



ForestConnect project on climate-smart forest connectivity for large carnivores in the Balkan-Carpathian- Dinaric region

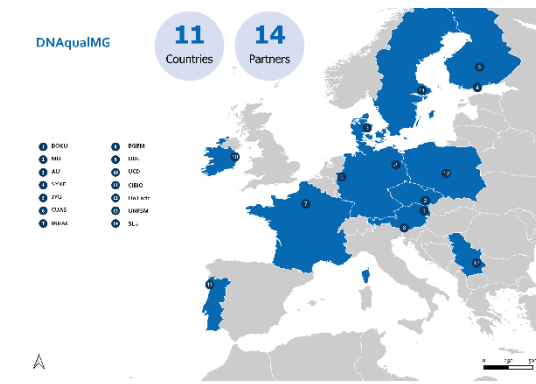
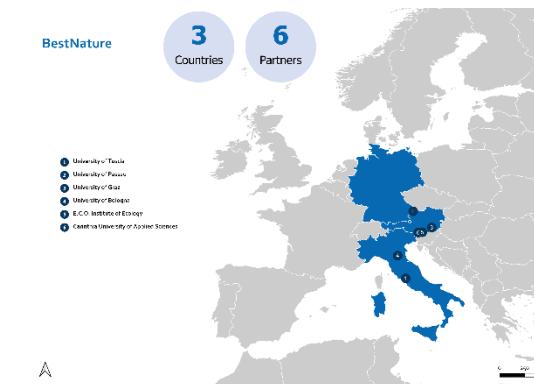
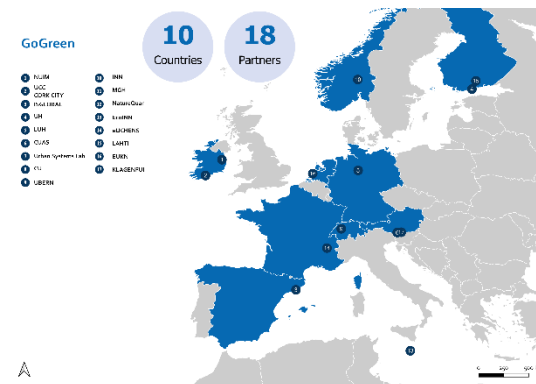
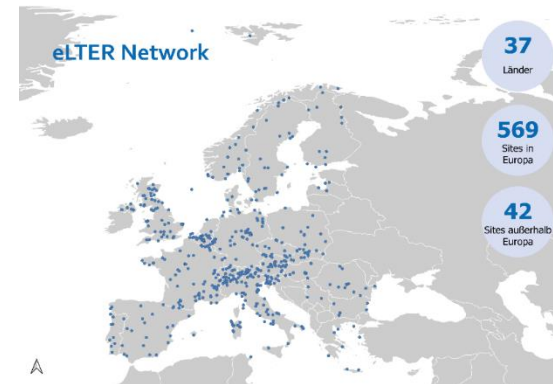
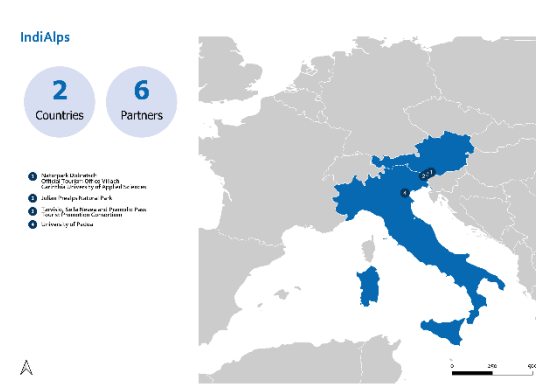
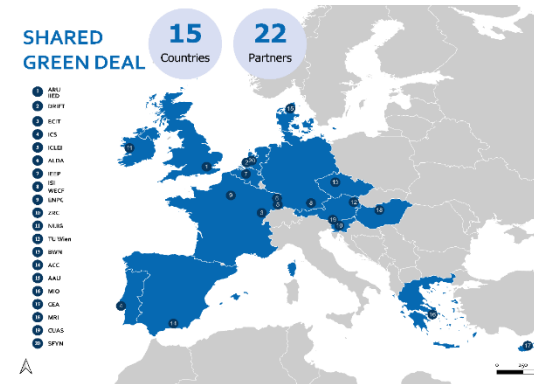
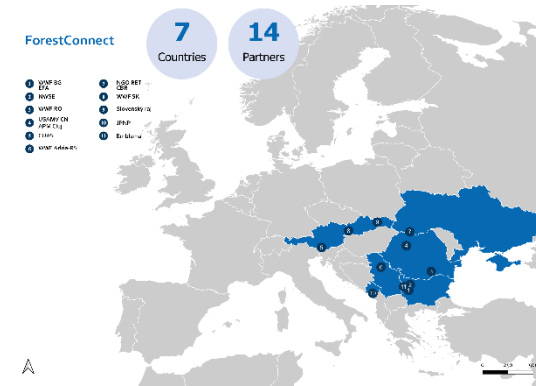
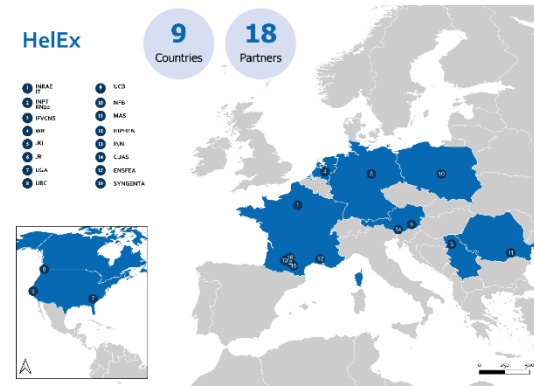
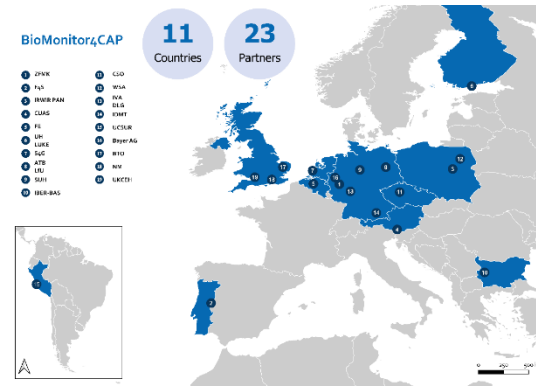
Elisabeth Wiegele | Carinthia University of
Applied Sciences, UNESCO CHAIR for Sustainable
Management of Conservation Areas

*15th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Biodiversity
17-18 June 2024 | Vienna, Austria*



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Forest Connect

Towards a Climate-smart Forest Connectivity for Large Carnivores in the Balkan-Carpathian- Dinaric Region

Interreg
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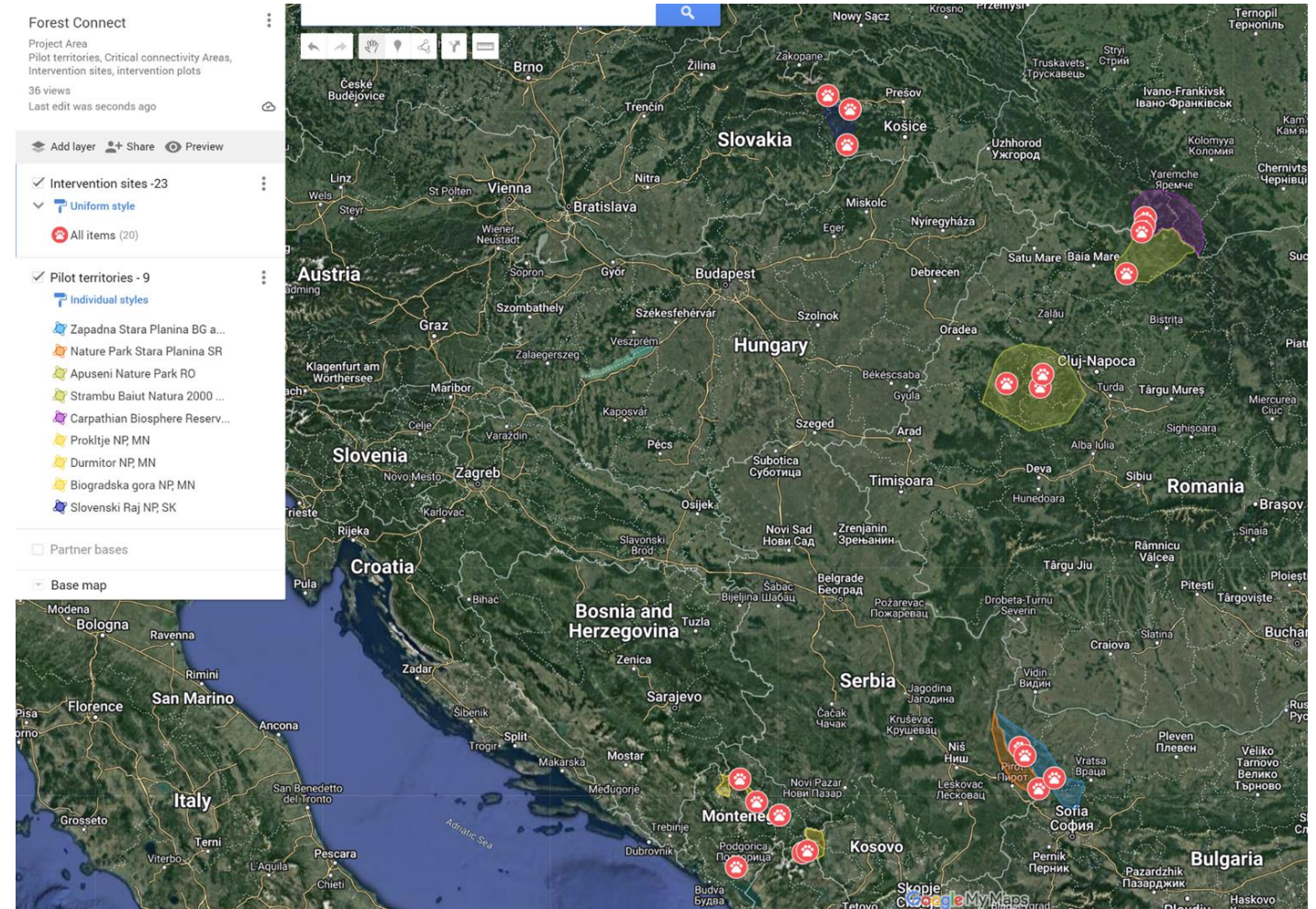
Overview of project territories

7 countries
AU, BG, MN, RO, SK, SR, UA

9 pilot territories

Zapadna stara planina Natura 2000 (BG)
Biogradska gora NP (MN)
Durmitor NP (MN)
Prokletije NP (MN)
Apuseni Nature Park (RO)
Strambu Baiut Natura 2000 (RO)
Slovenski Raj NP (SK)
Stara planina NP (SR)
Carpathian Biosphere Reserve (UA)

23 intervention sites



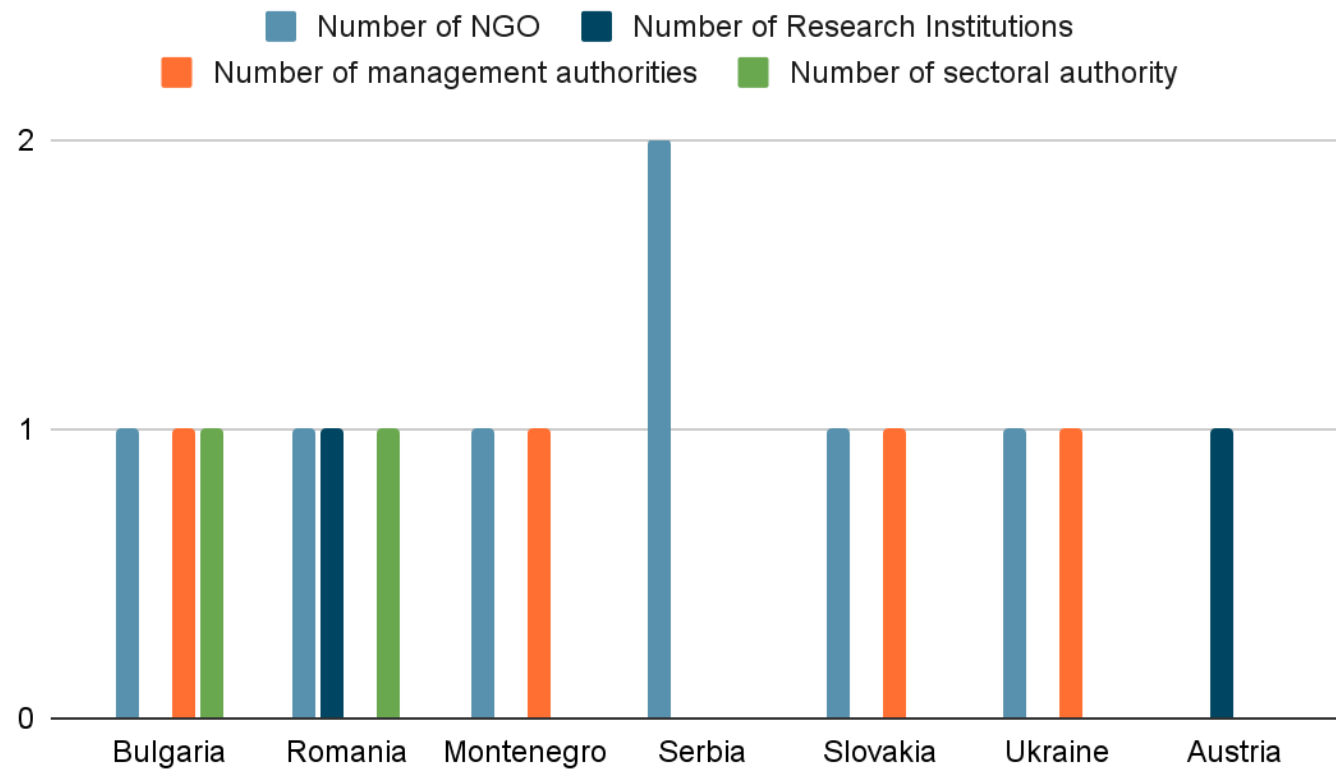
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Project partners in the countries



Why Large Carnivores?



Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), Wolf (*Canis lupus*), Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*), the highly threatened Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardina*), Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) and Golden jackal (*Canis aureus*)

LCs as umbrella species are an indicator for healthy forest ecosystems connected through transnational ecological corridors.

LCs are prone to various challenges and threats, including habitat loss, human-wildlife conflicts, and also climate-induced changes. Climate-induced changes are hindering their ability to shift ranges and leading to displacement from mountainous areas. This displacement often directs them toward more densely populated settlements, consequently escalating the risk of human-wildlife conflicts.

LCs habitats and movements have a transnational character. The range of their forest habitable areas is quite large since their natural behaviour requires a substantial space regardless of the borders

The nature of LCs carnivores as species allows for the application of unified transnational solutions, as opposed to smaller animals with shorter migration routes that should be tackled locally, transnational measures are perfectly suited for conservation measures of LCs.

ForestConnect Context and Relevance

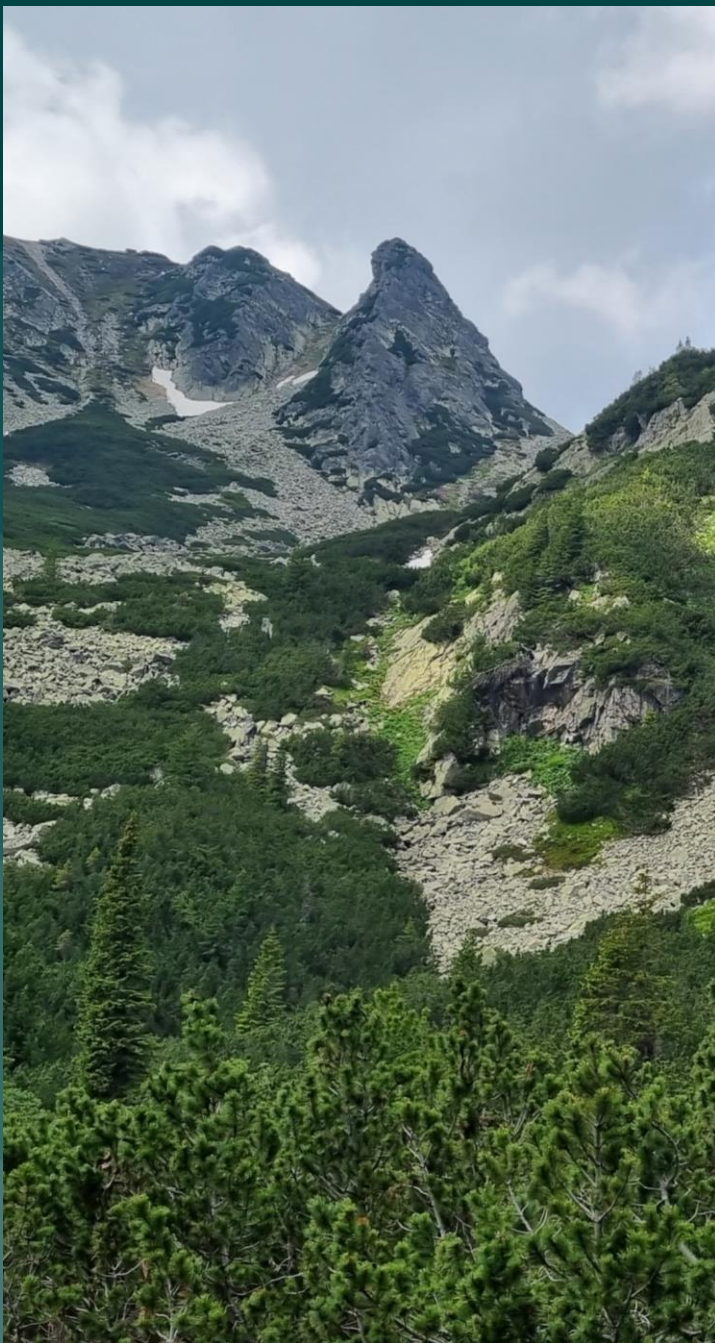
ForestConnect is designed to address common challenges and needs to **protecting and preserving transnational forest ecological corridors of LCs** in the Carpathian, Balkan and Dinaric Mountains:

LC corridors are endangered not only by unsustainable management practices and infrastructural developments in forest habitats but **climate change poses additional pressure** on these ecosystems.

Climate-induced habitat fragmentation can 1) impede LCs range shifts and displace individuals from mountainous areas towards more populated settlements with a risk to **increase HWC** and 2) reduce the non-timber forest products may **affect the diet** to a more carnivorous one, additionally increasing the conflicts with cattle farmers.

Although climate change effects are recognised by management authorities, this is **not translated into resilience-enhancing forest management practices** and clear guidance for managers of the territories:





Specific Objectives

1. New tools and technologies integrated in transnational monitoring of large carnivores' forests

Joint and harmonised development of transnational tools and technologies for monitoring of key large carnivore forest habitats and identification of species movement patterns in response to climate change

2. Heterogeneity, connectivity and climate resilience of large carnivores' forests is improved

Common solutions in line with the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy and based on joint pilot actions to improve heterogeneity, increase resilience and connectivity of forest habitats in the transboundary ecological regions used by large carnivores

3. Promote capacity and cooperation for integrated LC climate-forest connectivity across eco-regions

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