

FINAL MEETING REPORT

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

All the presentations delivered during the Biodiversity WG meeting
are available on the Carpathian Convention website¹

Day 1 – 17 June

Session I – Introduction

1. Opening of the WG Biodiversity meeting

Harald Egerer, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, formally opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and highlighting the record number of attendees in the WG Biodiversity session. He expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation, and Technology of Austria for co-hosting the meeting in Vienna.

2. Welcome remarks by the meeting host

Elfriede-Anna More, Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology of Austria, welcomed the WG Biodiversity participants to Vienna, emphasizing Austria's strong commitment to combating biodiversity loss, both domestically and internationally. She highlighted the importance of collaboration in achieving shared goals and preserving unique mountain ecosystems. The Ministry is eager to work together in order to advance the sustainable use of biodiversity in the Carpathians and other regions through joint efforts.

3. Welcome remarks by the Serbian Presidency

Aleksandra Došlić, Ministry of Environmental Protection, Serbia, addressed the WG Biodiversity participants on behalf of the Serbian Presidency to the Carpathian Convention, emphasising the crucial role of biodiversity in achieving the goals of the Convention. She also highlighted the successful Carpathian Convention COP7 (CC COP7), held in October 2023 in Belgrade, which adopted the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework, bringing a significant attention to biodiversity and emphasising the importance of biodiversity integration into other sectors. Ms. Došlić encouraged active participation in the meeting and the implementation of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework. She stressed that cross-border cooperation and a coordinated response within the Carpathian Convention platform are essential to tackle the region's complex challenges.

4. Welcome remarks by the WG Biodiversity Chair

Eliška Rolfová, Ministry of the Environment, Czech Republic, welcomed the meeting participants in her capacity of the Chair of the WG Biodiversity meeting and took over the chairing of the meeting.

In her address, Ms. Rolfová emphasized that the CC COP7 provided a strong mandate to prioritize biodiversity efforts, which should now be spearheaded by the WG Biodiversity. She highlighted the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework as well as the Memorandum of Cooperation between the CBD, the Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention and noted that holding the meeting in Vienna provided an excellent opportunity to strengthen the cooperation with the Alpine region. She also handed the floor to Ms. Helena Kostohryzová, Ministry of the Environment, Czech Republic, who announced that the Environmental Council had just formally adopted the Nature Restoration Law (new landmark EU regulation on nature restoration).

5. Adoption of the agenda

The meeting agenda was presented by the Chair and adopted without any amendments.

¹ <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/2024/03/19/15th-meeting-of-the-working-group-on-biodiversity/>

6. Inputs from Science for the Carpathians (S4C) - recommendations based on Forum Carpaticum 2023 relevant for the WG Biodiversity

Agnieszka Wypych, Jagiellonian University and a representative of the S4C, presented a [comprehensive set of scientific recommendations](#) that are relevant for the work of the WG Biodiversity and for the implementation of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework. The recommendations derive from the latest Forum Carpaticum held in 2023 in Kraków, Poland.

S4C kindly requested feedback on how to improve the current format of the offered recommendations to make them more useful and clearer for the Carpathian Convention Working Groups (WGs) and other bodies, including the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee. Although the recommendations specify the relevant CC bodies, Articles, and protocols they are relevant for, S4C will welcome further suggestions. One specific question is whether it would be beneficial to cite specific scientific papers that the recommendations are based on (please note that not all recommendations are based on published papers; in some cases, the Forum Carpaticum Book of Abstracts will remain the reference). An additional suggestion offered inclusion of scientific paper into the [Carpathian Countries Integrated Biodiversity Information System](#) (CCIBIS).

Ms. Wypych also informed about the idea of building the BUCOVINA PEACE PARK between Romania and Ukraine, which will, among others things, support creating a climate of peace and cooperation for managing resources as well as for controlling illegal activities in the cross-border area. The Romanian and Ukrainian representative were invited to support this initiative, which is led by Dr. Marcel MÎNDRESCU, University of Suceava, Romania (mindrescu@atlas.usv.ro) and Dr Dariia KHOLIIVCHUK, Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Ukraine (d.kholyavchuk@chnu.edu.ua).

Lastly, Ms. Wypych announced that the Forum Carpaticum (FC) 2025 will be held in 2nd week of September 2025 in Bratislava, Slovakia by the Comenius University. The focus topic of next FC will be "Addressing Marginalized Areas and Facilitating participation of Marginalized Groups in Sustainable Development of the Carpathian Region".

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

7./8. Updates from the Carpathian Convention COP7, as well as the review of the progress in implementation of the WG Biodiversity Work Plan 2021 – 2023 and preparation of the WG Biodiversity Work Plan 2024 – 2026

Klaudia Kuraś, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, delivered a presentation informing about the specific mandate of the CC COP7 for the work related to the WG Biodiversity, which includes specific provisions on the adoption and implementation of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework, implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as provisions on conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity. Furthermore, Ms. Kuraś presented a draft Work Plan for the WG Biodiversity for years 2024 – 2026 which closely reflects CC COP7 mandate. She offered as well a short overview of the progress made in the implementation of the previous WG Biodiversity Work Plan 2021 – 2023.

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

Participants were invited to consider the draft workplan, also with a view to the deliberations of the WG Biodiversity at its 15th meeting.

Session II – Large carnivores conservation in the Carpathians – projects implementation and cooperation opportunities

9. LECA project – Supporting the coexistence and conservation of Carpathian Large Carnivores

Martin Duľa, Mendel University in Brno/ LECA Project Lead Partner, was invited to present the LECA project on supporting the coexistence and conservation of Carpathian Large Carnivores, including current project results, updates and the ongoing work that is relevant for the WG Biodiversity. In details presented were the activities within the four pilot actions in the Carpathians, including: 1) Beskydy-Kysuce – wolf telemetry, field monitoring and cooperation with stakeholders, 2) East Carpathians - extensive camera-trapping of lynx and application of

preventive measures, 3) Tatras - telemetry & collection samples & cooperation with relevant stakeholders, 4) Slovak Karst-North HU Mts. - extensive camera-trapping of lynx and application of preventive measures.

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

10. LECA project – Supporting the coexistence and conservation of Carpathian Large Carnivores (continuation)

Martin Duľa presented in detail one of the main project activities which focuses on the development of thematic guidance on monitoring harmonization, poaching investigation and conflict prevention. **Prior to the WG Biodiversity meeting, a draft structure of the thematic guidances was circulated to the meeting participants with an invitation to provide comments and suggestions.** The document will be resubmitted together with the meeting report. The Chair invited the WG Biodiversity to provide feedback on the document, its structure, proposed focus and content, which will be crucial for further development of the thematic guidances.

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

After the presentation, the Chair invited the WG Biodiversity to participate in an interactive discussion to enhance the usefulness of the prepared thematic guidance and the identification of potential stakeholders. The insights gained from this discussion will be considered in the next phases of development.

11. Conservation of the Carpathian lynx in West and Central Europe

Jochen Krebsühl, representing the Lynx Institute and the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group, was invited to present the results of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) COP14 decision on enlisting the Eurasian Lynx in Appendix II to the Convention, as well as the Concerted Action for the Eurasian Lynx. One of the suggested actions that is of particular importance for the WG Biodiversity is the proposal to develop in close cooperation with Carpathian Countries and under the auspices of the CMS, the Bern Convention and the Carpathian Convention a **joint strategy for the conservation of the autochthonous lynx population in the Carpathian Mountains**. Mr. Krebsühl presented a suggested work plan and next steps for undertaking this task inviting the WG Biodiversity to get involved with its expertise.

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

The Chair invited the participants to consider the suggested way forward and emphasized the importance of developing the joint strategy for the conservation of the autochthonous lynx population in the Carpathian Mountains, which is not only closely linked to the work of the LECA project but also will allow for enhancing synergies and strengthening cooperation with the CMS and Bern Convention, forming a powerful and strategic partnership that could go beyond cooperation on lynx conservation in the future, addressing other relevant species.

Considering the ongoing extensive work on large carnivores, contributing to the implementation of the International Action Plan on Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ensuring Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians, namely under the LECA project as well as the new initiative for the development of the Carpathian

Lynx Strategy, the Chair invited the WG Biodiversity to consider **reestablishing a Large Carnivores Expert Group which will be directly involved in the above-mentioned work.**

Session II – Implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework at the regional level, with a focus on the Carpathians and the adopted Carpathian Biodiversity Framework

12./13. Presentation of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework and streamlining the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework into the national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) of the Carpathian countries

Klaudia Kuraś presented the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework (CBF) adopted by the CC COP7 as the first regional instrument supporting the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Besides presenting the structure and Strategic Objectives of CBF, Ms. Kuraś described the processes empowering the

framework, which focus on 1) translating the global targets and goals to tangible actions specific to the Carpathian characteristic, 2) reporting through integrating the Carpathian related policy measures and actions into the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) of the Carpathian Countries, and 3) implementing, that should take place on the regional and national level through relevant transnational initiatives and projects, as well as national activities to be both contributing to achieving the global goals and targets.

To support the Parties in the process of integrating the CBF and Carpathian activities into NBSAPs, the Secretariat created [Guidance Document for Streamlining the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans](#) and its [Annex I: Table with example policy actions relevant for the Carpathians for more information on the process](#)).

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

14. Global Biodiversity Framework – importance of the regional approaches for its implementation

Jamal Annagylyjova, CBD Secretariat, joined online to elaborate on the role of regional approaches and initiatives for supporting the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework, such as the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework. The CBD Secretariat representative provided an overview of the recently held meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI-4, 21-29 May 2024, Nairobi, Kenya), which, among others, considered a draft CBD COP decision recognizing the contribution of regional strategies, frameworks, plans or initiatives, such as the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework, to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Ms. Annagylyjova provided updates on the process of renewing national commitments to be aligned with the Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as on the increased role of regional approaches in the CBD via establishing regional and/or subregional technical and scientific support centers. Lastly, some of the SBI-4 recommendations for the CBD COP16 that enable regional approaches were presented.

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

Following the presentation, the Chair provided updates on the discussions within SBI-4 regarding the draft CBD COP16 decisions related to the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework, which could be considered as a model for other regions to follow. Further discussions and cooperation on supporting the final inclusion of this provision in the CBD COP16 decision will continue between the Carpathian Convention and CBD Focal Points from the Carpathian countries.

15. Examples from the Alps, with a focus on Austria, on GBF implementation:

- Updates on biodiversity activities from the Slovenian Presidency of the Alpine Convention and the Alpine Biodiversity Board

A joint presentation by Blanka Bartol, Slovenian Ministry for Natural Resources and Spatial Planning, and Claire de Kermadec, Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, provided an overview of the biodiversity related activities within the "sister" Alpine Convention. The Alpine Convention is currently developing a Policy Brief on implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework, which - following the example of the Carpathian Convention - will support a development of an instrument/Action Plan for regional implementation of global targets in the Alps. Furthermore, ideas for future mandate/activities within the Alpine Biodiversity Board were presented.

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

In addition, Paolo Angelini, Head of the Italian Delegation to the Alpine Convention, on behalf of the incoming Italian Presidency (January 2025) presented the planned priorities and potential areas of cooperation between the two Conventions, which will be further discussed between the Secretariats and the Chairs of the respective working bodies.

- Implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework in Austria

Gabriele Obermayr, Ministry of Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, Austria, was invited to share the experiences of Austria in the implementation of the Global Biodiversity

Framework, especially on the development and implementation of the adopted in 2022 Biodiversity Strategy 2030 for Austria that is already aligned with the global framework. For those Carpathian countries, which are still in the process of revising their NBSAPs, the intervention provided many interesting insights and suggestions for consideration. An English translation of the Austrian Biodiversity Strategy 2030 for Austria will be shortly made available and will be shared with the WG Biodiversity for information.

For more information see [the presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

- Implementation of the Alpine Biodiversity Protocol in Austria

Gerald Gimpl, Ministry of Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, Austria, presented the formal and practical examples of implementation of the Alpine Convention Protocol on Nature Protection and Landscape Conservation in Austria, including the Legal Data Base and Service Center, series of publications, as well as the operations of the Climate Research Center in the Nature Park Ötztal providing solutions for alpine settlement areas.

For more information see [the presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

16. LIFE Carpathian Strategic Nature Project – project idea as a unique opportunity for the Carpathians

Klaudia Kuraś together with Dorothea Palenberg, Blue! advancing european projects, presented a strategic project idea to be submitted under the LIFE Strategic Nature Project (LIFE SNaP), which could provide large-scale and long term-funding for some activities planned in the Carpathian region, envisioned in the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework. Importantly, the possible LIFE co-funding would be particularly important for transboundary and transnational activities, which for different formal reasons, are not usually financed from the national funding sources of the involved Parties. The LIFE SNaP's budget, ranging from 15 to 50 million EUR over 5 to 10 years, far exceeds the scope of traditional LIFE projects or typical project supporting the Carpathian Convention activities, enabling the implementation of large-scale, impactful initiatives.

The joint SNaP proposal should include activities corresponding to the priorities of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (simultaneously also to the relevant CBF Strategic Objectives), including:

- extension of the network of protected areas (CBF SO1)
- enhancing the protected area network coherence by setting up ecological corridors (CBF SO1)
- implementation of EU nature restoration targets for species and habitats (CBF SO1)
- ecosystem restoration (CBF SO1)
- enhanced protection of the primary and old-growth forests (CBF SO2)
- improving the health and resilience of managed forests (CBF SO2)
- bringing nature back to agricultural land (CBF SO1 + SO5)

CBF SO8 (Cooperation with Ukraine) can also be duly considered under the above activities.

A transnational LIFE SNAP for the Carpathians provides a unique opportunity of actively involving all the Parties in the implementation (EU MS and Ukraine eligible for LIFE Programme, Serbia can join as third country) allowing for jointly addressing the strategic environmental challenges of the Carpathians.

Regarding the timeline for the potential project development, the Secretariat suggests applying first for the Technical Assistance Project Preparation, offered by LIFE Programme, which aims at preparing a concept note and a full proposal for SNAP. **The deadline for the TA-PP submission is 18 September 2024. In this respect, the submission of the full proposal for the transnational LIFE Carpathian Strategic Nature Project is foreseen for 2025.**

For more information see [the presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

17. Moderated discussion on the implementation of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework:

The Chair moderated a discussion on several topics relevant for the implementation of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework based on the prepared and circulated beforehand questions, including on:

- **Ensuring synergistic implementation of GBF and CBF at the national level**

During the discussion the Parties were asked to provide updates on the current status of the NBSAP revision in the country, and potential inclusion of the Carpathian Convention-related matters.

Czech Republic: the revision of the NBSAP is ongoing and finalisation is expected in 2025. At this moment, current strategy (2016-2025) is being evaluated in terms of implementation achieved and relevance of its goals and targets for the future, also with regard to their alignment with the GBF, EU BDS, NRL, etc. The best way to integrate the CC/CBF is under consideration.

Romania: the revision of the NBSAP is at very early stage. A project offered for preparing the NBSAP is submitted under the public procurement. In the offer, the Ministry requested the consideration of the Carpathian Convention.

Poland: the process of preparing national targets before CBD COP16 has started, however, it is progressing slow. At the moment, the national targets are not mentioning specifically the Carpathian Convention.

Slovakia: draft of the NBSAP is already prepared and currently in consultations with other ministries and stakeholders. The Carpathian Convention Protocols are included in specific thematic targets. It is not clear whether the Slovak NBSAP will be adopted by the CBD COP16, however, for sure until the end of the year.

Hungary: NBSAP was adopted in August 2023 without any specific target for the Carpathian Convention, however, the national targets are relevant for the Carpathian Convention. Next year, Hungary will prepare an assessment of the NBSAP implementation.

Serbia: delay in developing NBSAP due to a late start of GEF project supporting the NBSAP alignment with GBF, however, the established Working Group is currently working on the national targets which should be ready before the CBD COP16. The Carpathian Convention will be included under the target on implementation of international agreements with specific reference to the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework.

➤ **Development of the LIFE Carpathian Strategic Nature Project**

With support of an interactive tool, the Chair asked for inputs in regard to potential priority areas and stakeholders to be involved in LIFE SNAP for the Carpathians. The results of this exercise will be used in the further planning and consultation for the project development.

A general overview of suggested priority areas for the project implementation include:

- Large carnivores (particularly lynx) monitoring, mitigating conflicts
- Ecological connectivity
- Conservation of grassland habitats
- Freshwater restoration (wetlands, peatlands, free-flowing rivers)
- Creating a GenBank for the Carpathian plants
- Ecosystem restoration-implementation of new Nature Restoration Law
- Integrated spatial planning
- Compensation of stakeholders/communities for actions that enhance ecosystem services such as maintaining forest cover, protecting water sources and creating pollinator habitats
- Integration of stakeholders (land users and owners) in conservation measures.

The stakeholders groups to be involved in the project will depend on decided project activities.

➤ **Support to Ukraine**

The meeting participants were invited to share ideas and information on ongoing initiatives to support Ukraine, particularly in respect to the Ukrainian Carpathians.

Harald Egerer provided updates on the Secretariat's work in terms of supporting the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration of the Carpathian Convention on the impact of war on the environment in Ukraine and the need for cooperation and assistance from 2022. In this respect, the Secretariat, together with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine is currently working on a project proposal for enhancing biodiversity conservation through a strengthened protected areas network and the sustainable management of key forest ecosystems, while increasing resilience to climate change and creating opportunities for sustainable development in the region in the Ukrainian Carpathians. This project's objectives and expected results are also aligned with the relevant articles and protocols of the Carpathian Convention. The project is submitted to the Global Environment Facility.

Furthermore, the Science for the Carpathians (S4C) together with the Secretariat has been supporting the Ukrainian scientists, particularly through organization of special sessions on various events, including the Forum Carpaticum 2023.

S4C representatives informed about a summer school for Ukrainian forest scientists that is planned this year in Switzerland, more information to be circulated. Furthermore, S4C informed about establishing a Bukovina peace park, however, stressed the need for support from higher institutions on Romanian side.

Slovakia is working closely with Ukrainian colleagues on setting up cooperation for river restoration and potential establishment of the transboundary Ramsar site.

Czech Republic is promoting green recovery in UA in cooperation with UNEP with a special focus on sustainable reconstruction and providing relevant expertise in connection with the ecological damage caused by the destruction of the Kachovka reservoir. Czech Republic also mentioned a new LIFE project of the Cech Nature Conservation Agency, which aims to create an effective system of governance and management of the Emerald network in Ukraine based on Natura 2000 tools. Cooperation among Czech and Ukrainian experts is ongoing in several areas, such as industrial emissions.

WWF-CEE is working on initiative called "Build back better in Ukraine", team working with Ukrainian stakeholders and the Ministry for ensuring sustainability of undertaken or planned recovery activities.

As one of potential cooperation ideas, Blue! suggested providing capacity building for writing project proposals, particularly for LIFE projects.

- Other suggestions/ideas for CBF implementation, e.g. project ideas, initiatives, to implement CBF at the local, national, cross-border or transnational level

Due to time limitation, the last topic was not thoroughly discussed and participants were invited to share further input in writing.

Opening of the Day 2

Session III – Cooperation with other organizations and bodies

18. Carpathian Network of Protected Areas: updates on activities and outlook

Andrea Kurta, Piatra Craiului National Park, on behalf of the Chair of the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA), delivered a presentation on the ongoing initiatives supporting the awareness raising about the ecological importance of the Carpathian protected areas and fostering youth engagement in stewardship for the mountain environment - Youth at the Top. This year edition, taking place on 18-19 July will be held under the theme "Alpine flowers and pollinators insects". All PAs and other organization are invited to join the initiatives.

Furthermore, Ms. Kurta provided information about the idea of the Carpathian Day that is now being supported by the CC COP7 decisions. The Secretariat is facilitating involvement of various actors in celebration the Carpathian Day as an education and awareness raising events on or around 26 September. Ms. Kurta shared the experiences of Romania, which has already organized several events in protected areas related to the Carpathians on that day.

More information about the Carpathian Day initiative can be found on the [dedicated page at the Carpathian Convention website](#).

For more information see [the presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

19. Tourism Research for Biodiversity Conservation - Experiences from the Carpathian Protected Areas

Karolina Taczanowska, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna, Member of the Science for the Carpathians, presented the results of the research conducted in the Tatras Mountains on carrying capacity of tourism destination with consideration of ecological and social aspects.

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

20. Carpathian Wetland Initiative: updates on activities and outlook

Adriana Kušíková, Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, Chair of the Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWI), provided updates on the CW achievements in 2023 and priorities for 2024, including on the need for improving the operation and governance of the initiatives such as establishing its new structure (association), new Terms of Reference and increased funding/fees.

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

21. EUSDR PA6: updates on activities and outlook

Florian Ballnus, Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection, EUSDR PA6 Coordinator, joined the meeting online delivering a presentation on updates on recent and upcoming EUSDR PA6 activities, including:

- RAMSAR Regional Initiative by Danubeparks Wild Islands
- EUSDR Flagships: Task Force Processes of PA6, new nominations in June 2024
- 22nd PA6 Steering Group Meeting 24-25 September 2024 in Tulln, Austria, in cooperation with 31st Conference of the Working Group Sustainability / Soil Protection of the Working Community of the Danube Regions

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

22. Scientific Network for the Caucasus Mountain Region (SNC-mt): information on activities and possible cooperation

Nina Shatberashvili, Director at the Scientific Network for the Caucasus Mountain Region (SNC-mt), made a presentation about the establishment, operations and objectives of the Sustainable Caucasus Network, as well potential cooperation areas between the Caucasus and the Carpathians. Mr. Shatberashvili emphasised the strategic partnership between the SNC-mt and the Science for the Carpathians that has been formalized in 2021.

For more information see [the presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

Session IV – Cooperation with other projects relevant for the WG Biodiversity

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

Elisabeth Wiegeler, on behalf of the Carinthia University of Applied Sciences, Austria, presented the recently approved ForestConnect project (Interreg Danube Programme) on climate-smart forest connectivity for large carnivores in the Balkan-Carpathian-Dinaric region, which aims to establish climate-smart forest connectivity for large carnivores such as brown bears, wolves, and Eurasian lynxes in the Balkan-Carpathian-Dinaric region. The project addresses the significant challenges posed by habitat fragmentation, climate-induced changes, and human-wildlife conflicts. By developing transnational monitoring tools and technologies, the project seeks to improve the heterogeneity, connectivity, and climate resilience of forest habitats and develop guidelines for protected areas managers. Additionally, it aligns with the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy and emphasizes the importance of large carnivores as umbrella species, whose health reflects the overall condition of forest ecosystems.

The Chair invited the partners to exchange with the LECA project partners to look for synergies and keep the WG Biodiversity regularly updated on the project developments. The Secretariat is planned to be subcontracted under the project.

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

24. BioLine project on restoration of biodiversity and connectivity for ecological management of powerline corridors in Danube – Carpathian region

Rasto Rybanic, on behalf of SOS/BirdLife, Slovakia, presented the BioLine project, submitted to the Interreg Danube Region Programme. The project aims to restore biodiversity and ecological connectivity in powerline corridors in

the Danube-Carpathian region. Led by SOS/BirdLife Slovakia, the project involves 22 partners across seven countries and focuses on innovative ecological management of powerline corridors to support safe energy distribution while enhancing natural habitats and migration pathways. The BioLine project emphasizes the significance of the Convention work on enhancing connectivity and it aims to link its efforts with the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework, the Ecosystem Restoration Decade, and other restoration initiatives. A joint meeting between the Working Groups on Biodiversity and Energy is planned to further these goals and in view of the possible endorsement by the Carpathian Convention of Guidance documents for ecological corridor management. Parties will be updated on the selection process.

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

25. TRANSNATURE project on unveiling the dynamics of transboundary biodiversity governance in Europe to enhance biodiversity protection

Federica Cittadino, on behalf of Eurac Research, introduced the TRANSNATURE Project and the related Interactive Map under development within the project, which highlights examples of transboundary biodiversity protection. It explained the project's partners, duration, funding, case studies, and aims, emphasizing the importance of ensuring conservation across borders with involvement from multiple governance levels. Feedback was sought from participants on additional cases and design improvements for the map. Relevant resources and contact information were provided to facilitate further engagement and inquiries.

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

26. CentralMountains project on strengthening governance models for sustainable development of mountain areas in Central Europe

Isidoro De Bortoli on behalf of Eurac Research, presented the *Joint Strategy Report for community-led sustainable development of mountain areas in Central Europe*, emphasizing the importance of cross-border participatory governance. The Report has been already shared among the Carpathian Convention Focal Points and relevant stakeholders. The presentation highlighted some relevant challenges such as institutional fragmentation, language barriers, and the impact of political instability, especially in the Carpathians. It called for integrated approaches to address demographic, economic, and ecological challenges, stressing the need for stakeholder engagement and smart funding solutions. Several recommendations are developed within the report, addressing policy makers and Carpathian Convention stakeholders, among which the creation of multilevel agreements and alternative governance models to enhance the effectiveness of cross-border cooperation and ensure long-term sustainability.

For more information see the [presentation delivered at the meeting](#).

27. NaturaConnect project on Building a resilient ecological network of conserved areas across Europe for nature and people: WORKSHOP*

* Short report from the NaturaConnctet workshop is available in Annex 1.

Session V – Closing of the meeting

28. Conclusions, next steps and closing of the WG Biodiversity meeting

The Chair presented conclusions and recommendations of the 15th WG Biodiversity meeting as follows:

- 1) WG Biodiversity is invited to provide feedback on how to improve the current format of the [Science for the Carpathians recommendations](#) to make them more useful and clearer for the Carpathian Convention Working Groups and other bodies by 31 July 2024.
- 2) WG Biodiversity is invited to further review and provide inputs to the draft WG Biodiversity Work Plan 2024-2026 by 15 July 2024, based on its deliberations at the 15th meeting.
- 3) WG Biodiversity is invited to review and provide inputs to the draft thematic guidances on monitoring harmonization, poaching investigation and conflict prevention, being developed within the LECA project by 31 July 2024 (document attached to the follow up email).
- 4) WG Biodiversity recommends the development of the joint strategy for the conservation of the autochthonous lynx population in the Carpathian Mountains (Carpathian Lynx Strategy) and is invited to

provide feedback on the discussion paper on the development of the strategy by 31 July 2024 (document attached to the follow up email).

- 5) WG Biodiversity recommends reestablishment of the Large Carnivores Expert Group to support the work of WG Biodiversity on large carnivores, namely the development of LECA thematic guidances and the Carpathian Lynx Strategy.
- 6) WG Biodiversity recommends further enhancing synergies and strengthening cooperation with other conventions on relevant topics, namely the CBD, Alpine Convention, CMS and Bern Convention.
- 7) WG Biodiversity recommends development of the LIFE SNAP for the Carpathians, which will support implementation of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework. Furthermore, WG Biodiversity is invited to provide inputs for the project development, particularly on the project thematic scope, as needed.
- 8) WG Biodiversity welcomes and acknowledges the work of its many long-term partners and stakeholders that contributes, in particular via project cooperation, to the implementation of the Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity, related strategic documents / action plans and COP decisions.

The Chair thanked the meeting participants for their active contributions to the meeting discussions and declared the meeting closed.