



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

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## 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

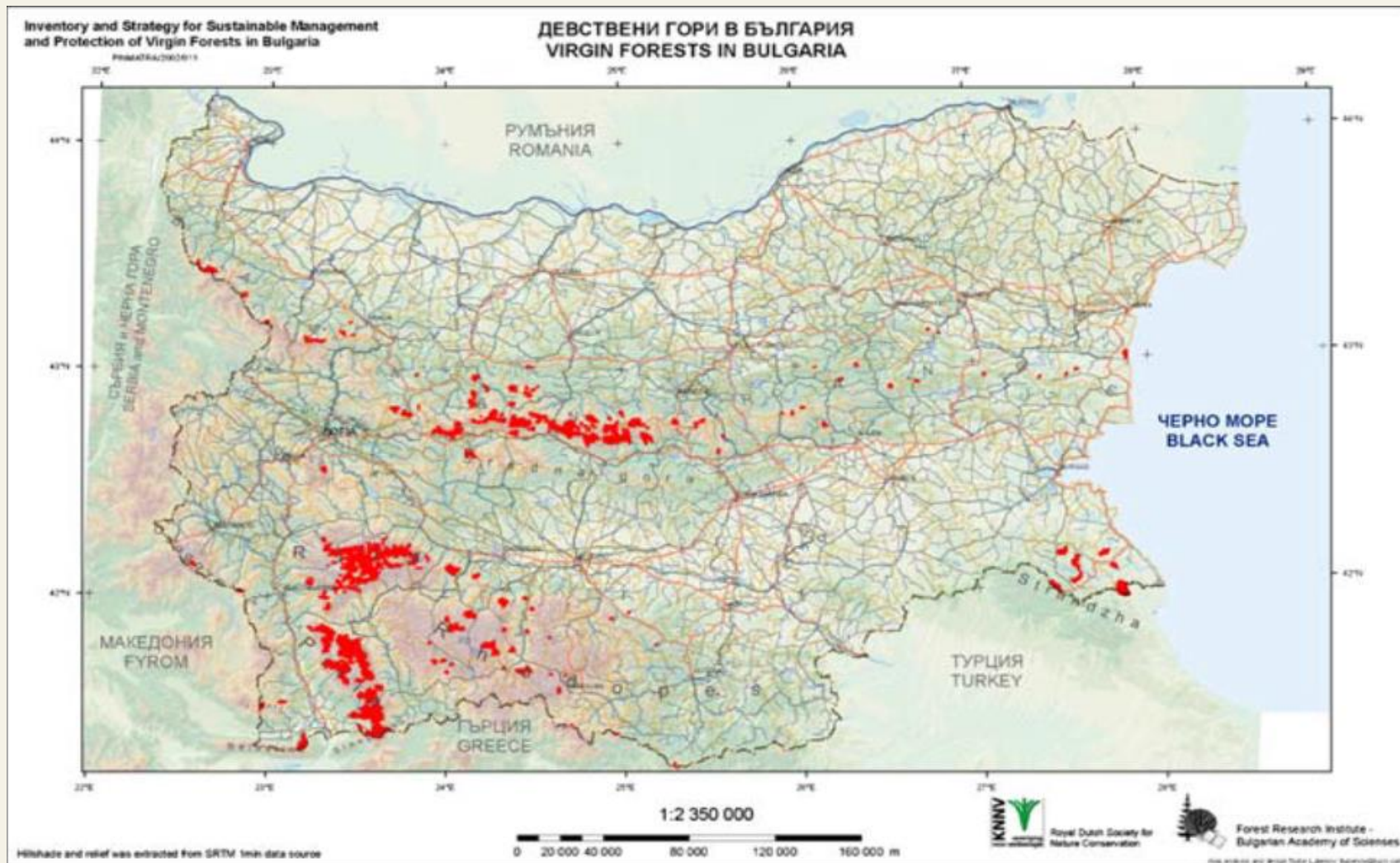
**Based on the above described parameters, the following results were achieved:**

- **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 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”



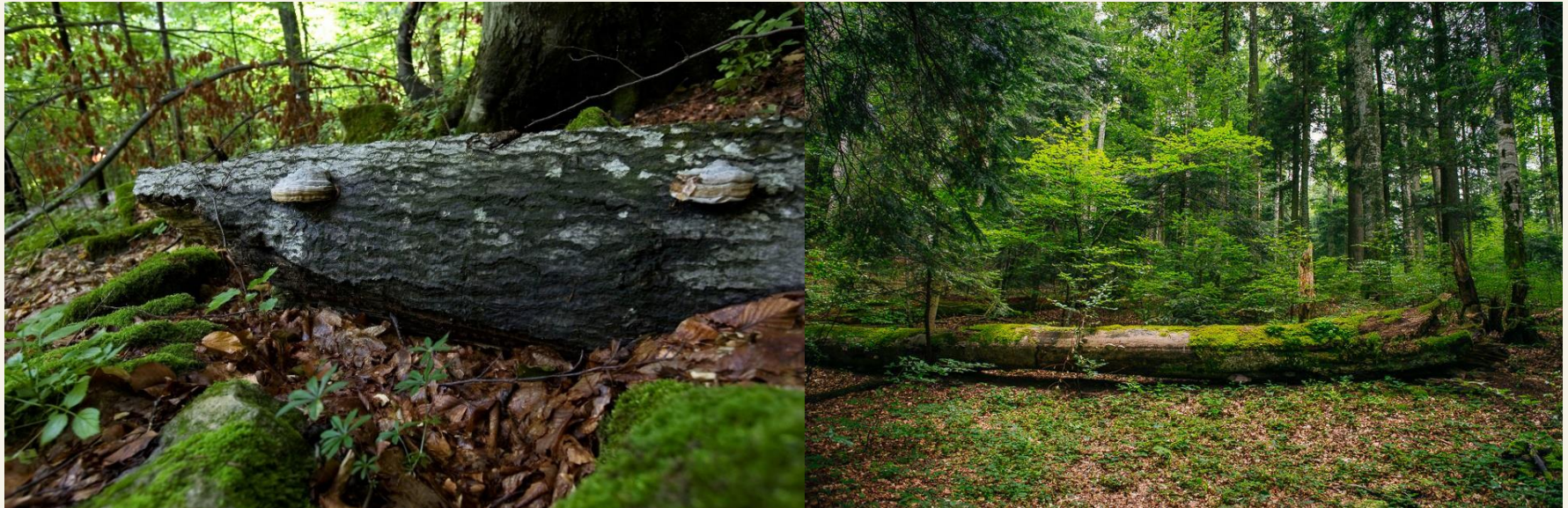
- WWF took the results of these studies into consideration as **best available information sources** related to Virgin forests.
- This studies contained **action plans** to ensure long protection of these forests but they were **only partially followed by the State Authorities** in the two countries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





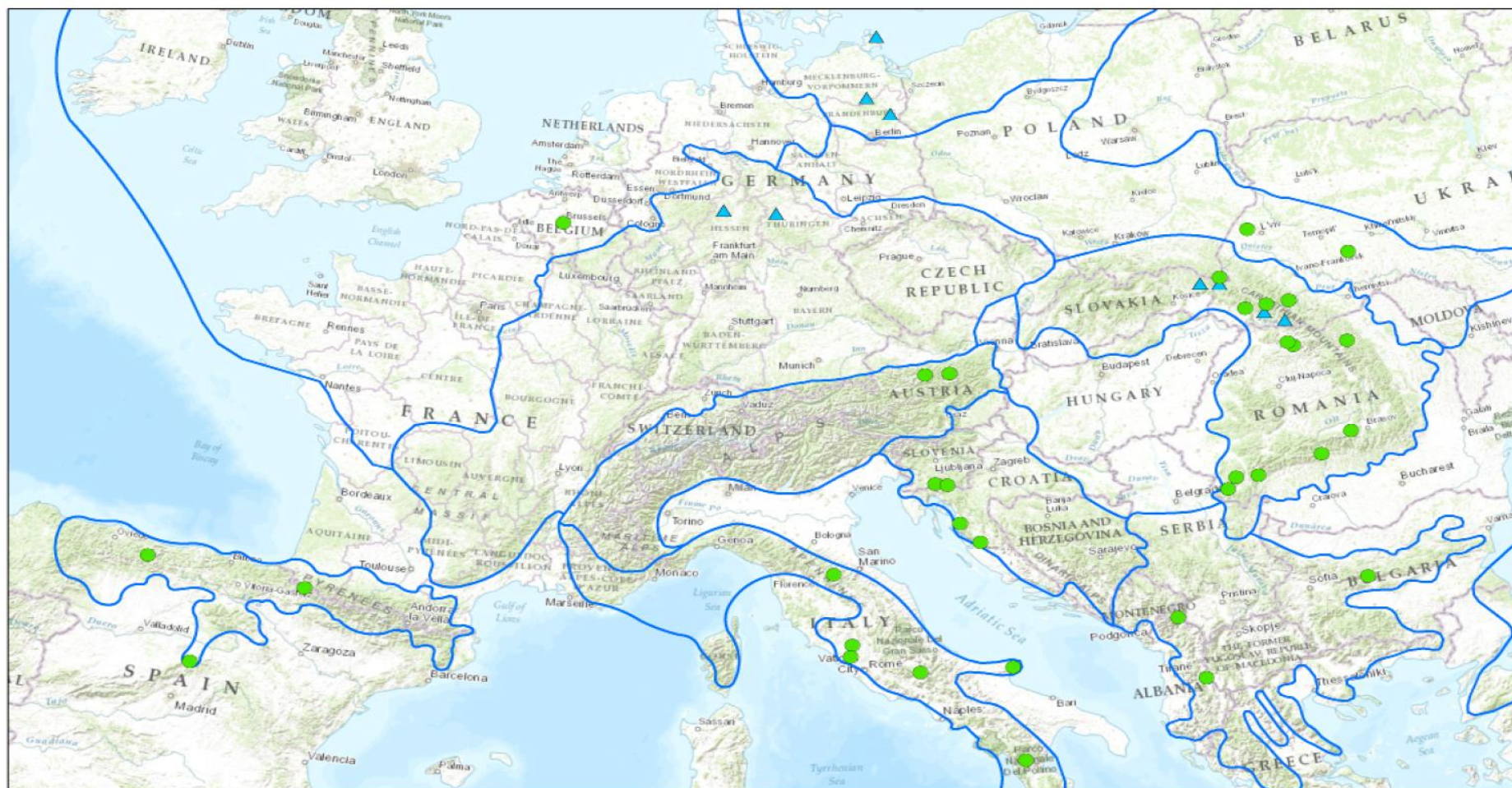
## Different solutions for protection...

### 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

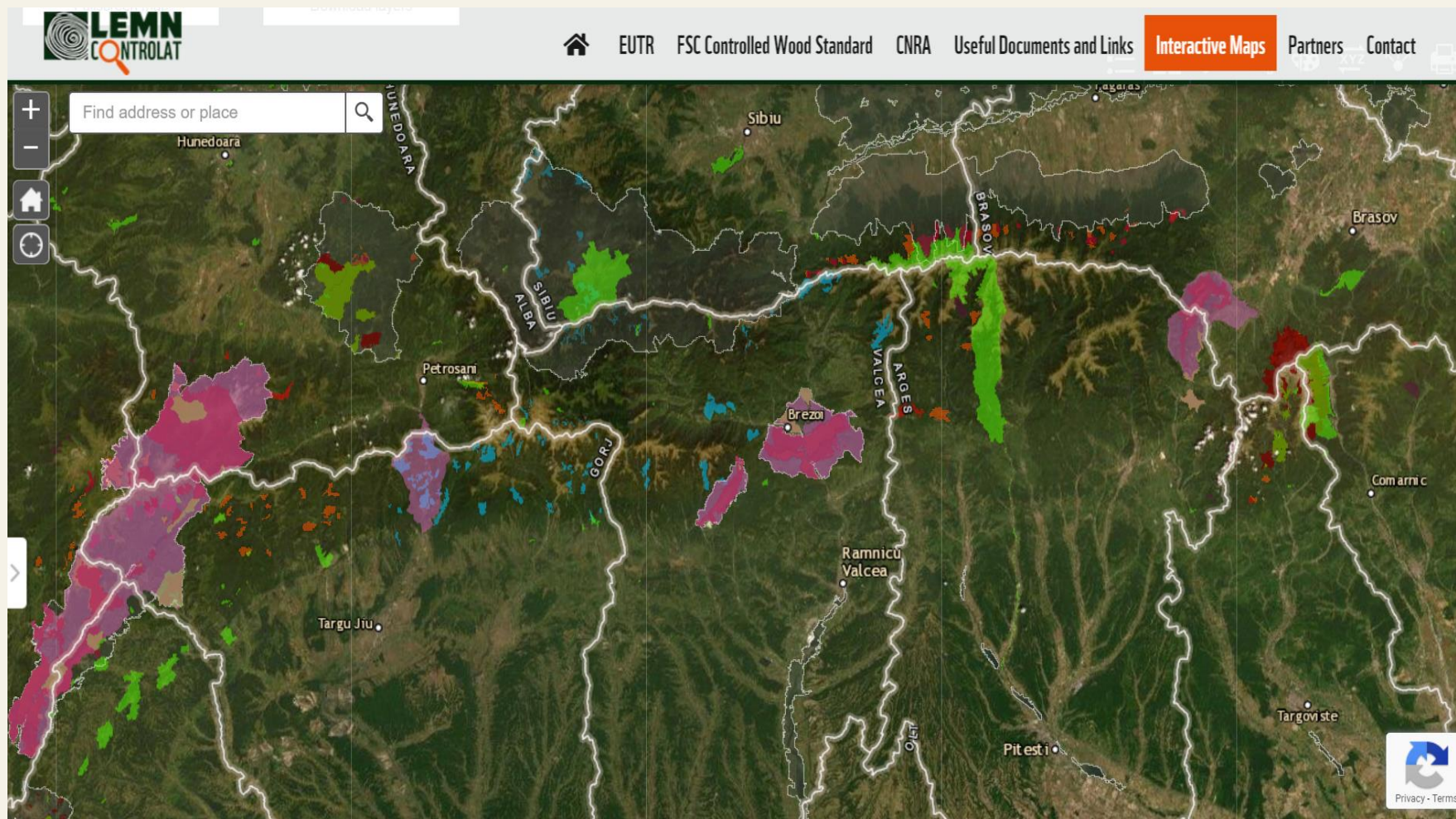


- Nominated World Heritage component parts
- ▲ Existing World Heritage component parts
- Beech forest regions

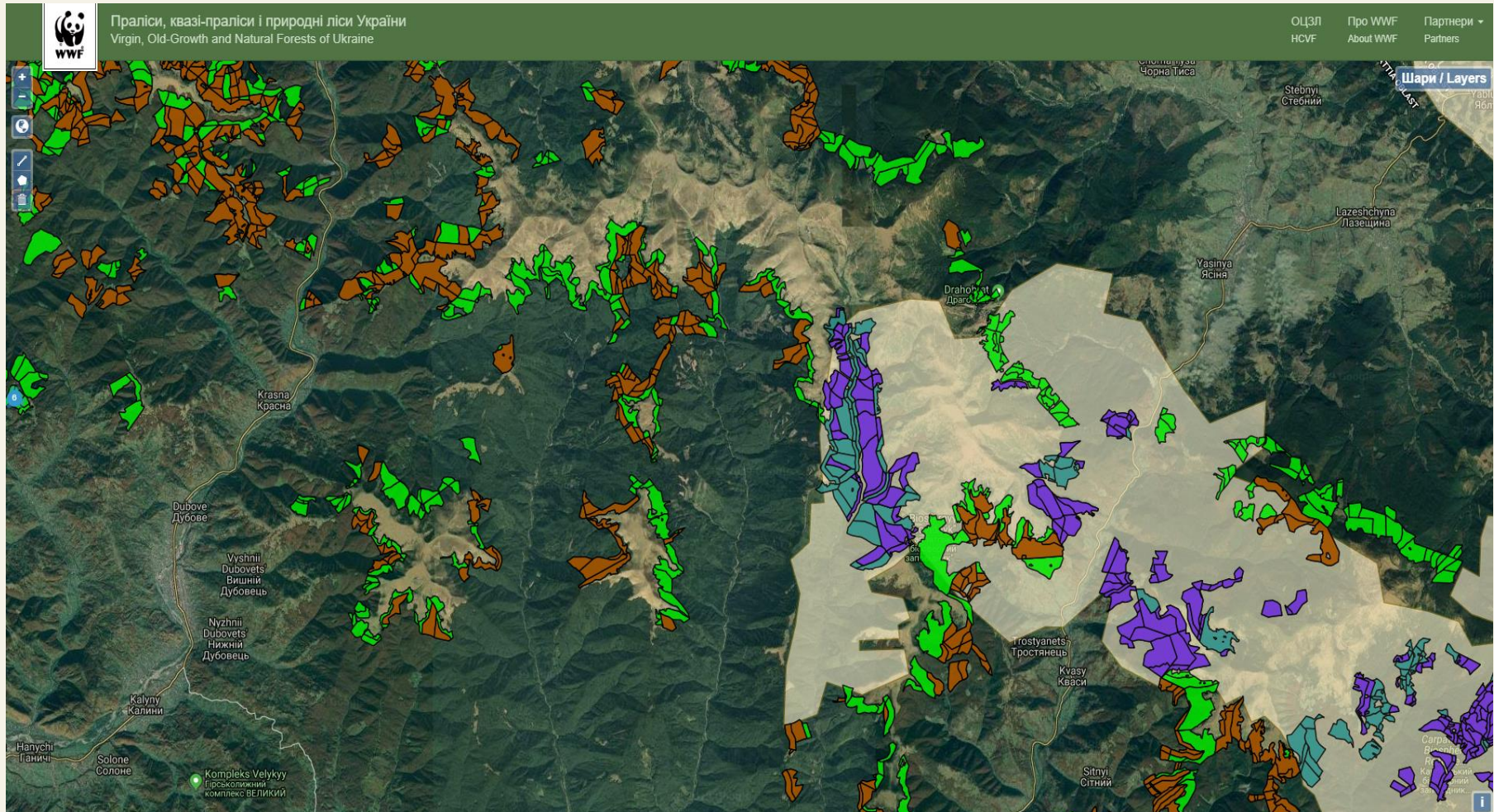




# Interactive map of OGF and Protected Areas in Romania



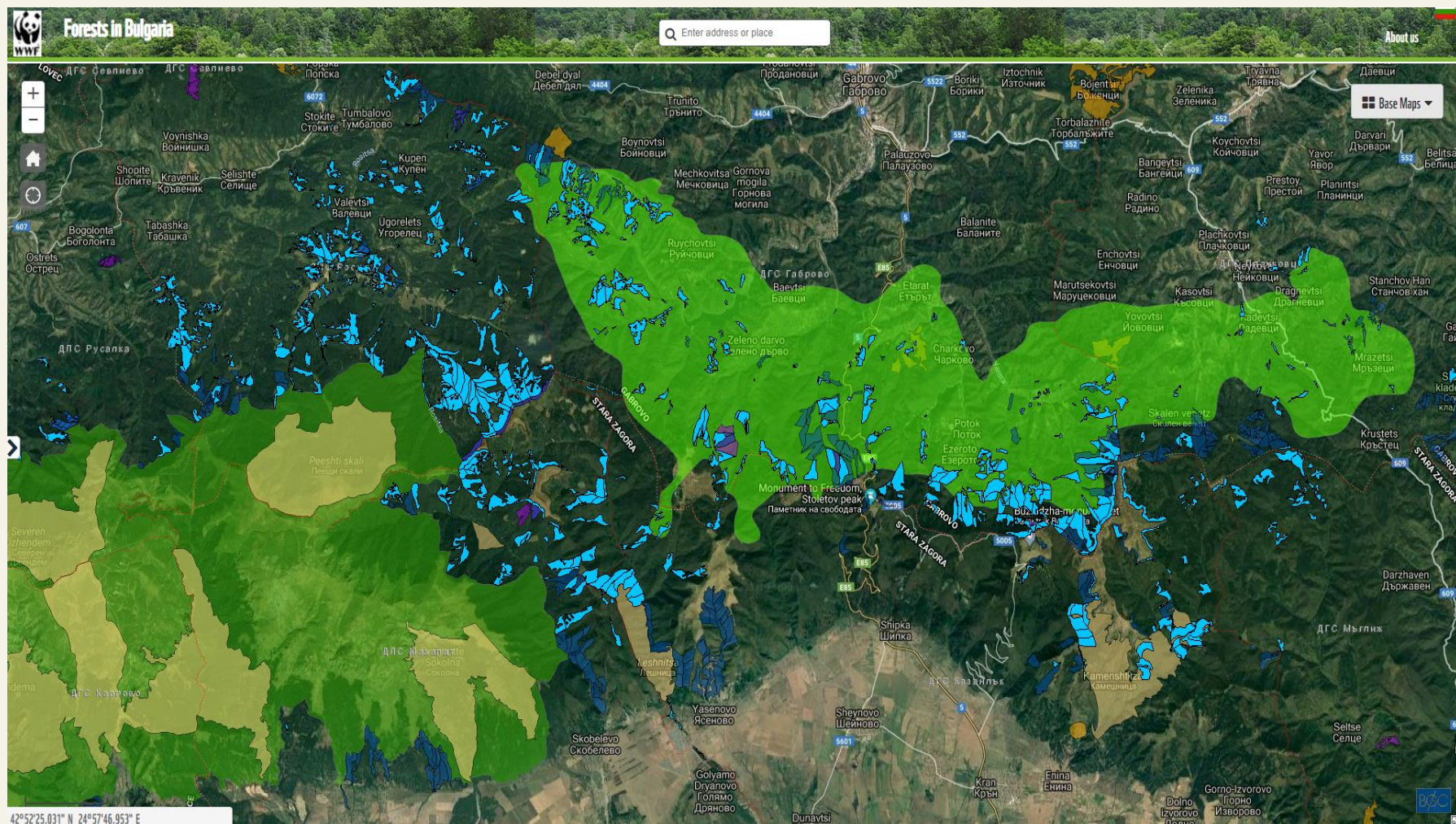






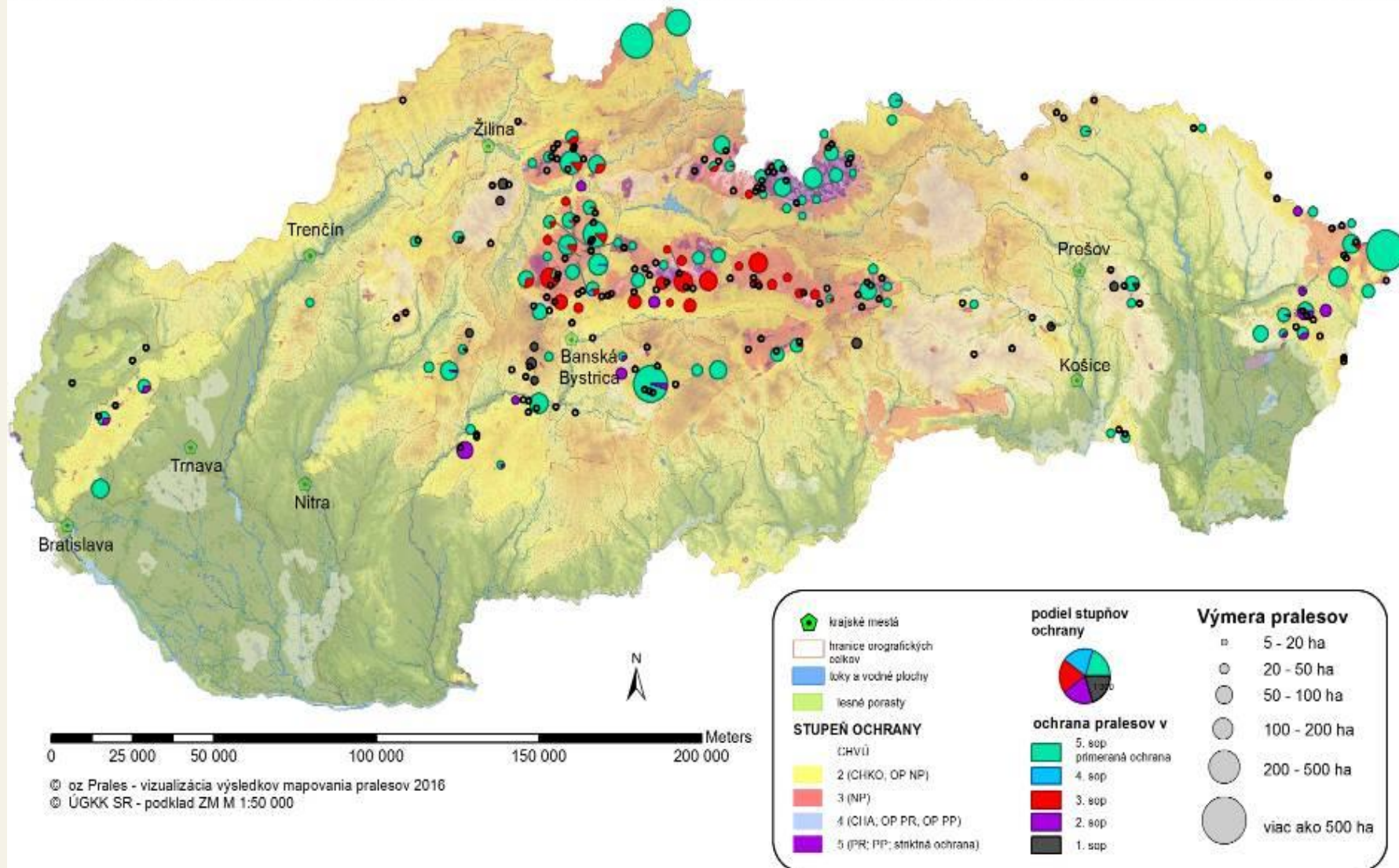


# Interactive map of OGF and Protected Areas in Bulgaria



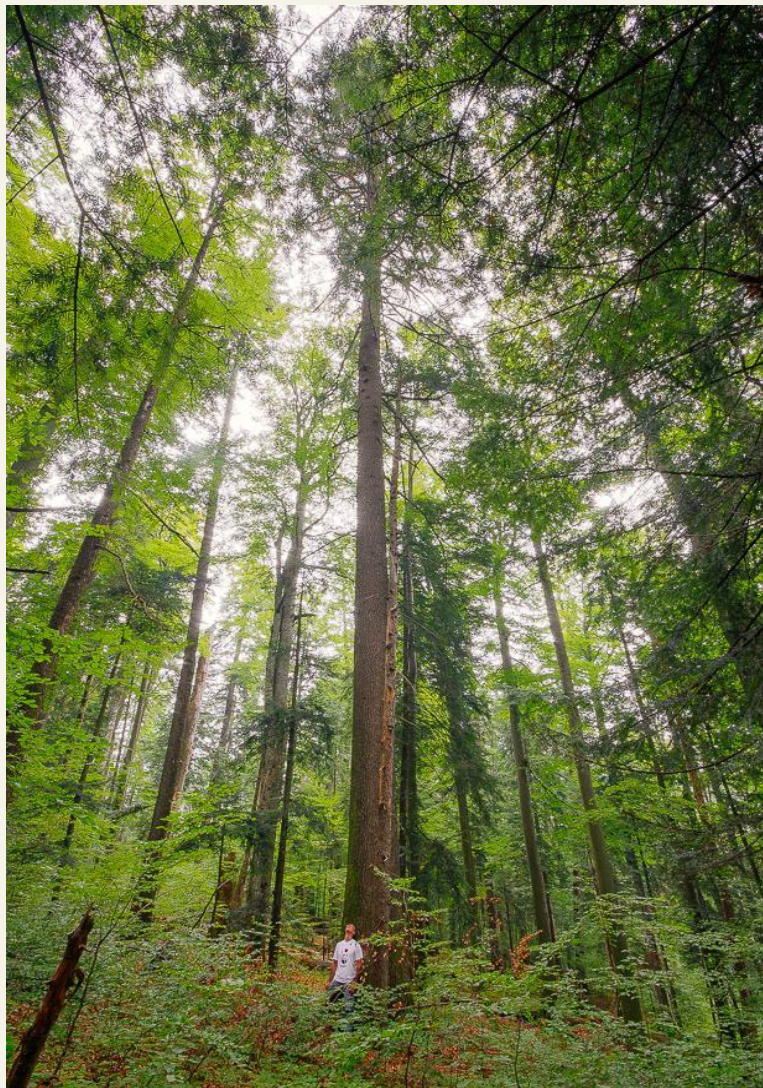


## Schématické znázornenie ochrany pralesov a pralesových zvyškov identifikovaných na Slovensku v rokoch 2009 - 2016





## 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**

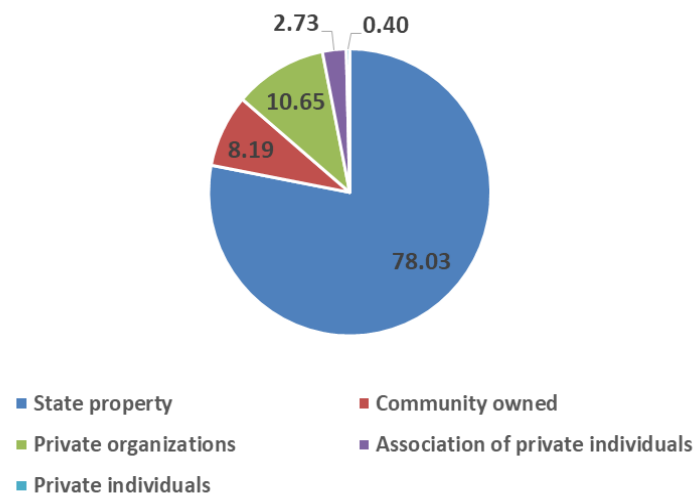


## Country information – RO National Catalogue of Virgin and Quasi virgin

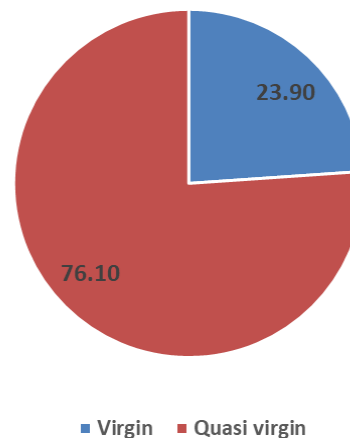
Nr crt	Property type	Area ha	Percent
1	State property	22679	78.03
2	Community owned	2381	8.19
3	Private organizations	3096	10.65
4	Association of private individuals	793	2.73
5	Private individuals	115	0.40
Total		29064	100.00

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 by property type - Romania



Virgin and Quasi virgin forests included in the Catalogue Romania





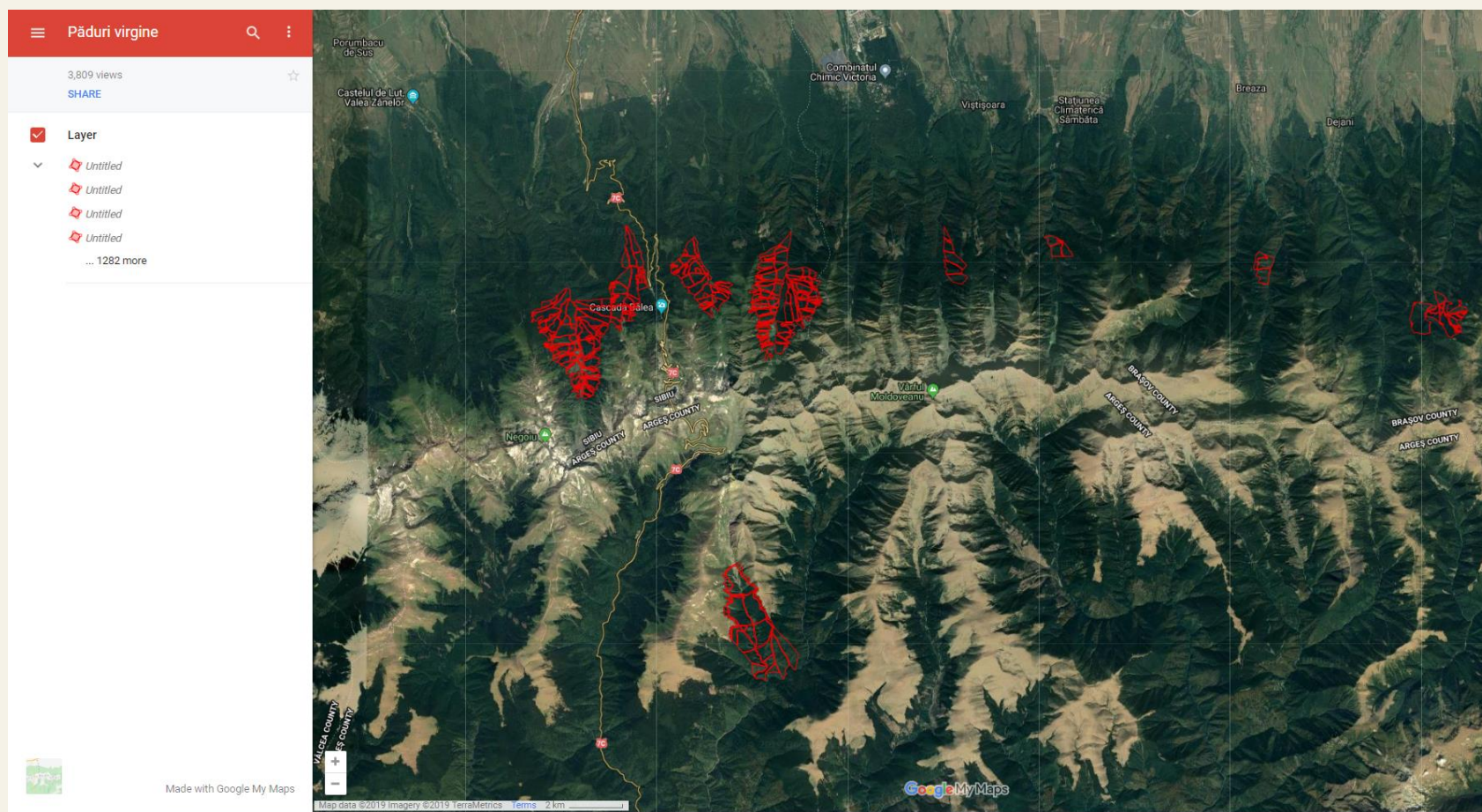


## Country information – RO National Catalogue of Virgin and Quasi virgin

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=1o9IGGe3OHultiJu9Jr1fEjpbAXlpH5DZ&ll=45.5970270820613%2C24.7474808287202&z=12>







## Country information – Ukraine Virgin, Quasi virgin and Natural forests

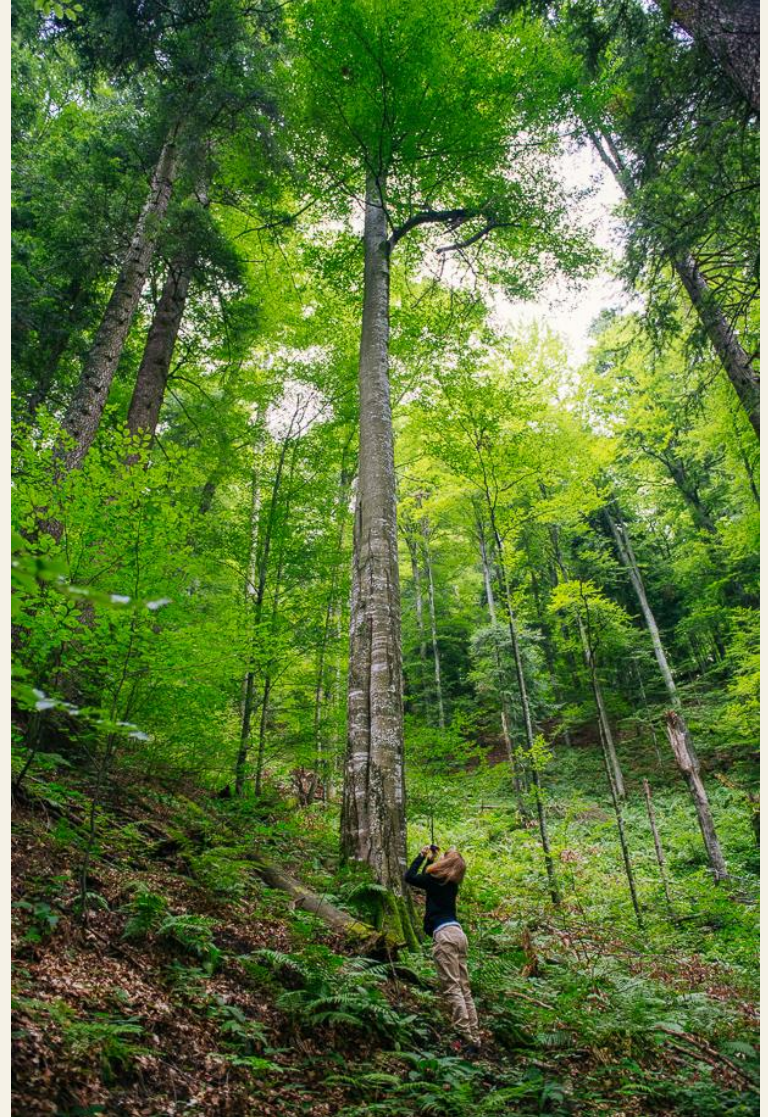
Nr crt	Protection status of OGF in Ukraine	Area ha
<b>Qualified areas WWF Criteria (3 regions of Carpathians)</b>		<b>93777</b>
1	3rd and 4th level of protection PA - low level of protection	8472
2	Management and recreational zones of national parks, regional parks, anthropogenic and buffer zones of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





## 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 photograph of a forest floor. A large, fallen log lies horizontally across the frame, covered in vibrant green moss. Several flat, shelf-like fungi are growing from the log. The forest floor is covered in brown, fallen leaves, and the background is filled with lush green trees and foliage.

Thank you!