

## DECLARATION

### Achieving functional biodiversity in the Danube-Carpathian Region by mainstreaming ecological connectivity (tbd)

**[DRAFT]**

XX.XX.2022

We the undersigned, EUSDR PA 04 "Water Quality" (tbc), EUSDR PA 05 "Environmental Risks" (tbc), EUSDR PA 06 "Biodiversity & Landscape" (tbc), the Carpathian Convention, and the ICPDR (tbc),

- welcoming the impulse provided by the European Green Deal, in particular the 2030 EU Biodiversity Strategy and the UN Decade on Ecosystems Restoration for sustainable development action across the Danube-Carpathian region,
- highlighting the benefits of a regional approach to fostering sustainable development,
- recognizing the urgency of reversing the trend of biodiversity loss,
- acknowledging that habitat fragmentation in the Danube-Carpathian region is among the leading drivers of biodiversity loss and threats to the environmental, social and economic well-being,
- believing that integrated spatial and development planning can counteract this threat and that this requires a Whole of Government and Whole of Society approach,

Pledge to continue and intensify our efforts to

- **Prioritize ecological connectivity conservation in activities, projects, and plans**, and offer our platforms for cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation toward this goal,
- **Reach out to fora in neighbouring regions** such as the EUSALP and Alpine Convention in order to jointly contribute to the objective of building a TEN-N in Europe
- **Develop tools for effective application of the "Do No Significant Harm"<sup>1</sup>** approach of the European Green Deal as well as the Mitigation Hierarchy<sup>2</sup> together with players in the fields of transport and energy infrastructure planning,

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<sup>1</sup> According to the European Commission [definition](#), the *Do No Significant Harm* principle means not supporting or carrying out economic activities that do significant harm to any environmental objective, where relevant, within the meaning of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852

<sup>2</sup> In line with the [Methodological guidance](#) on the provisions of Article 6 (3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, the Mitigation Hierarchy is a hierarchical procedure where appropriate actions are taken for [no net loss of ecosystems and their services](#) in the following order: avoidance, reduction/minimisation, restoration/rehabilitation and offsetting. This means that the first objective

- **Accelerate the completion of the Ecological Network of Large Carnivores in the Carpathians map** and to map large coherent landscapes with wilderness features, and of terrestrial and aquatic ecological corridors between protected areas, in particular Natura 2000 sites, with the aim of securing their conservation.
- **Strengthen the management of existing Protected Areas** and in Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures by promoting cooperation across borders and experience exchange
- **Support the identification and designation of additional protected areas** to fill-in gaps in the regional ecological corridor system as requested by the EU Biodiversity Strategy
- **Drive capacity-building measures of environmental authorities** to enter into fruitful cross-sectoral dialogue on connectivity issues
- **Promote civil society participation** and good governance to maximise impact of our work
- **Support public engagement and outreach** to increase awareness about ecological connectivity across the region and to gain the support of key stakeholder groups such as land owners, transport or energy infrastructure planners for ecological connectivity conservation.
- **Ensure that the recently launched development of an International Standard on biodiversity** adequately considers ecological connectivity by providing support to the International Standardization Organisation (ISO) Technical Committee (TC) 331 on Biodiversity.

We herewith call upon the EUSDR National Coordinators, the EUSDR Trio Presidency, the European Commission and non-environmental players *(list to be revised/extended)* engaged in implementing regional agreements and the European Green Deal to join us in these efforts and to provide support in particular by

- **facilitating and promoting inter-agency, transnational and stakeholder cooperation** toward mainstreaming ecological connectivity objectives into spatial and development planning in the fields of transport, energy, and tourism, including soft measures such as training, governance, and research.
- **Allocating EU funding to measures** that conserve ecological connectivity, favour nature based solutions, promote protected areas management and build incentives & compensation measures for relevant land owners,
- **Mainstreaming EU Green Deal policies** (EU Forest Strategy, EU Soil Strategy, EU Biodiversity Strategy), in particular their targets related to ecosystem restoration, protected areas, connectivity, and climate into other sectoral policies.

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should be to try and avoid or prevent negative impacts. Where this is impossible, damage should be minimised and restoration attempted. Compensation or offsetting should be a last resort.