

## **Herding/pastoralism in the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention)**

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Anamaria Iuga (National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, Bucharest, Romania)

[You can join us during and after the meeting...](#)

## Herding/pastoralism is a very ancient occupation

- It has a long history in Europe, with continuous adaptations and innovations
- But with many millenia/centuries old, tested but still relevant 'best practices'



Wall painting from Roman Times (Rome)



Feeding pigs with acorns (British Library)

*No other activity of man can be compared with **extensive pasturing**, including that of woodland, in the **widespread and lasting effect** it has produced.*

*Although it was almost universally practised in Europe up to 200 years ago, and **at one time was the main way in which the woodland was utilised**, it can be **studied in only a few places today**.*



Grazing sheep in a wood-pasture (Kinga Öllerer)

Heinz Ellenberg (1988)  
*Vegetation Ecology of Central Europe*

# Threat: ageing, decrease and disappearance of traditional herders

## Diverse causes

- Disrespect from the society (regarded as backward, even stupid)
- Lifestyle changes (difficult job, urbanisation)
- Economic pressures (unjust competition from industrial meat and dairy)
- Misunderstanding (“just stand on the pasture and do nothing”)



A passed away knowledgeable herder  
Gyimes, Romania (Ábel Péter Molnár)

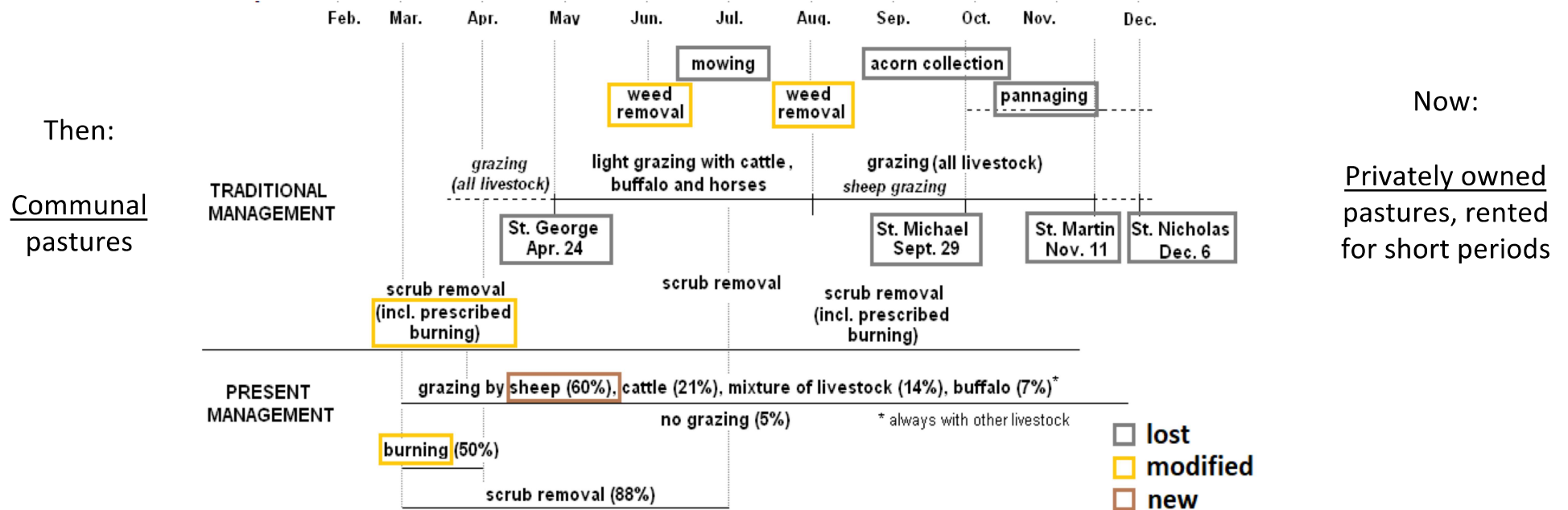


Shepherds family  
Romania (Anamaria Iuga)



Hay making in Maramures  
(Cosmin Ivaşcu)

**Outcome:** changes in the traditional practices that created and maintained these pastoral habitats (e.g. calendar, stocking rates, grazing livestock species)



The traditional and present management regimes applied in the wood-pastures from Southern Transylvania and the percent of vascular plant species identified flowering in different months (source: Öllerer, 2014)

## Significant segment of our cultures originate / is maintained by herders

- Folk songs, dances, music instruments, cloths, craftworks etc.
- Ecological and land-use management knowledge and practices
- Herder festivals, museums, exhibitions are organized
- Traditions are acknowledged, but herders themselves are often less respected and supported

**Slovak festivals** (Bačova cesta, Bačovské dni, Ovenálie, Pastierske nôty, Ovčiarska nedeľa etc.)

**Polish festivals, conferences** (Tradycyjne Mieszani Owiec w Koniakowie, Program Owca Plus, Międzynarodowa Konferencja Pasterska etc.)



Fujara (on the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO)



Milk measurement feast, involving a “Păpălugăra” (Green Man), Romania (Anamaria Iuga)



Hutsul Festival (source: internet)

## Cultures only survive if alive (i.e. transmitted, adaptive)

- Maintained by ongoing adaptations in traditional settings ("on the pasture")
- Transformed/adjusted to modern lifestyles (e.g. Dance House Movement, UNESCO)
- Heritage making process (outside/intellectuals interventions)



Milking in the Carpathians  
Romania (Ábel Péter Molnár)



In winter the pasture is used as ski  
slope, Carpathians  
Romania (Anamaria Iuga)



Dance Houses in cities

## Culture (and knowledge) needs support: moral and financial

### Without support:

- Opera houses would close...
- Museums, research institutes would close...
- Herders will disappear...



A younger herder in the Carpathians  
Romania (Ábel Péter Molnár)



Preparing cheese, Maramureș region  
Romania (Anamaria Iuga)



The last forest pig keepers  
and the last forest pigs  
in Serbia (Ábel Péter Molnár)



## Habitats created by traditional land-use (by grazing and mowing)

- Millions of hectares in our region
- They are often species rich (biodiversity hotspots), and valuable for conservation
- For survival they need extensive management

### Their future is uncertain. Options are:

- If abandoned they turn into species-poor bush/forest
- Conservationists need expensive, unsustainable machinery to remove biomass
- Ongoing management by herders (with tradition-based innovation)?

Pasture woodland in Jelenec –  
Gýmeš (19. century)



The same site managed by  
conservationists (Slovakia)



Alexander Fehér



Southern  
Carpathians,  
Romania

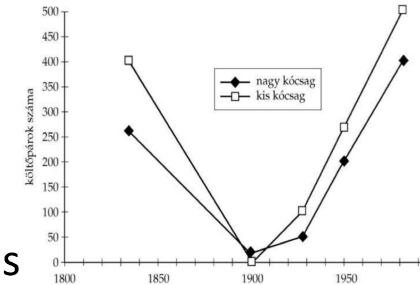


Stara Planina, Serbia

# Protection of nature and culture works!

## We saved

- Eagles, egrets, falcons, wolves, bison
- Many traditional livestock breeds, fruit varieties, crafts and customs
- **Do we want to save herders? The present answer of the society: no, not really...**



Young cowboy competition, Hungary (Sándor Karácsony)



Three-generational roma herder family (near Cluj, Ábel Molnár)

**Redyk Karpacki** (2013): 300 sheep moved from the Brasov region (RO) to Moravské Valašsko (CZ) May-September 1 200 km



Garstka 2013

## Conservationists can learn from herders/ traditional rural communities - coproduction of knowledge, re-discovering ancient knowledge

- re-evaluating current knowledge on ecosystems and habitats
- discovering forgotten/overlooked methods of landscape and ecosystem management
- E.g.: rediscovering **ancient livestock guarding dogs** and traditional knowledge as ecological friendly method of depredation by large carnivores - method introduced to other continents with no LGD traditions by conservationists



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### Coexistence through the Ages: The Role of Native Livestock Guardian Dogs and Traditional Ecological Knowledge as Key Resources in Conflict Mitigation between Pastoralists and Large Carnivores in the Romanian Carpathians

Cosmin Marius Ivaşcu<sup>1,2\*</sup> and Alina Biro<sup>3,4</sup>

**Abstract.** Livestock guardian dogs (LGDs) in the Romanian Carpathians are as old as the pastoral presence and activity in the region. The main role of these dogs is to protect livestock from predation by large carnivores. The Carpathian Mountains, as opposed to other European mountain ranges, have always had considerable populations of wolf, brown bear, and lynx; conflict with the herders is inevitable. Here, the shepherds rely only on themselves and their dogs to keep their animals safe from predation during pastoral movements. We investigated 12 sites from the historical regions of Banat and Transylvania, where we have collected traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) on the use of native LGDs as an ancient non-lethal method for the prevention of livestock depredation. By monitoring the behavior of their dogs, the shepherds establish a complex ethno-ecological relationship with them, which helps them foretell the movements and presence of large carnivores in their vicinity. We have also investigated the recent positive change of attitude of some of the Romanian nature conservationists towards the Romanian Carpathian Shepherd Dog breed, which is also currently promoted by important international nature conservation NGOs as an ecologically friendly method to mitigate the conflict with large carnivores. The uninterrupted use of endemic LGD breeds by pastoralists in Romania might be one of the main reasons for the survival and conservation of large carnivores here in the past and in the future.

**Keywords:** Romanian livestock guardian dogs, pastoralism, large carnivores, traditional ecological knowledge, bio-cultural heritage.

#### Introduction

Large carnivore protection and population recovery are some of the most important and controversial issues in nature conservation worldwide. The predatory behavior of large carnivores often inflicts considerable economic losses to

guardian dogs (from here on abbreviated as LGD) in large carnivore conservation initiatives. This approach represents the rediscovery and modern adaptation of ancient, non-lethal methods of carnivore attack prevention developed over millennia in the herding traditions in Asia and Central,

## **Major social injustices inflicted on traditional herders in our region\***

- Disrespect and misrepresentation (by the society and decision makers)
- Invisibility (e.g. in media)
- Misunderstanding (by public, decision makers, conservationists)
- Economic vulnerability (e.g. through unjust competition with food industry)
- Political vulnerability (e.g. inappropriate, even perverse/irrational regulations)
- Unethical collaborations (e.g. in research and development)
- Rights violations (e.g. traditional land-use practices, access to pastures)
- Disconnection (e.g. among herders and with partners in collaborations)
- Improper education (e.g. disrespectful and decontextualized school curricula)
- Lack of inclusivity (e.g. in protected area management)

\*Source: Molnár et al.: Social justice for traditional knowledge holders will help conserve Europe's nature. (submitted)

## Traditional herders are diverse...

- Knowledgeable herders can be partners in research and development
- Ethical, decolonized approaches: knowledge co-production, co-design, co-management etc.
- Need for meaningful and respectful collaborations
- **Role of young/middle-aged active herders**
- **Role of women herders**

### 4. Traditional herders' knowledge and worldview and their role in managing biodiversity and ecosystem-services of extensive pastures

József KIS<sup>a</sup>, Sándor BARTA<sup>b</sup>, Lajos ELEKES<sup>c</sup>, László ENGI<sup>d</sup>, Tibor FEGYVER<sup>e</sup>, József KECSKEMÉTI<sup>f</sup>, Levente LAJKÓ<sup>g</sup>, and János SZABÓ<sup>h</sup>

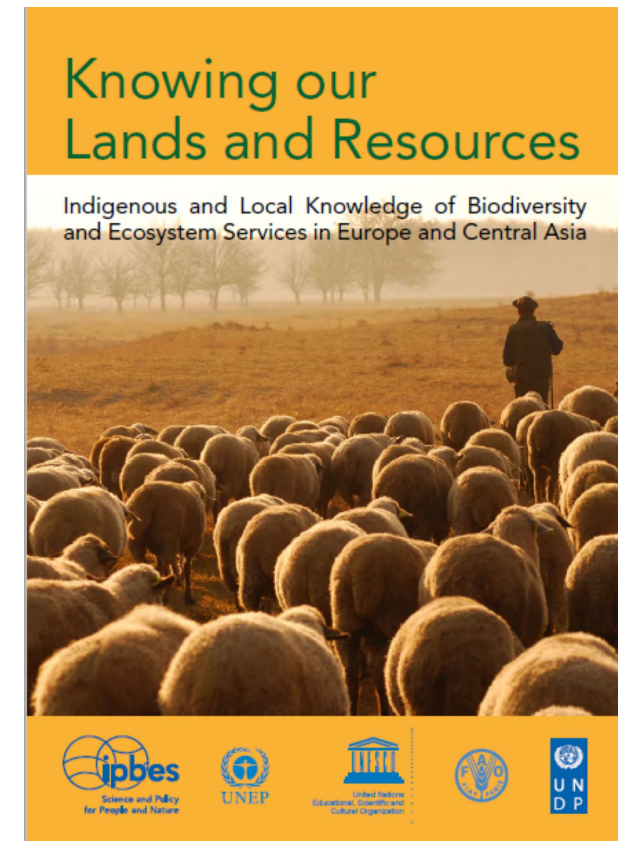
- Cattle herder, 6625 Fábiansébestyén, Rózsa Ferenc utca 30. HUNGARY
- Cattle herder, 5321 Kunmadaras, Széchenyi u. 7. HUNGARY
- Cattle herder, 6767 Ópusztaszer, Rontó szél 173. HUNGARY
- Cattle herder, 6728 Szeged, Gyula u. 16. HUNGARY
- Cattle herder, 6900 Makó, Járandó u. 14/1. HUNGARY
- Shepherd, 6097 Kunadacs, Peregadacs u. 3. HUNGARY
- Shepherd, 6794 Úllás, Sipos malom 42. HUNGARY
- Shepherd, 4002 Debrecen, Nagy Mihály kert 71. HUNGARY



An Afternoon on the Pasture with the Shepherd László Sáfian (knowledge of grass, sheep, bells, dogs)  
6,283 views · Premiered Jan 28, 2022

A 3-hour long slow film narrated by a traditional herder

An IPBES paper solely written by herders about their contributions to nature conservation

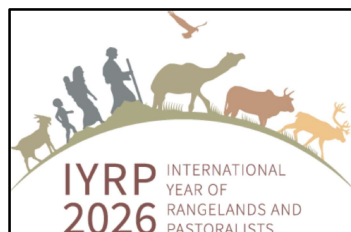


## Some relevant global institutions

- UN International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP)
- Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Sites (GIAHS)
- Cultural World Heritage (UNESCO)
- Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES)
- ...

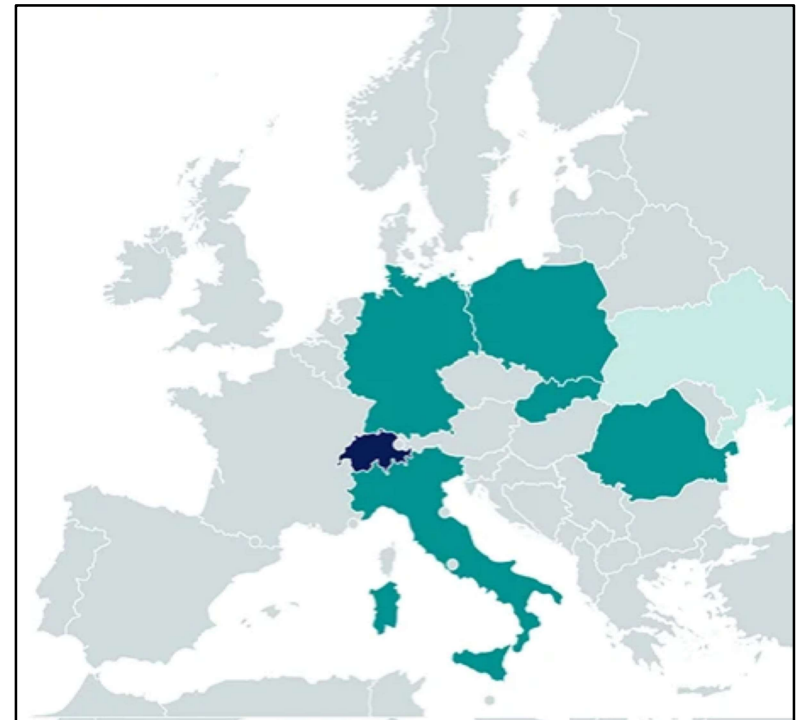
## Regional, local institutions

- There are many...
- Polish herders..
- A new one: Women Herders group (Hungary)
- ....



## **G4B: Grasslands for biodiversity: supporting the protection of the biodiversity-rich grasslands and related management practices in the Alps and Carpathians (CH, DE, IT (Aut. Prov. Bolzano/Bozen), PL, RO, SK, UA)**

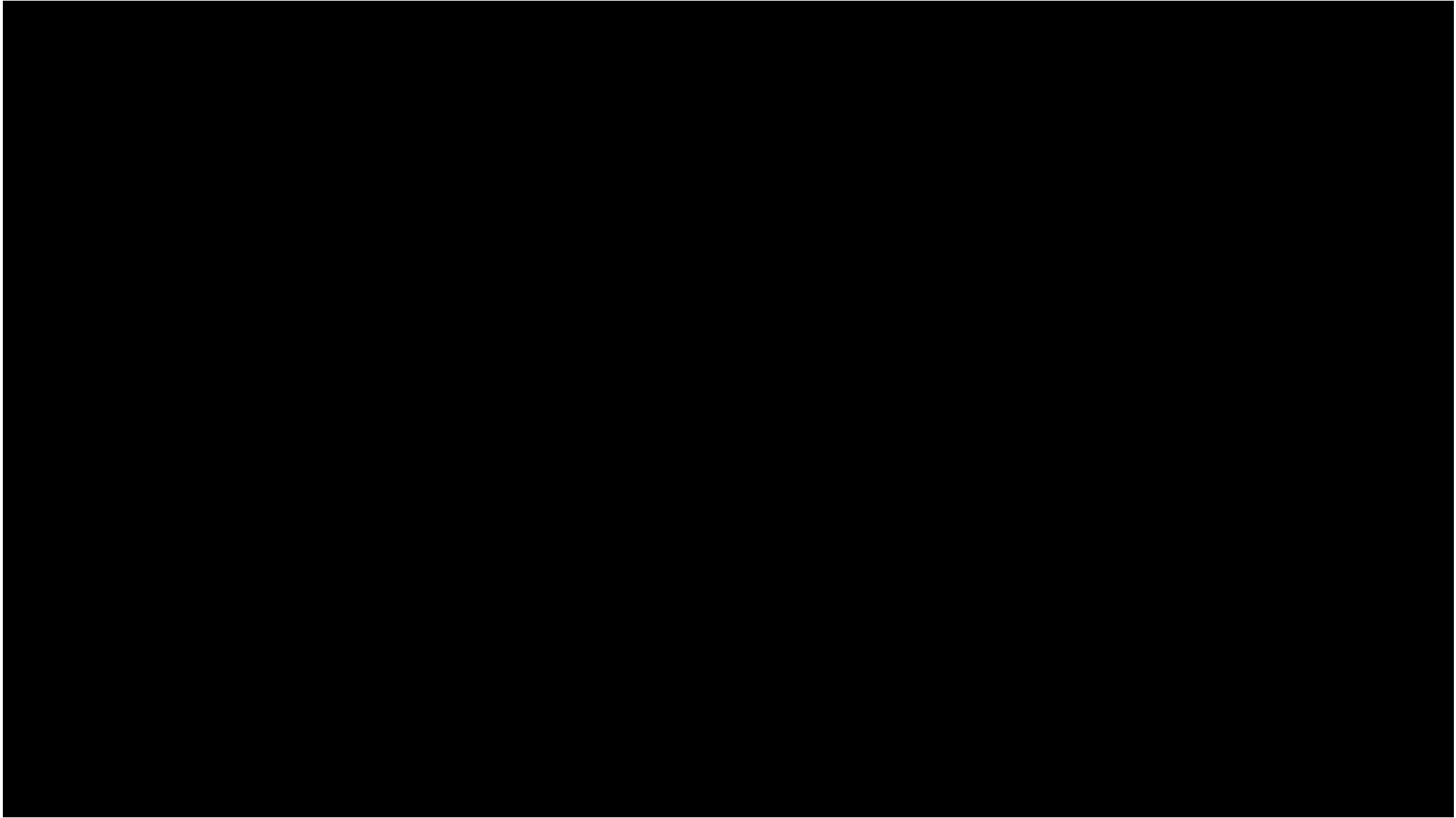
- Identify biodiversity-rich grasslands in the Alps and the Carpathians
- Identify the biodiversity-supporting grassland management practices and regimes - information provided by farmers and stakeholders to identify biodiversity-supporting grassland management regimes, their legacies and farmers' motivation for biodiversity-supporting grassland management.
- Identify the areas suitable for expansion of the grassland protection network in the Alps and the Carpathians
- Propose new protected areas and their management across the Alps and the Carpathians



## Objectives for the Carpathian Convention regarding pastoralism

- To be discussed... future of pastoralism as a sustainable **livelihood**
- To be discussed... keeping pastoralists' **knowledge** alive and adaptive for the era after the shocks of our present civilization (strategic importance)
- To be discussed... **heritage** management, tourism
- To be discussed... a sustainable way of **conservation** management
- To be discussed... role of **young** and middle-aged herders
- To be discussed... role of **women** herders
- To be discussed... how we will represent the region in the UN international year (**IYRP**)?
- To be discussed... ... ..
- To be discussed... ... ..





## **Pastoralists are conserving species rich ecosystems for centuries - without acknowledging it - the case of semi-natural grasslands in the Carpathians**

- Semi-natural grasslands are one of the most species rich ecosystems in Europe and the world, they include pastures and hay meadows
- If there were no herders/villagers and no domestic animals (sheep, goats, horses, cows etc.) there would be no hay meadows and pastures = loss plant and animal diversity specific to those ecosystems
- Hay meadows/pastures = maintained/managed by herders and small holders using traditional knowledge (most cases) and adapting to current socio-economic conditions

## The case of Romania

2012: 33% of utilised agricultural area (UAA) were semi-natural grasslands (23% pasture - 3 384 680 ha; 10% hay meadows - 1 471 600 ha)

2020: surface of pastures and meadows has declined by 17.4% (783 000 ha)

Causes are obvious: lack of generation renewal, urbanisation. migration to other countries etc.



Species rich semi-natural grasslands on former agro-terraces (Poiana Rusca Mountains, Hunedoara) (Cosmin Ivaşcu)

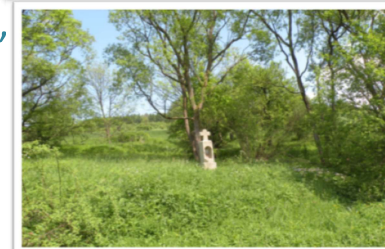
Scattered village of former transhumant shepherds (Şugag commune, Alba county) (Cosmin Ivaşcu)

I found this slide,  
highly relevant

COP5

# Carpathian traditional rural landscapes

- **Problem:** dramatic landscape homogenization
- **Causes:** nationalization, liberalization, EU accession, unsustainable tourism, land grabbing by agricultural corporations
- **Effects:** disempowerment of local communities, bureaucracy, strong corporate players
- **Diagnosis:** the “problem of traditional farming” is not its economic inefficiency, it does not fit with the existing political, institutional, legal, and financial framework – misinterpreted as the free market approach
- **Action needed:** establishment of **landscape-scale demonstration areas**, where local communities would be helped to restore and sustain a „modern- traditional” way of farming



Source: International conference on wooded rural landscapes in CE Europe, Rzeszów – Eger 20-25 September 2017



Shepherds family. Romania (Anamaria Iuga)



Sheep flocks. Above: Eastern Romania; below, Dobrudja (Romania). (Anamaria Iuga)