

JOINT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2021 - 2026 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), WITH FOCUS ON ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Introduction

Joint Strategic Action Plan (SAP) 2021 – 2026 for the Implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Transport’s focus

The Protocol on Sustainable Transport to the Carpathian Convention (Mikulov, 2014; hereinafter referred to as “The Protocol”) covers several aspects related to mobility. Among others, they include policies development, infrastructure planning and development, different transport modes, traffic management systems, transport externalities and real costs.

This Joint Strategic Action Plan (SAP) 2021 – 2026 for the Implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Transport (hereinafter referred to as “Transport SAP”) is implementing those provisions of the Protocol on Sustainable Transport to the Carpathian Convention that have a specific focus on ecological connectivity and biodiversity conservation and in relation to the transport land related modes. The Transport SAP was developed with the support of the Danube Transnational Programme project [TRANSGREEN](#), in cooperation with Carpathian Convention transport, spatial planning and biodiversity experts and stakeholders, and it is conceived as a document dealing with the identification of the main actions by objective, in order to integrate land transport infrastructure and ecological connectivity in a relatively short term. In the Carpathians, the increase in traffic flows and infrastructure often leads to fragmentation of habitats and barriers for wildlife. This is of particular concern as the Carpathian mountain range is still harbouring species and habitats that are close to extinction in other parts of Europe. Loss of biodiversity due to unsustainable transport infrastructure is thus a loss for all of Europe and hinders the attainment of the CBD Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the objectives of the EU cohesion policy and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. To this end, integrated discussions between conservation and transport experts of the Carpathian Convention, the scientific community, and practitioners has been facilitated and encouraged during the development of the Transport SAP, defined “joint” for its integrated aspects. The results of the TRANSGREEN project showed 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 trans-regional levels.

The Transport SAP aims to address the above-mentioned challenges, mainly implementing Articles 1, 2, 3, 8 and 17 of the Sustainable Transport Protocol.

In Article 1, the Protocol invites the parties to increase transnational cooperation in order to, among other goals, avoid landscape fragmentation and develop environmentally friendly transport models and systems.

Article 2 underlines the geographical scope of the Protocol, being the Carpathian Region, as defined by the Conference of Parties.

Article 3 of the Protocol reports the definition of terms used also in this Transport SAP, especially regarding “ecological connectivity”, “external costs”, “sensitive areas”, “transport infrastructure” and “Trans-European Network”.

Article 8 of the Protocol refers to the connectivity of transport infrastructure, highlighting the importance of the protection of sensitive, biodiversity-rich and ecological connectivity areas. Finally, article 17 states that the Conference of the Parties shall develop and adopt the Strategic Action Plan in the Carpathians, which will accompany the implementation of the Sustainable Transport Protocol.

Thematically, the integration of transportation and ecological connectivity merges aspects included both in the Protocol on Sustainable Transport and in the Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable use of Biological and Landscape Diversity.

The Transport SAP mirrors the achievements of the TRANSGREEN and [ConnectGREEN](#) projects, which are relevant for political decision-making, and of other on-going projects aiming at demonstrating ways of designing functional transport infrastructures mitigation measures and improving the functionality of ecological corridors. Results from the work within the pilot areas of TRANSGREEN, and of other relevant projects’ documents (e.g. the guidelines and recommendations for integrated transport infrastructure planning, construction, management and monitoring, definitions) and outputs are feeding the content of the Transport SAP.

The Transport SAP seeks to clearly identify priorities and explicitly outline the potential expected results stemming from the implementation of suggested actions.

The Transport SAP proposes a series of objectives that should be reached by all Carpathian countries jointly. For each of the proposed main objectives, specific actions, expected results, source of funding and timeframe of implementation are also included. Ultimately, the goal of the current Transport SAP is to provide indications to maintain and enhance the environmental quality standards in the Carpathians, without curbing its infrastructural development.

The Transport SAP is addressed to competent authorities in each Carpathian country pointing, first, at the enhancement of the cooperation among different Ministries and responsible actors in each Carpathians’ country, and providing indications on the actions needed for the

development of ecologically-friendly transport infrastructure and the implementation of the [EU Green Infrastructures \(GI\) Strategy](#) at national and Carpathian level.

Green Infrastructure is defined and implemented by several approaches related to wildlife conservation and landscape planning. However, all these definitions emphasize the elements of ecological connectivity, multifunctionality of landscapes, wildlife conservation and habitat restoration to enhance the connection between natural areas. Green infrastructures consist of natural and anthropic elements, such as (re)forested areas, green bridges, parks in urban areas, green roofs and walls, high natural value agricultural land or protection forests. Green infrastructure aims at maintaining and creating landscape features that might guarantee that ecosystems will continue to provide services such as clean water, clean air, productive soils and attractive recreation areas. According to the [EU Strategy on Green Infrastructure](#) the overall goal is the development of a Trans-European Network for Green Infrastructure in Europe, a so-called TEN-G, equivalent to the existing networks for transport (TEN-T). Furthermore, according to the [EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030](#), *“in order to have a truly coherent and resilient Trans-European Nature Network, it will be important to set up ecological corridors to prevent genetic isolation, allow for species migration, and maintain and enhance healthy ecosystems.”*. The Transport SAP seeks to contribute to the development of a framework of coexistence of TEN-G and TEN-T in Carpathians with less possible impacts on biodiversity and ecological connectivity.

Adoption process of the Joint Strategic Action Plan (SAP) 2021 – 2026 for the Implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Transport

As regards the adoption process of the Transport SAP by the Carpathian Countries, the final agreed version of the document, developed within the Convention WGs, was shared by the Carpathian Convention National Focal points, with the support of the Members of the Sustainable Transport Working Group, with responsible Ministries, that authorized its final adoption at the 6th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP6). Indeed, the key role for the implementation of the Convention between the COP meetings is played by the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (CCIC) - a subsidiary body established by COP1, pursuant to COP Rule 21 in correspondence with Article 14 paragraph 2-point e and Article 16 of the Convention. The CCIC consists of National Focal Points to the Convention.

Contrary to the Convention and its thematic protocols, this strategic action plan is not a legal act binding the Parties, therefore it does not require the signature and ratification of the Countries and it is adopted by a decision of the Conference of the Parties.

The implementation of the Transport SAP depends mainly on the current priorities of the Parties to the Protocol, and the availability of financial resources for carrying out activities determined in the Transport SAP. Upon the expiry of the validity period, based on implementation progress evaluation and current common priorities of the Parties, a subsequent SAP or strategy can be adopted for the next planning period.

This Transport SAP, common to all Parties, cannot consider the realities and priorities of, or progress made by any individual country but can be a useful guidance instrument to develop National Action Plans. Therefore, each country in its own interest, and for its internal planning

needs, should elaborate its own National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of the Protocol.

Joint Strategic Action Plan (SAP) 2021 - 2026 for the Implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Transport

Pursuant to Article 17 paragraphs 1 and 4 of the Sustainable Transport Protocol to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (hereinafter referred to as “the Convention”), adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Mikulov on 26th September 2014 and entered into force; Pursuant to Decision COP5/9 on Sustainable transport and infrastructure, industry and energy, in particular its paragraphs 2 and 3; Following the Draft Programme of Work of the Carpathian Convention, 1 January 2018 – 31 December 2020, Annex 1, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention by its Decision COP5/15 on Programme of work and budget of the Carpathian Convention paragraph 6; In line with the Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Kiev on 22 May 2003 and entered into force; In line with the Strategic Action Plan for the implementation of the Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable use of Biological and Landscape Diversity; In order to ensure implementation of the provisions of the Sustainable Transport Protocol, the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee recommended the following Strategic Action Plan for approval of the Bureau and adoption by the Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

In order to ensure realization of mobility needs, in harmonious relation to both society and economy as well as nature, in particular through the development of infrastructure while minimizing its negative impact on the environment, within the next 3 to 5 years the Parties, as for article 17 of the Sustainable Transport Protocol, and relevant stakeholders¹ shall undertake the following actions:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

¹ Involved categories of stakeholder: 1. Fundamentally collaborated: Stakeholders who work in partnership in relevant aspects in all phases of a Linear Transportation Infrastructure (LTI) development process from the decision-making and planning stages through to the implementation, operation and maintenance phases of a project; 2. Involved: Stakeholders that work partially or directly with interested third parties and it is, therefore, necessary to ensure their concerns and aspirations are understood, considered and, where appropriate, incorporated into decision making; 3. Consultancy: Stakeholders with high interest, low influence but supportive; and, 4. Informative: Stakeholders who have little interest, so there is less need to consider them in much detail or to engage with them. However, it is important to assist them in understanding the problems and promoting potential solutions.

Reducing negative impact of existing transport infrastructure on ecological connectivity

Pursuant to Articles 1, par. 2 a), b), d) and e), Article 3 and Article 8 of the Protocol, the following actions shall be undertaken:

1. Support and promote a common methodology² for collection, analyses and mapping about fauna traffic mortality.
RESULTS: common methodology about fauna traffic mortality monitoring shared and promoted at the Carpathian level towards identifying critical zones for safety of humans and wildlife.
INVOLVED ACTORS: Parties, Road and railway management authorities
FUNDING: state budget
TIMEFRAME: ongoing
2. Identify “critical sections” on existing transport infrastructure.
RESULTS: definition and mapping of critical sections on existing transport infrastructure which influence the ecological connectivity.
INVOLVED ACTORS: Parties, EU DTP ConnectGREEN Project partners
FUNDING: project based – EU DTP ConnectGREEN Project
TIMEFRAME: by 2026
3. Preparation of “restoration projects”, detailed proposal of measures to restore ecological connectivity for all critical sections.
RESULTS: projects of mitigation measures on transport infrastructure towards increasing their ecological connectivity.
INVOLVED ACTORS: CC WG Biodiversity, CC WG Transport, Parties
FUNDING: project based – EU Interreg
TIMEFRAME: by 2026

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Ecological connectivity and wildlife-vehicle collisions are taken into account in the development of transport infrastructure

Pursuant to Article 1, par. 2 d), Article 3 and Article 8 of the Protocol, the following actions shall be undertaken:

²“TRANSGREEN Tool for registering animal-vehicle collisions: http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/35/a8315c06442b2a29426b674458779cd0b92ee9a9.pdf. Link to the online tool: <https://road-kill-registration.green-web.eu/?lang=en>

1. Ensure the protection of migration corridors and ecological connectivity in spatial planning.
RESULTS: legal and regulatory instrument to protect migration corridors in spatial planning are developed and implemented by relevant authorities, where not yet existing.
INVOLVED ACTORS: Parties
FUNDING: state budget
TIMEFRAME: by 2026
2. Make available the Innovative Decision Support Tool³ for transport/spatial planners.
RESULTS: innovative Decision Support Tool available to assist in decisions making on reducing conflicts in corridor areas related to nature conservation and transport/spatial planning.
INVOLVED ACTORS: EU DTP ConnectGREEN project partners
FUNDING: project based – EU DTP ConnectGREEN
TIMEFRAME: by 2021 – EU DTP ConnectGREEN project timeframe
3. Make use of the “*Wildlife and Traffic in the Carpathians-Guidelines how to minimize the impact of transport infrastructure development on nature in the Carpathian countries*”⁴ for monitoring the impact of transportation on nature and for evaluating the effectiveness of mitigation measures.
RESULTS: standards for monitoring the impact of new transport infrastructure on the fauna promoted and implemented by both transport and environmental sectors.
INVOLVED ACTORS: Parties
FUNDING: state budget
TIMEFRAME: ongoing

³ An “Innovative Decision Support Tool” for the preservation of ecological corridors to be used by landscape planners is under development within the EU DTP Project ConnectGREEN. The Decision support tool is planned to be integrated in the CCIBIS platform (see footnote 8). According to the proposed target group of the tool (spatial planners, local decision-makers, local authorities and investors), there will be two main parts of the tool: 1) the narrative part will identify potential conflicts among specific land- use functions, define a logic algorithm to propose changes or new investments (through check-list), 2) based on this information, the proposed solutions/mitigation measures will be advised. Relevant links: <http://www.ccibis.org/> and <http://library.spectra-perseus.org/>.

⁴ Chapter 12 of the “Wildlife and Traffic in the Carpathians-Guidelines how to minimize the impact of transport infrastructure development on nature in the Carpathian countries”. Link: http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/35/02caaaf3c1c1365f76574e754ddbdc4e1af4a7a.pdf. The Guidelines were developed under the EU DTP TRANSGREEN Project.

4. Share common practices related to the application of methodologies (e.g., SEA, EIA, TIA, AA⁵) for the assessment of impact of transport infrastructure on ecological connectivity.
RESULTS: information on methodologies for the assessment of impact of transport infrastructure on ecological connectivity shared.
INVOLVED ACTORS: Parties
FUNDING: project based – EU DTP SAVEGREEN
TIMEFRAME: continuous
5. Make use of the *Carpathian Countries Integrated Biodiversity Information System (CCIBIS)*⁶ to collect information about existing and planned transport infrastructure in the Carpathian region.
RESULTS: common database with updated information about transport infrastructure available.
INVOLVED ACTORS: Parties, CCIBIS Administrators
FUNDING: project based - EU DTP ConnectGREEN and SAVEGREEN projects
TIMEFRAME: ongoing
6. Collect data about monitoring the impact of transport on fauna, new GI elements, prevention systems, mitigation measures and ecological corridors into CCIBIS.
RESULTS: updated database.
INVOLVED ACTORS: Parties, CCIBIS Administrators
FUNDING: project based - EU DTP ConnectGREEN and SAVEGREEN projects
TIMEFRAME: ongoing
7. Make use of CCIBIS to identify strategic ecological connections in the Carpathian region.

⁵ SEA: Strategic Environmental Assessment; EIA: Environmental Impact Assessment; TIA: Territorial Impact Assessment; AA: Appropriate Assessment. TRANSGREEN project produced a Training Package “Keeping Nature Connected – EIA for Integrated Infrastructure Planning”: http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/35/f5374e0aee3813cfd352c8005b5ceb0da52d52c5.pdf

⁶ The Carpathian Countries Integrated Biodiversity Information System (CCIBIS) is an online platform for collecting and sharing scientific information and data generated in projects within the Carpathian Convention Community. The CCIBIS works to provide a scientific network for professionals and a platform of increased awareness, not only for relevant stakeholders, but also for members of civil society as well as anyone interested in the Carpathian region. The CCIBIS is an open source tool and living platform, thus any organization, institution or private person is welcome to share its data. The platform contributes to overcome the generally observed lack of data availability. It has been built and extended under the Interreg projects BioREGIO, TRANSGREEN and ConnectGREEN. Link: <http://www.ccibis.org/>

RESULTS: common database with updated information about ecological connectivity.

INVOLVED ACTORS: Parties, NGOs and Research Centres / Universities

FUNDING: EU DTP ConnectGREEN project

TIMEFRAME: ongoing

8. Based on CCIBIS, overlap existing and planned transport infrastructure and areas of ecological importance⁷.

RESULTS: map showing the intersections between transport infrastructure and ecological connectivity.

INVOLVED ACTORS: Parties, ConnectGREEN project partners

FUNDING: project based

TIMEFRAME: by 2021 – EU DTP ConnectGREEN project timeframe

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Fostered cooperation of all relevant stakeholders of Carpathian Convention and enhancement of stakeholder participation in spatial planning, and development of transport infrastructure

Pursuant to Articles 1, par. 2, Article 5 and Article 8 of the Protocol, the following actions shall be undertaken:

1. Facilitate integrated consultations, coordination and cooperation between all relevant stakeholders, in order to encourage their active participation in discussing current and future environmental conflicts and raise awareness on the potential impact of planned infrastructures on ecologically sensitive areas.

RESULTS: common cross-sectorial workshops organized in the framework of Carpathian Convention to involve relevant stakeholders in the discussion of environmental conflicts.

INVOLVED ACTORS: Parties, CC Transport WG, CC Biodiversity WG

FUNDING: project based - EU DTP ConnectGREEN and SAVEGREEN projects

TIMEFRAME: by 2026

2. Disseminate and promote the implementation of the “*Wildlife and Traffic in the Carpathians-Guidelines how to minimize the impact of transport infrastructure development on nature in the Carpathian*”

⁷ E.g. TEN-G, migration corridors of large carnivores, ecological corridors, Natura 2000 sites (and other sites of national and international importance), components of the Emerald network, UNESCO World Heritage Properties, Man and Biosphere Reserves, wildlife dispersal areas, protected areas, linkage and roadless areas

*countries*⁸ among transport infrastructure, spatial planning and other relevant authorities, with regards mainly to:

- Basic steps and processes for ensuring ecological connectivity within transport linear infrastructure
- Fauna passages and other technical solutions
- Monitoring the impact of transport on nature

RESULTS: road map for relevant projects' outputs' implementation at the national level.

INVOLVED ACTORS: Parties

FUNDING: no funding required

TIMEFRAME: ongoing

3. Conduct proper public participation procedures⁹, such as public consultations on feasibility studies or environmental impact assessments, making use of good practices.

RESULTS: stakeholder consultation processes in spatial planning for transport infrastructure.

INVOLVED ACTORS: Parties

FUNDING: state budget

TIMEFRAME: ongoing

4. Develop and make use of training courses on interrelations between biodiversity and transport networks for national and local stakeholders.

RESULTS: capacity of national and local stakeholders built and increased through training courses on interrelations between biodiversity and transport networks.

INVOLVED ACTORS: Parties, NGOs and national and local experts and stakeholders

FUNDING: project based – EU DTP ConnectGREEN and SAVEGREEN projects

TIMEFRAME: by 2026

⁸ Wildlife and Traffic in the Carpathians-Guidelines how to minimize the impact of transport infrastructure development on nature in the Carpathian countries". Link: http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/35/02caaafe3c1c1365f76574e754ddbdc4e1af4a7a.pdf

⁹ EU DTP TRANSGREEN Public Participation – Scheme for an integrated linear transport infrastructure development/planning: http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/35/d9697e33f311110be59cae6a14002130484978b6.pdf