



Overview of Old growth forest conservation activities of WWF DCP/CEE and main c

Ionut Sorin Banciu – Regional Forest Lead WWF CEE

Zvolen - Slovakia – 28 June 2019



Regional perspective of OGF protection work - History

2001–2005, two projects conducted by the Royal Dutch Society for Nature Conservation (KNNV) in Romania and Bulgaria (BBIMatra Programme).

Provided information about the **extent** and the **preservation status** of their virgin forests and enabled them to categorize these forests as potential NATURA 2000 sites

A conceptual framework for defining of virgin forests – a unifying concept

A **set of criteria** for the selection of virgin forests which are used in both projects:

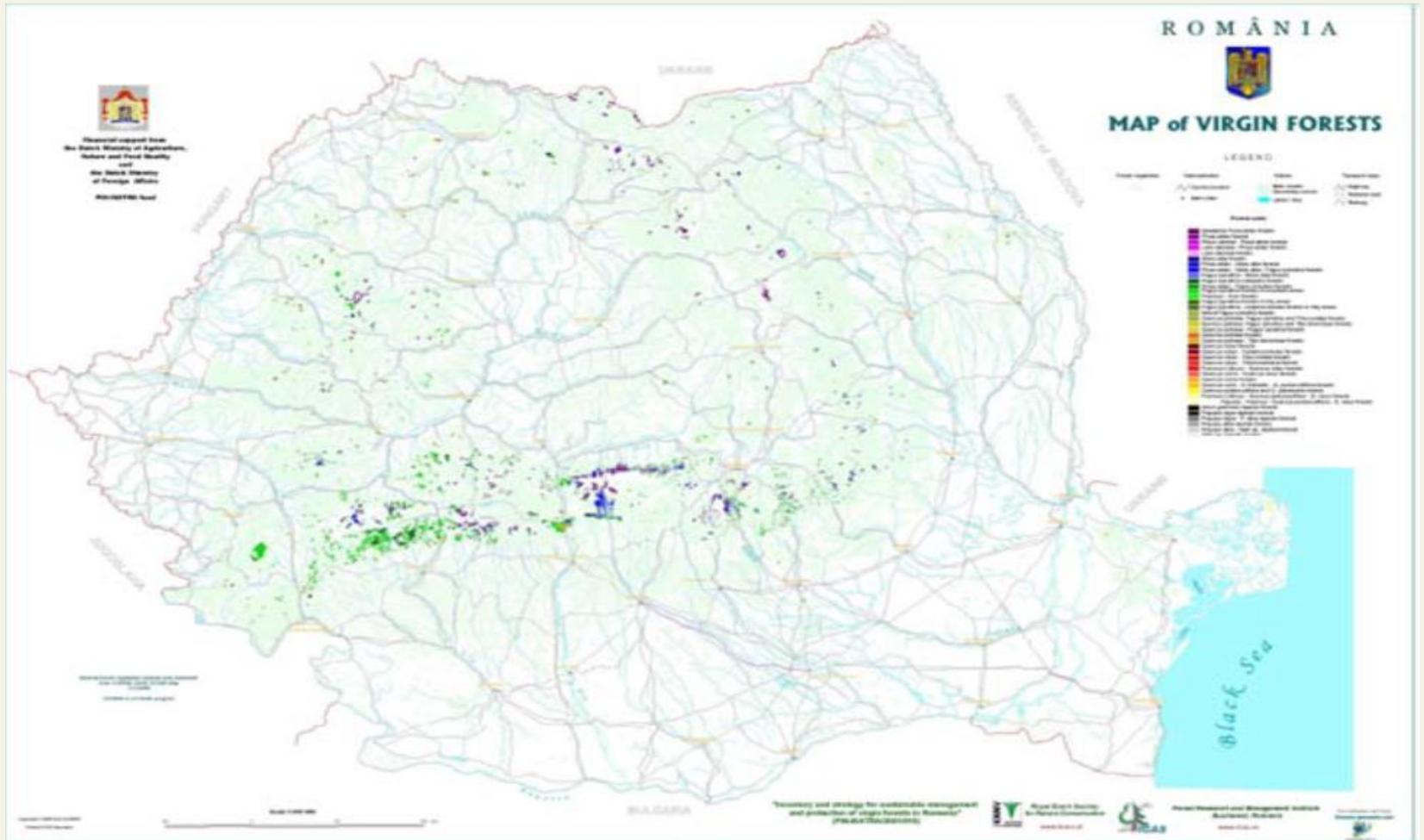
- Authenticity
- Structural features
- Diversity in ages and dimensions
- Minimum area (size)
- Natural boundaries

Based on the above described parameters, the following results were achieved:

- **in Romania:** 3,402 sites larger than 50 ha with a total area of **218,494 ha**
- **in Bulgaria:** 160 sites larger than 50 ha with a total area of **103,356 ha.**



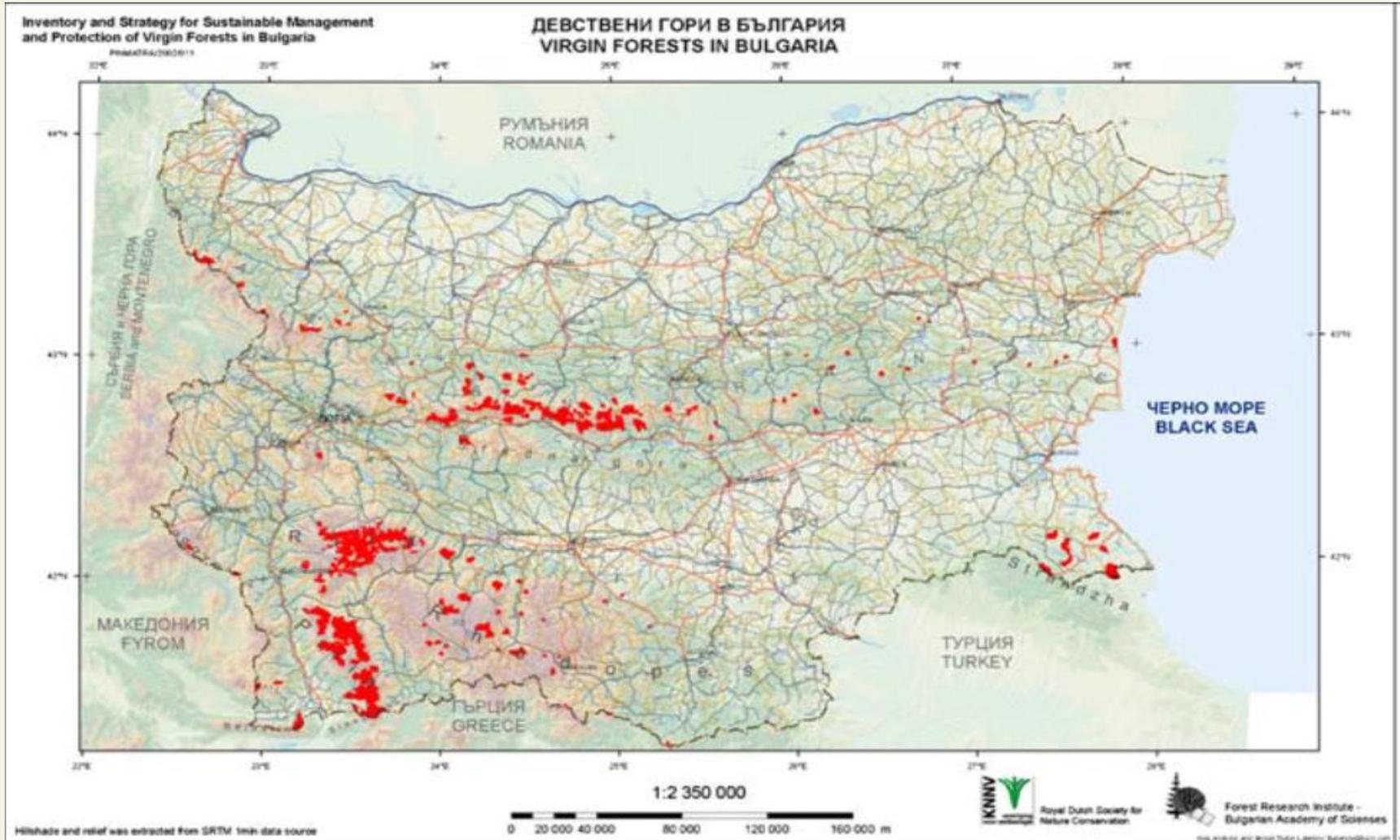
First map of potential Virgin forest for Romania



Distribution of mapped virgin forests in Romania (Source: Biris, and Veen 2005)



First map of potential Virgin forest for Bulgaria

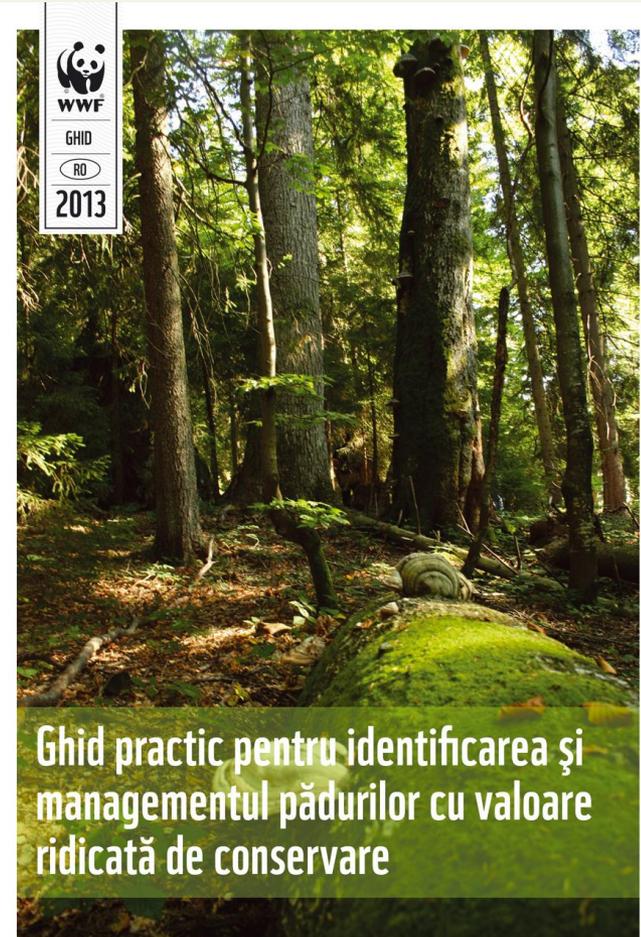


Distribution of mapped virgin forests in Bulgaria (Source: Veen and Raev 2006)



Virgin & Old Growth Forests a WWF DCP working “brand”

- The work to protect these forests started **within the larger context of FSC certification**
- **HCVF concept** was the first tool used to **voluntary protect primary forest ecosystems**
- **2005** the first edition of the **Practical Guideline for the identification and management of HCVF** was published in **Romania**.
 - **HCVF category 3.D Primary forest ecosystems** was defined using existing criteria
- The process was replicated in **Bulgaria and Ukraine**





Virgin & Old Growth Forests a WWF DCP working “brand”



- WWF took the results of these studies into consideration as **best available information sources related to Virgin forests.**
- This studies contained **action plans** to ensure long protection of these forests but they were **only partially followed by the State Authorities** in the two countries mainly for the designation of the Natura 2000 sites.



Virgin & Old Growth Forests a WWF DCP working “brand”

- Next phase of WWF work started in **2011** in Romania with a campaign called “**Save Virgin Forests**” considering that the **State Authorities where not doing enough to protect them.**
- The work expanded to Bulgaria and Ukraine and more recently to Slovakia
- **Except Slovakia** where the process was initiated by NGO **Prales**, and **Bulgaria** where **The Association of Parks** made the first steps in **2009**, in the other countries WWF was the main force behind this process





Same approach for identification...

Main activities:

- Development of a agreed national **criteria and indicators for the identification of these forests using a participatory approach** (relevant stakeholders involvement and input)
- **Inclusion of the agreed C&I in national legislation**
- **Identification & mapping** – Preselection/Areas of potential Virgin & OGF, followed by field inventories and qualification **according to nationally approved criteria and indicators or internal WWF criteria**
- **Legislation and procedures** to include qualified areas under **strict protection**
- **Awareness raising** activities (Public events, brochures, books, photo galleries etc.)
- **Capacity building for interested stakeholders** (Protected area Managers, State institutions, Forest Management Units, local NGO's)
- **Development of online GIS tools and maps** of identified areas
- **Advocacy work for compensation mechanism** (Romania)



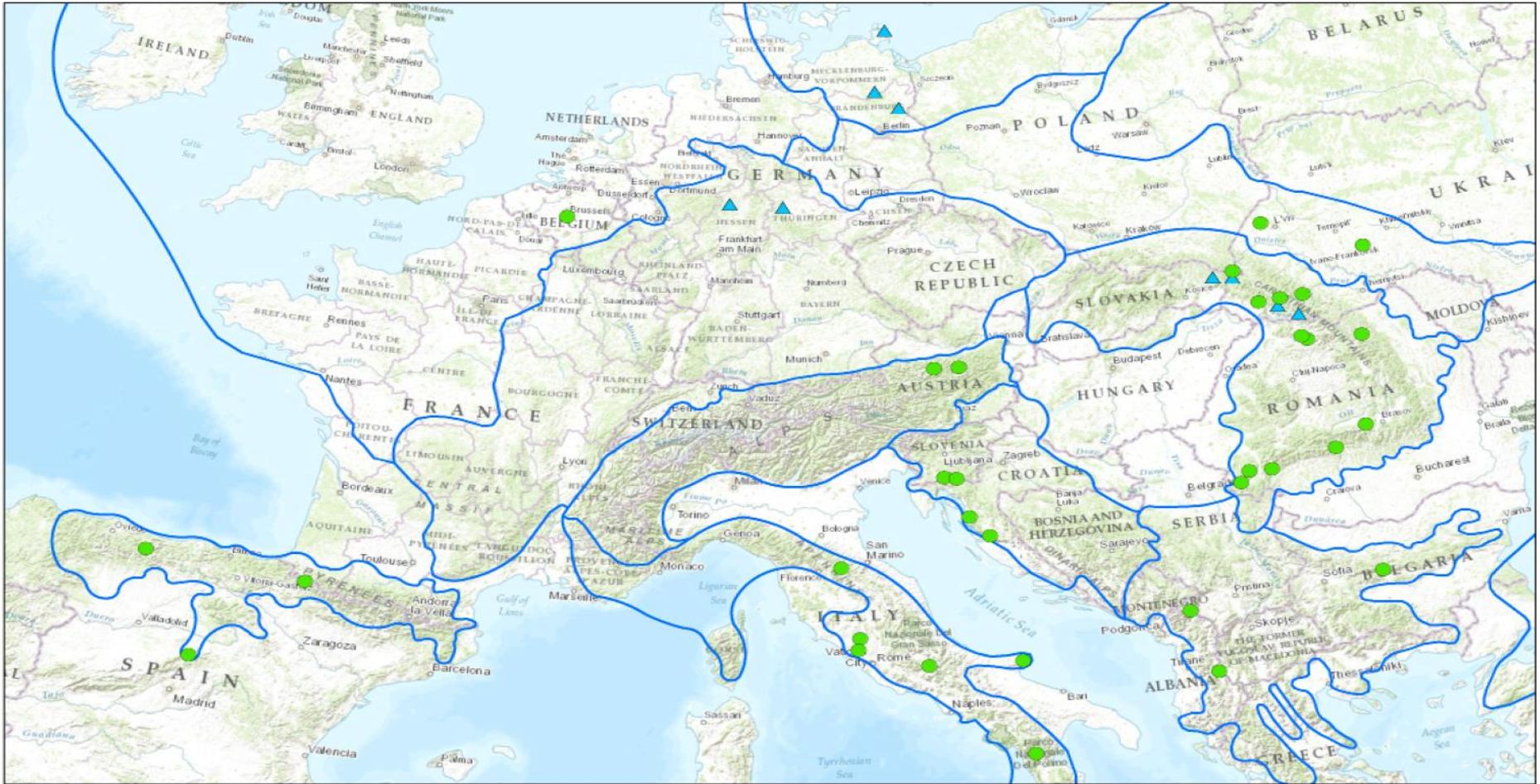
Different solutions for protection...

Adopted solutions for protection:

- Initially these areas were protected through **voluntary mechanisms** (mainly FSC certification) **or already existing legislation for protected areas or forestry** (e.g. Romania)
- **Include them in newly established protected areas** – Natura 2000 as **areas of non-intervention** (e.g. 10% of forest areas included in Natura 2000 in Bulgaria)
- Inclusion under **specific functional categories** (1.5.o and 1.5.j) in renewed **Forest Management Plans** – Romania
- **Newly established mechanisms & procedures** – **National Catalogue of Virgin & Quasi virgin Forests of Romania**
- **Amendments of Forest Acts** to include provisions for protection of these forests - Slovakia
- **Official proposals for New Protected Areas** – National reserves (Slovakia), Nature Monuments (Ukraine)
- **International processes** – **Carpathian Convention** (for Virgin forests), **UNESCO World Heritage Site**



+28.000 ha of OGF included in UNESCO World Heritage Site RO & UA in 2017



Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe

Background: ESRI Topographic Baselayer
Projection: WGS 84

0 87.5 175 350 Kilometer

Scale: 1:7.796.082



- Nominated World Heritage component parts
- ▲ Existing World Heritage component parts
- Beech forest regions

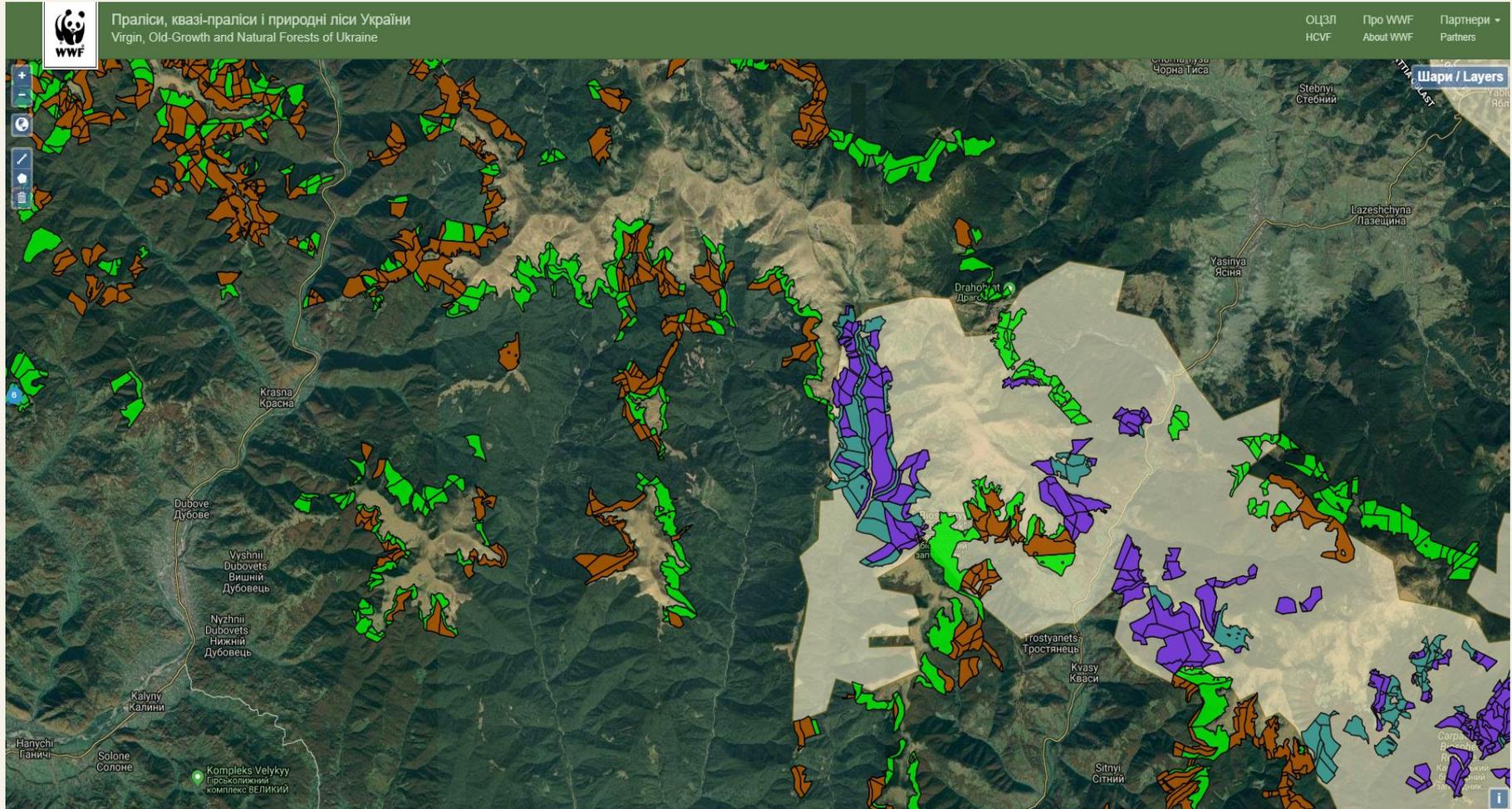


Interactive map of OGF and Protected Areas in Romania

The screenshot displays the LEMN CONTROLAT interactive map interface. At the top left is the LEMN CONTROLAT logo. The navigation bar includes links for Home, EUTR, FSC Controlled Wood Standard, CNRA, Useful Documents and Links, Interactive Maps (highlighted in orange), Partners, and Contact. A search bar with the text "Find address or place" is located on the left side of the map. The map itself shows a satellite view of a region in Romania, with various areas highlighted in colors: green, red, purple, and blue. These colors likely represent different types of OGF (Old Growth Forest) and Protected Areas. Major cities and towns labeled on the map include Hunedoara, Sibiu, Brasov, Comarnic, Targoviste, Pitesti, Ramnicu Valcea, Brezoi, Petrosani, Targu Jiu, and Sibiu. Mountain ranges and rivers are also labeled, such as HUNEDOARA, SIBIU ALBA, GORJ, ARGES VALCEA, and OLT. A "Privacy - Terms" link is visible in the bottom right corner.

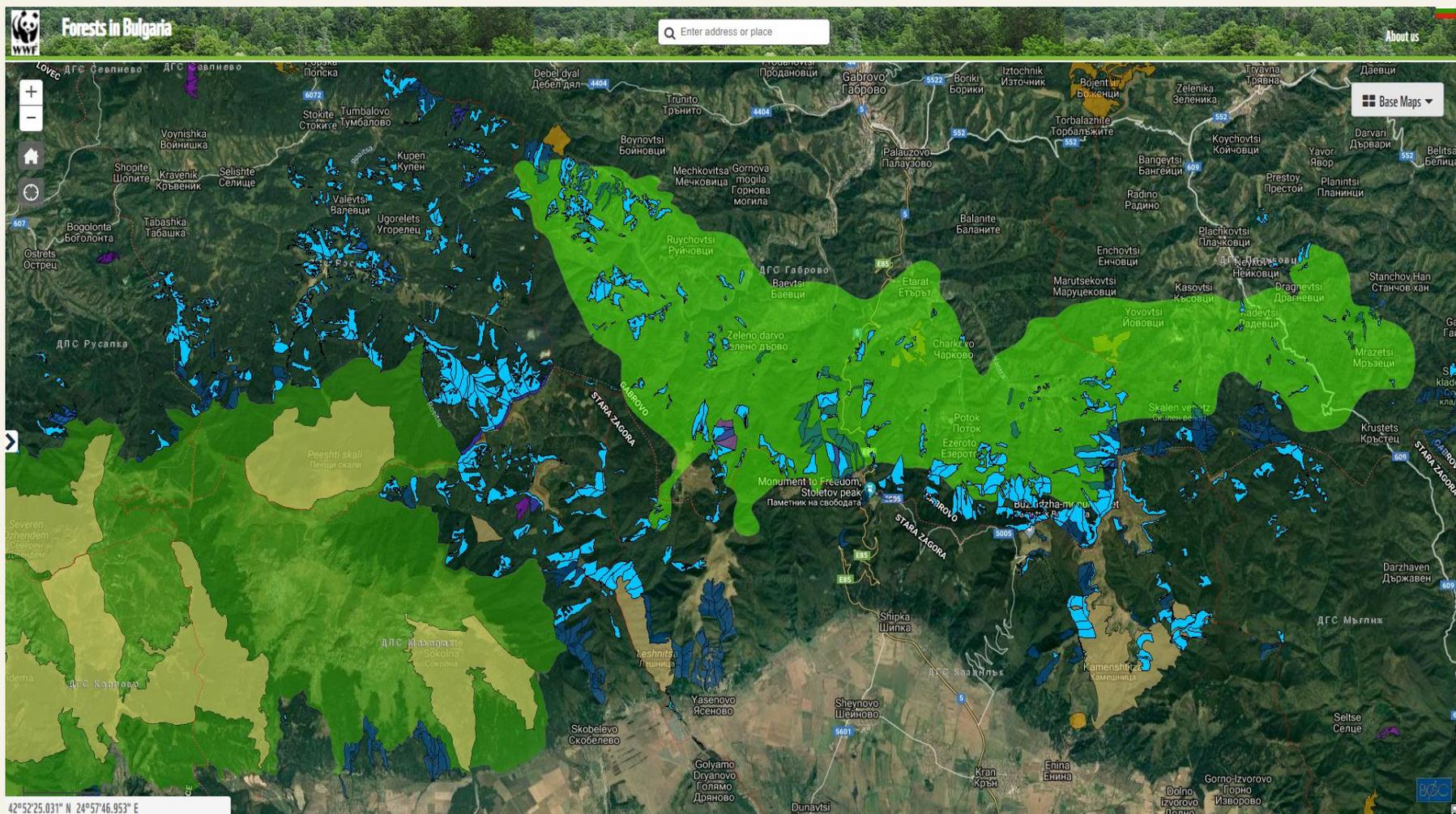


Interactive map of OGF and Protected Areas in Ukraine

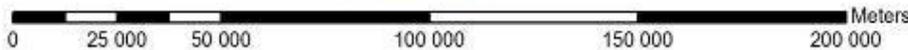
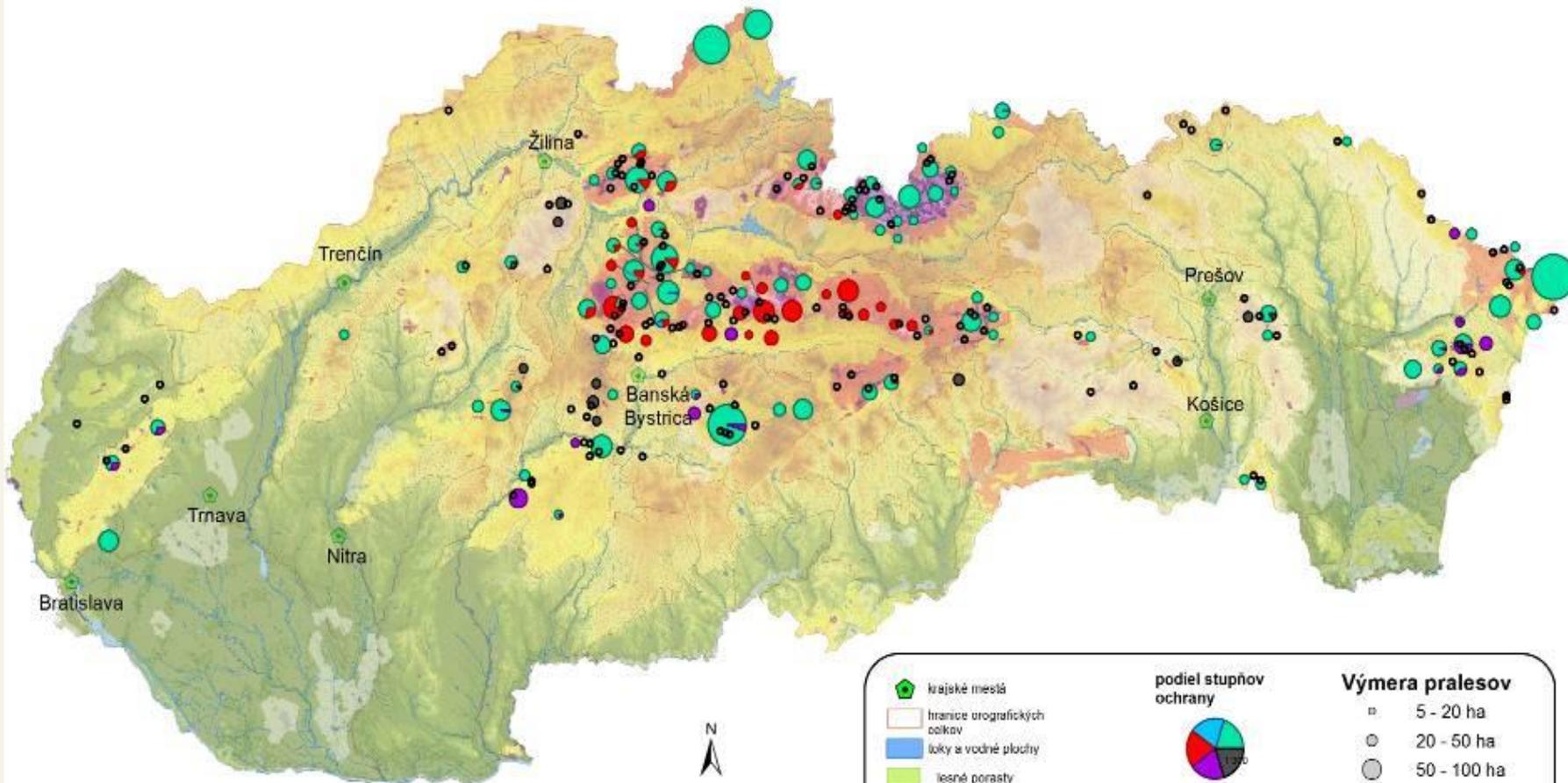




Interactive map of OGF and Protected Areas in Bulgaria



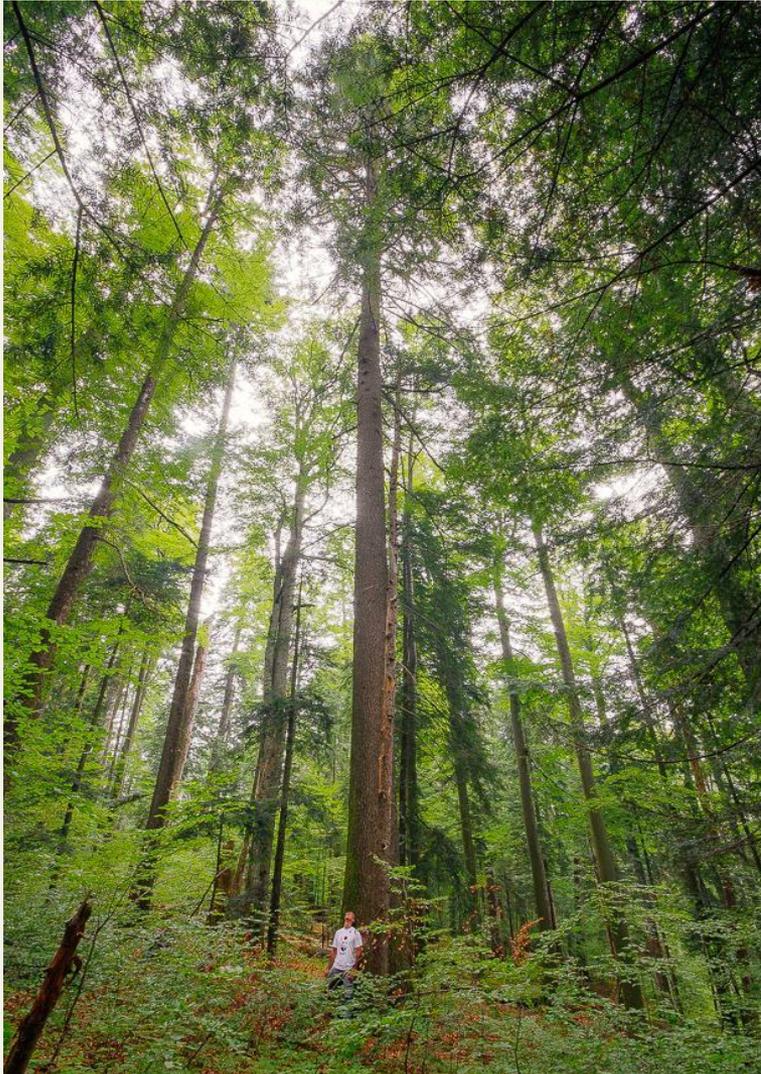
Schématické znázornenie ochrany pralesov a pralesových zvyškov identifikovaných na Slovensku v rokoch 2009 - 2016



© oz Prales - vizualizácia výsledkov mapovania pralesov 2016
 © ÚGKK SR - podklad ZM M 1:50 000

krajské mestá hranice úrovníc prírodných pamiatok toky a vodné plochy lesné porasty	<p>podiel stupňov ochrany</p>	<p>Výmera pralesov</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ 5 - 20 ha ○ 20 - 50 ha ○ 50 - 100 ha ○ 100 - 200 ha ○ 200 - 500 ha ○ viac ako 500 ha
<p>STUPEŇ OCHRANY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 (CHVÚ) 3 (NP) 4 (CH, OP, PR, OP, PP) 5 (PR, PP; státna ochrana) 	<p>ochrana pralesov v</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. sop: primeraná ochrana 4. sop 3. sop 2. sop 1. sop 	

Regional figures



Areas under **preselection** : **480.000 ha** in the Region (RO, UA & BG) – 305.000 ha RO + 125.000 ha in UA + 50.000* ha in BG – **430.000 ha in the Carpathians**

Areas where **field inventories** were made: **318.000 ha** (Autumn 2018 RO, UA, BG) – 164.000 ha RO + 115.000 ha UA + 39.000 ha in BG – **279.000 ha in the Carpathians**

Qualified areas by WWF & other organizations : **260.000 ha** (January 2019, RO, UA, BG) – 65.000 ha RO + 123.000 ha (27.000*) BG + 94.000 ha UA – **159.000 ha in the Carpathians**

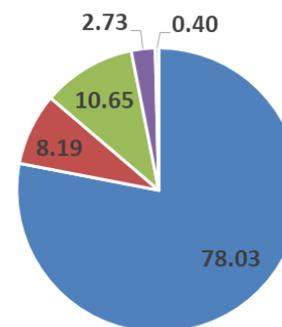
From which under **protection** (January 2019): **218.000 ha** : 52.000 ha in RO, 109.000 ha (13.000*) in BG, 51.000 ha in UA, 7000 ha in SK. – **110.000 ha in the Carpathians**



Country information – RO National Catalogue of Virgin and Quasi virgin

Nr crt	Property type	Area ha	Percent
1	State property	22679	78.03
2	Community owned	2381	8.19
3	Private organizations	3096	10.65
4	Association of private individuals	793	2.73
5	Private individuals	115	0.40
Total		29064	100.00

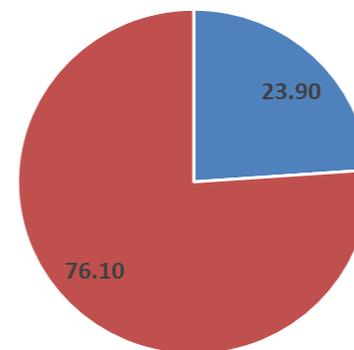
Virgin and Quasi virgin forests by property type - Romania



- State property
- Community owned
- Private organizations
- Association of private individuals
- Private individuals

Nr crt	Category of forest	Area ha	Percent
1	Virgin	6947	23.90
2	Quasi virgin	22117	76.10
Total		29064	100.00

Virgin and Quasi virgin forests included in the Catalogue Romania



- Virgin
- Quasi virgin



Country information – RO National Catalogue of Virgin and Quasi virgin

Online map of Virgin and Quasi virgin forest – polygons included in the Catalogue – October 2018

[Link:](#)

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1o9IGGe3OHultiJu9Jr1fEjpbAXIpH5DZ&ll=45.5970270820613%2C24.7474808287202&z=12>





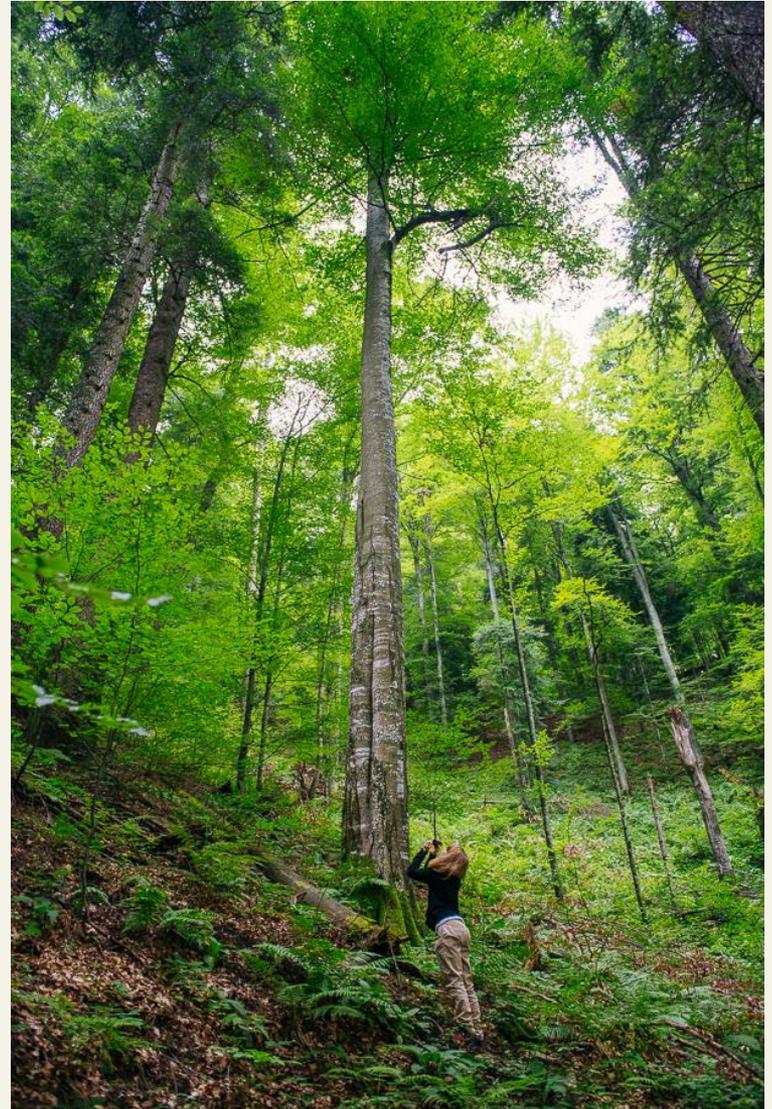
Country information – Ukraine Virgin, Quasi virgin and Natural forests

Nr crt	Protection status of OGF in Ukraine	Area ha
Qualified areas WWF Criteria (3 regions of Carpathians)		93777
1	3rd and 4th level of protection PA - low level of protection	8472
2	Management and recreational zones of national parks, regional parks, anthropogenic and buffer zones of biosphere reserves	9343
3	Strictly protected zone of national, regional parks and in nature reserve	5555
4	Strictly protected zone of biosphere reserve	19903
Included in existing protected areas		43273
A	out of which strictly protected	25458
included in low level of protection areas		17815
B	Confirmed by State Forest Agency	22400
still to be confirmed		9400
C	Nature monuments (Lviv Region)	1800
D	Expanded protected areas (Lviv Region+Zakarpattia)	2000
Protected OGF up to date		51658



Next steps...

- **Speed – up the process to ensure protection** using existing legal & procedural frameworks and new partnerships
- Development or improvement of **compensation mechanisms** for private forest owners and **local communities** through **National and European funds**
- **Better promote the values of Virgin forests**
- Develop secondary legislation to implement **PES schemes (RO)** to support conservation
- Identify and promote **nature conservation business cases**



Main challenges

- **bureaucratic processes and constant political & legislative changes**
- **Limited willingness to protect these forests due to lack of compensation mechanisms for private and community owned forests**
- **Limited active involvement from other organizations and sometimes criticism to WWF work or approach**
- **Opposition from stakeholders (owners, forest managers) to new restrictions because of past experience related to Protected Areas designation processes (mainly Natura 2000)**





Virgin & Old Growth Forest protection in DCP

A large, horizontal log lies on the forest floor, covered in vibrant green moss. Several flat, shelf-like fungi are growing from the log. The background is a dense forest of tall, thin trees with lush green foliage. The ground is covered in brown, fallen leaves.

Thank you!