco-regions could be a significant gain.

6. Integration in Europe wide strategies and policies (EUSALP, EUSDR)

The cooperation of the three networks allows a strong involvement in transnational European strategies such as the Alpine and the Danube macro-regional strategy but also within the existing common treaties of international law such as the Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention, or the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and other relevant conventions and programmes. For all these strategies and policies, ecological connectivity is a crucial issue of their biodiversity conservation part.

7. Joint interest of activities:

The cooperation allows to mutualise numerous common interests such as the research of funding possibilities, the establishment of a common policy work and of a common competence network and it allows to create synergies for new, ongoing or closed projects (especially INTERREG) and the use of their results in the whole space.

3) ADC Network mission statement:

To establish permeable landscapes and ecological connectivity within and between the three regions and contribute to their management by:

- **Creating large non fragmented areas ensured by linking protected areas and Natura2000 sites and equivalents**
- **Ensuring the conservation of European biodiversity by including relatively small protected areas, hotspots of biodiversity (reducing the "island" effect) and creating links (ecological corridors) to strengthen the significance of them**
- **Minimising the negative effects of fragmentation of habitats**
- **Ensure capacity building for protected area managers and other stakeholders in the field of ecological connectivity**
- **Contribute to strengthen the efficiency of ecological connectivity initiatives by a cooperation of the three regions in the frame of the macro-regional strategies (EUSALP, EUSDR)**
- **Enable and to promote a closer cooperation of both macroregions in the field of ecological connectivity**

4) Fields of activity

The cooperation will take place in the following fields of activities:

4.1. Common policy work
- Identify and formulate a common and pragmatic policy strategy
- Active approach to identify and involve relevant stakeholders in all processes
- Active common lobbying for ecological connectivity in this central European Space (EU, Macro Regions, Alpine Convention, Carpathian Convention…)
- Referring to EU strategies of GI (ALPGOV)
- Identification of legal frameworks in all areas (e.g. EU policies about connectivity)

4.2. Exchange and sharing of know-how, methodologies and tools
- Define a common methodological approach for the three living spaces (air, water, earth)
- Realise and use common tools to evaluate the potential of ecological connectivity (e.g. JECAMI)
- Proceed to an intensive exchange of know-how and experiences on ground realisations

4.3. Establish a competence network
- Strengthen the competences of the involved institutions and networks
- Activate together the key players at all levels
- Establish a network of Pilot regions to implement ecological connectivity

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4.4. Identify the needs of ecological connectivity in the whole space
- Harmonisation of the analysis procedure
- Analysis of the situation of ecological connectivity in the Alps-Danube Region and in the Carpathians by a common tool
- Create exchange platforms for the ecological network in all the three regions

4.5. Implement ecological connectivity in the whole space
- Implementation of connectivity plans in, between and cross over eco-regions
- Realisations of concrete measures in Pilot regions and beyond
- Common development of EU projects

4.6. Communication
- Common Public information
- General environmental awareness raising about the topic on a common base
- Publishing relevant articles and ensure promotion of know how
- Common press work, common products (exhibitions, clips, films) and event

Existing tools and results of former projects and topic related work will be made available for all the partners. A solid base of methodology and tools have been developed especially in the Alps and will be transferred as far as wished to the other regions. The main aim is the concrete and long term implementation of ecological connectivity in the field in all regions.

5) Topics and activities (regularly to be updated)

Level of activities:

> • National programs about ecological connectivity (involving different levels of decision makers)
> • International harmonisation of approaches and methods (mapping) in cooperation with the international policies (Alpine Convention, Carpathian Convention, Ramsar Convention, Danube and Alpine Macro regional programs) -
> • Local implementation (based on local and regional planning)

Topics:

1. Exchange, methods and training projects

1.1. Elaboration of common tools and methodologies (e.g. JECAMI)
1.2. Define approaches to establish and manage ecological corridors
1.3. Exchange about existing strategies and new concepts
1.4. Knowledge exchange about ecological connectivity for species between ecoregions – Pyrenees, Alps, Carpathians, Dinaric Arc, Apennine, Jura, SavaParks …

2. Pilot Regions approach

2.1. Establish a network of Pilot regions
2.2. Establish a pilot region in the border region between Alps/Carpathians/Danube
2.3. Urban area pilot regions and connectivity measures
2.4. Role of Pilot regions for species protection and macro-regional policies

3. Implementation projects for green infrastructure (including those of the European Union)

3.1. Interlink protected areas by connectivity measures and policies
3.2. Alps-Carpathian river corridors (Austria-Slovakia)
3.3. Verification of declared ecological corridors (site visits)
3.4. Special measures for connectivity in favour of flagship species

4. Communication and policy projects

4.1. Communication project about ecological connectivity – how to make it understandable?
4.2. Communication strategy project towards decisions makers for a concrete pilot region
4.3. Ecosystem services ensured by ecological connectivity – how to define them, how to valorise them?
4.4. Species – success stories of ecological connectivity

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5. Sectorial topics

5.1. Sectorial approaches and land use planning: rivers, hydropower, windmills, high tension lines, transport, tourism
5.2. Ecological connectivity and abandoned land in a pilot region
5.3. European agriculture policy and the Alpine-Danube-Carpathian ecoregion: influences on ecological connectivity and habitat fragmentation
5.4. Alien species – ecological connectivity: chance or threat?

6) Project descriptions (on the base of the agreed topics):

Project Number 1 – The basis of ecological connectivity in the ADC Network

WP1 Elaboration of common tools and methodologies (e.g. JECAMI) - TOPIC 1.1

Key words: Definition of connectivity and fragmentation; common analysis procedure, common mapping basis, agreement of a measure catalogue, common standard tool

Project Partners: PA administrations, scientific institutions, spatial planning institutions,…

Funding options: INTERREG DANUBE/Scientific frame programme of EU/Horizon 2020

Elements: 1 – Identifying of existing procedures/policies

2 – Defining a common analysis approach and tool

3 – Defining measures for all concerned areas

4 – Provision of common data base

WP2 Establish a network of Pilot regions - TOPIC 2.1

Key words: Definition of possible PR within the whole area; threats for connectivity; involvement of protected areas (PA); cross-sectorial processes

Project Partners: PA administrations, scientific institutions, spatial planning institutions,…

Funding options: INTERREG DANUBE

Elements: 1 – Analysis of the areas and PA

2 – Identification of the potential of connectivity

3 – Negotiations with national and regional authorities

4 – Delimitations of the perimeter

WP3 Interlink protected areas by connectivity measures and policies - TOPIC 3.1

Key words: Ecological corridors, continuum measures, local agro-environmental measures, tourism policies, spatial planning, environmental protection measures, stakeholder involvement (agriculture, forestry, hunters,…)

Project Partners: Decision makers on local and regional level, PA managers, ministries

Funding options: INTERREG DANUBE

Elements: 1 – Identify potential

2 – Propose linking elements

3 – Mapping

4 – From static to dynamic nature protection

WP 4 Communication project about ecological connectivity – how to make it understandable? - TOPIC 4.1

Key words: Biodiversity, fragmentation, habitats

Project Partners: Experts in communication, NGO's, Media

Funding options: LIFE communication

Elements: 1- Definition of terminology

2 – Target group

3 – Communication vectors

4 – Products

WP5 Sectorial approaches and land use planning: rivers, hydropower, windmills, high tension lines, transport, tourism - TOPIC 5.1

Key words: General definition of possible measures, proposals of implementation in PR

Project Partners: Energy providers, tourist experts, water management bodies, land-use planners

Funding options: INTERREG DANUBE

Elements: 1 – Define threats

2 – Propose solutions

3 – Adapt it to concerned sites

4 – Financial evaluation of probability

Project Number 2 – Realising Ecological Connectivity in a Pilot Region with high symbolic value

WP1 Define approaches to establish and manage ecological corridors – TOPIC 1.2

Key words:	Analysis of corridor potential and needs, management of habitats
Project Partners:	Protected areas, Nature protection departments of regional governments, scientists, networks of PA
Funding options:	INTERREG B and C, Life, Regional funding
Elements:	1 – Gap analysis
	2 – Potential for connectivity
	3 – JECAMI analysis
	4 – Management plan

WP2 Establish a pilot region in the border region between Alps/Carpathians/Danube - TOPIC 2.2

Key words:	Alpine-Carpathian wildlife corridor region
Project Partners:	WWF, DANUBEPARKS, CNPA, ALPARC, local government
Funding options:	INTERREG A, LIFE, Sponsoring
Elements:	1 – Site visit
	2 – Stakeholder involvement
	3 – Priority setting
	4 - Communication

WP3 Alps-Carpathian river corridors (Austria-Slovakia) – TOPIC 3.2

Key words:	River connectivity management
Project Partners:	DANUBEPARKS, scientists, Nationalpark Donauauen
Funding options:	LIFE, Local funding
Elements:	1 – Connectivity analysis
	2 – Gap analysis
	3 – Mapping
	4 – Recommendation of measures

WP4 Communication strategy project towards decisions makers for a concrete pilot region - TOPIC 4.2

Key words: Political recommendations, management recommendations, large public communication, medias

Project Partners: WWF, DANUBEPARKS, local NGO's, ALPARC, CNPA

Funding options: INTERREG, LIFE Communication

Elements: 1 – Definition of a strategy

                                2 – Use of existing communication tools

                                3 – Media network

                                4 – Communication products and diffusion

WP5 Ecological connectivity and abandoned land in a pilot region - TOPIC 5.2

Key words: Land use, nature protection sites, National Park, NATURA 2000

Project Partners: Local governments (A/SK/H)

Funding options: INTERREG A, LIFE

Elements: 1 – Identification of land use

                                2 – Proposal for protected sites

                                3 – Evolution scenarios

                                4 – Purchasing land by governmental institutions

Project Number 3 – New strategies for ecological connectivity

WP1 Exchange about existing strategies and new concepts – TOPIC 1.3

Key words:	Models for the realisation of ecological connectivity, new approaches
Project Partners:	Scientists, spatial planners, ecologists, economists, politicians
Funding options:	INTERREG, Research programmes
Elements:	1 – Definition of existing strategies
	2 – Evaluation of strategies and success factors
	3 – New approaches and topics
	4 – Compendium of strategies

WP2 Urban area pilot regions and connectivity measures TOPIC 2.3

Key words:	Connectivity in urban areas, inner alpine and Carpathian valleys
Project Partners:	Urban planners, local politicians, scientists, ALPARC, DANUBEPARKS, CNPA
Funding options:	INTERREG, research programmes, local funding
Elements:	1 – Definition of urban areas and localisation in the programme area
	2 – Identification of hot spots
	3 – Concrete measure proposals
	4 – Testing in Pilot regions

WP3 Verification of declared ecological corridors (site visits) – TOPIC 3.3

Key words:	Site Visits, verification "in situ"
Project Partners:	Local NGO's, spatial planners, nature protection departments
Funding options:	Local, regional, national, included in larger EU programme
Elements:	1 – Mapping of corridors
	2 – JECAMI analysis
	3 – Site visit
	4 – Evaluation of functioning of the corridor

WP4 Ecosystem services ensured by ecological connectivity – how to define them, how to valorise them? – TOPIC 4.3

Key words:	Ecosystem services (ESS), compensation, valorisation of ESS
Project Partners:	PA and PA networks, economists, politicians
Funding options:	Local, regional, national, INTERREG
Elements:	1 – Definition of ESS
	2 – Attributing values
	3 – Valorisation by communication
	4 – Valorisation by compensation

WP5 European agriculture policy and the Alpine-Danube-Carpathian ecoregion: influences on ecological connectivity and habitat fragmentation – TOPIC 5.3

Key words:	CAP, national agriculture policies, agro-environmental measures
Project Partners:	Agriculture chambers of the countries, scientists, regional administrations
Funding options:	EAGF and EAFRD
Elements:	1 – Analysis of agriculture policy towards nature conservation
	2 – Spot on agriculture and ecological connectivity
	3 – SWOT Analysis of agricultural environmental policy
	4 – Final report

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Project Number 4 – Ecological connectivity and species protection in Central Europe

WP1 Knowledge exchange about ecological connectivity for species between ecoregions – Pyrenees, Alps, Carpathians, Dinaric Arc, Apennine, Jura, SavaParks … - TOPIC 1.4

Key words:	Species approach for ecological connectivity, needs, threats
Project Partners:	WWF, Networks of PA's, scientists, EU environmental agency
Funding options:	LIFE environment, INTERREG, research programmes
Elements:	1 – Species and needs of connectivity (by category)
	2 – Analysis of situation in the programme area
	3 – International conference
	4 – Final report

WP2 Role of Pilot regions for species protection and macro-regional policies – TOPIC 2.4

Key words:	Pilot regions within macro-regional strategies
Project Partners:	PA's network, EUSALP AG7, EUSDR PA6
Funding options:	INTERREG
Elements:	1 – Approach of ecological connectivity within the strategies
	2 – SWOT Analysis
	3 – Priority definition for species migration
	4 – Role of Pilot regions and their valorisation for a global approach

WP3 Special measures for connectivity in favour of flagship species – TOPIC 3.4

Key words:	Symbolic species of the three regions and migratory needs
Project Partners:	Biologists, specialised NGO's, nature protection departments of national authorities, PA's networks
Funding options:	EU and National research programmes, LIFE
Elements:	1 – Definition of flagship species
	2 – Identification of migration needs
	3 – Priority definition of measures
	4 – Measure catalogue

WP4 Species – success stories of ecological connectivity – TOPIC 4.4

Key words: Positive experiences, realised connectivity, saved species

Project Partners: WWF, national authorities, scientists, PA's networks

Funding options: LIFE communication, national ministries

Elements: 1 – Collection of success stories

                        2 – Critical evaluation of the success

                        3 - Realisation of video clips

                        4 – Large public report with mapping

WP5 Alien species – ecological corridors: chance or threat? – TOPIC 5.4

Key words: Alien species invasion and ecological corridors

Project Partners: Scientists, PA's networks, Pilot regions

Funding options: Research programmes, LIFE

Elements: 1 – Identification of alien species for the programme area

                        2 – Evaluation of the role of ecological corridors for alien species

                        3 – Experiences of Pilot regions

                        4 – Final report and mapping

7) Outlook

Strategy & Road Map:

1. Identify key organisations and persons

2. Identify the "unique selling proposition":

- Geographical aspect of the interface between the Carpathians/Danube/Alps
- Cooperation of numerous European countries within one major environmental topic
- Possibility to apply a common approach (efficiency)
- To integrate and implement European environmental approaches and policies

3. Develop new projects for this space

4. Building on existing tools and knowledge

5. Implementing with a high degree of communication work

Timing of activities

Elaboration of one of the 4 projects per year (year 1 – 4)

Elaboration of new project list in the year 5 and actualising the Action plan

Annexe document of the MoC between ALPARC – DANUBEPARKS – CNPA, October 2016

Next actualisation latest: October 2021