

DRAFT MEETING REPORT

16th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Biodiversity
13-14 May 2025, Veselí nad Moravou, Czech Republic

All the presentations delivered during the Working Group on Biodiversity (WG Biodiversity) meeting are available on the [Carpathian Convention website](http://www.carpathianconvention.org/2025/03/24/16th-meeting-of-the-working-group-on-biodiversity/)¹

DAY 1 | 13 MAY

Session I – Introduction

1. Opening of the WG Biodiversity meeting

Harald Egerer, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, formally opened the meeting by welcoming participants and emphasizing the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration through the work of the Convention's Working Groups (WGs). He highlighted the recent success of the WG on Sustainable Forest Management, which convened on 28-29 April in Bratislava, Slovakia, noting that the WG Biodiversity can build upon this momentum. Mr. Egerer expressed his appreciation for the effective chairmanships of the WGs, underscored the value of inter-WG cooperation, and stressed the importance of continued support for Ukraine. He also extended his sincere thanks to the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic for hosting the meeting.

2. Welcome remarks by the Serbian Presidency

Aleksandar Stanojević, Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia, addressed the WG Biodiversity participants on behalf of the Serbian Presidency to the Carpathian Convention. Mr. Stanojević emphasized the vital role of biodiversity in achieving the Convention's objectives and called for accelerating both its implementation and Serbia's EU integration. Highlighting the importance of the EU Nature Restoration Law, he noted Serbia's efforts in developing a national restoration plan. He also underscored the value of cross-boundary cooperation for sharing best practices and advancing restoration goals, referencing collaboration with the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, Alpine Convention, and Convention on Biological Diversity. He concluded by thanking the Carpathian Convention Secretariat and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation for their support in biodiversity monitoring.

3. Welcome remarks by the WG Biodiversity Chair

Eliška Rolfová, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic, welcomed participants in her role as Chair of the WG Biodiversity meeting and formally assumed the responsibility of chairing the meeting. She highlighted the Bílé Karpaty (White Carpathians) as a region of exceptional biodiversity, where centuries of pastoralism have shaped species-rich meadows. These meadows stand as a testament to successful local restoration efforts. She also emphasized the cultural significance of local traditions and wine growing, which contribute to the region's unique ecological and cultural landscape.

4. Adoption of the agenda

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

5. Review of the progress in implementing the WG Biodiversity Work Plan 2024-2026

¹ <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/2025/03/24/16th-meeting-of-the-working-group-on-biodiversity/>



The Chair provided a brief overview of the progress made in implementing the WG Biodiversity Work Plan and Mandate for 2024-2026. Ms. Rolfová noted that the meeting would offer further insights into the advancement of specific objectives, including the implementation of the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework and the International Action Plan on Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ensuring Ecological Connectivity, collaboration with partner initiatives, and the enhancement of landscape protection. These topics would be explored in greater detail through presentations over the course of the two-day meeting.

Session II – Large carnivore conservation in the Carpathians – project implementation and cooperation

6. LECA project: Supporting the coexistence and conservation of Carpathian Large Carnivores

Martin Duľa, Mendel University in Brno and LECA Project Lead Partner, presented the project's ongoing efforts to support the coexistence and conservation of Carpathian large carnivores. He detailed progress across four pilot areas in the Carpathians—Beskydy-Kysuce, East Carpathians, Tatras, and Slovak Karst—North Hungarian Mountains—highlighting activities such as GPS collaring of wolves and bears, extensive camera trapping, non-invasive genetic sampling, and stakeholder engagement. Key achievements include over 10,000 GPS positions from collared wolves, identification of lynx populations, and the development of the CarniTrack IT tool for stakeholder involvement. The project is now in its second half, focusing on analysing and validating pilot data and developing thematic guidance in three areas: monitoring harmonisation, conflict prevention, and poaching investigation. The final conference is planned in March 2026 at the Technical University in Zvolen, Slovakia. These outputs will inform the implementation of the International Action Plan on Large Carnivores and be aligned with the goals of both the Carpathian and Alpine Conventions.

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

After the presentation, participants discussed the versatility of the CarniTrack tool, which is available both as a web platform and mobile app, supporting multiple languages and applicable beyond the Carpathians. There was interest in replicating the project's methodologies and tools in other Carpathian cross-border regions, with forthcoming recommendations to support this. The update of the International Action Plan on Large Carnivores was also addressed, aiming to incorporate not only data and methods but also broader thematic areas. The Chair noted the reestablishment of the Large Carnivore Expert Group, which will review the draft thematic guidance documents expected in September/October, with further consultations planned through 2026. Ecological insights were also shared, including lynx population fluctuations due to poaching and habitat fragmentation, particularly in the Slovak Karst–North Hungarian region, and the impact of wolves and feral dogs on lynx dispersal. Additionally, there is ongoing interest in bear hormone analysis and stress indicators, with plans to analyze data from Romania's Făgăraș region.

7. LIFE WILD WOLF project

Miroslav Kutal, Mendel University in Brno, presented on the LIFE WILD WOLF project (2023–2027). The project involves 18 partners from nine European countries and aims to ensure the long-term conservation of wolves in human-dominated landscapes. The project focuses on understanding and managing bold and habituated wolf behavior through data collection, stakeholder engagement, and capacity-building. Key objectives include identifying behavioral drivers, neutralizing attractants, training emergency response teams, and developing intervention protocols. A major component involves analyzing close wolf-human encounters across Europe, with 371 records reviewed and 19 cases of bold wolves identified. In the Czech model area of Broumovsko/Krkonoše, stakeholder platforms are being established through moderated workshops with conservationists, farmers, hunters, and foresters. The project will culminate in a final conference in Czechia in 2027.

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



8. ForestConnect project: Towards a Climate-smart Forest Connectivity for Large Carnivores in the Balkan-Carpathian-Dinaric Region

Polona Zakrajšek, Carinthia University of Applied Sciences, presented the ForestConnect project, which focuses on enhancing climate-smart forest connectivity for large carnivores across the Balkan-Carpathian-Dinaric region, involving seven countries and nine pilot territories. Recognizing large carnivores as umbrella species and indicators of healthy, connected ecosystems, the project addresses threats such as habitat fragmentation, human-wildlife conflict, and climate change. Key objectives include developing transnational monitoring tools, improving forest heterogeneity and resilience, and strengthening cooperation across eco-regions. The project emphasizes practical, cross-border solutions aligned with the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy to ensure the long-term viability of large carnivore populations. A Strategic Action Plan is being developed to guide climate-adaptive forest management in ecological corridors, supported by stakeholder surveys and expert group consultations. Ms. Zakrajšek encouraged participants to share their ideas for improving large carnivore connectivity through specific actions or tools. She acknowledged the overlap between the ForestConnect and LECA projects and the need for collaboration, especially for informing the Strategic Action Plan.

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

9. Conservation of the Carpathian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) in West and Central Europe

Jakub Kubala, Technical University in Zvolen and the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group, outlined ongoing efforts to develop a Pan-Carpathian Conservation and Management Strategy for the Carpathian lynx (*Lynx lynx*), aiming for completion by late summer 2025. This strategy will be presented to the Carpathian Convention, Bern Convention, and the Convention on Migratory Species for their consideration. Building on past and recent population assessments, the strategy addresses key threats such as poaching, habitat fragmentation, and declining connectivity. Conservation priorities include fostering cross-border collaboration, establishing harmonized monitoring systems, implementing anti-poaching education, and ensuring development projects minimize habitat impacts. Led by the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group and the Carpathian Convention Secretariat, the strategy will be developed through expert consultations, online workshops, and input from all range states. It will be informed by upcoming IUCN Red List and Green Status assessments and aligned with international conservation guidelines to support national action plans across the Carpathian region. Mr. Kubala presented the suggested work plan for completing these tasks, inviting the Large Carnivore Expert Group and WG Biodiversity to be ready for providing their expertise through consultations.

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

Session III – Cooperation with and implementation of relevant international frameworks

10. Updates and Outlook from the EU Strategy for the Danube Region Priority Area 6

Florian Ballnus, Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection and EUSDR PA6 Coordinator, provided an update on the activities of Priority Area 06 (PA6) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), which focuses on preserving biodiversity, landscapes, and the quality of air and soil. PA6 operates through six task forces addressing key environmental issues, including sturgeon conservation, invasive species, soil protection, and landscape preservation. Highlights include the launch of the Danube Wild Islands Ramsar Initiative in 2024, the opening of Europe's first floating sturgeon hatchery in 2025, and citizen science efforts to monitor invasive species. Upcoming events include thematic panels and workshops on biodiversity and migratory fish, with continued collaboration across macro-regional strategies and new flagship project nominations due June 2025.

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

11. Presentation of the Alpine Convention Biodiversity Board: Engagement on the EU Nature Restoration Law

Claire de Kermadec, Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, provided an overview of their developing Alpine Biodiversity Action Plan 2030, which strongly focuses on nature restoration. Four core groups—Monitoring, Restoration, Conservation, and Connectivity—under the Alpine Biodiversity Board (ABB) are developing concrete actions to begin in 2027, in alignment with the EU Nature Restoration Law, tailored to the Alpine region. Key restoration priorities include peatland restoration, forest biodiversity enhancement, river continuity, pollinator recovery, and farmland biodiversity. Recent milestones of the Restoration Core Group include a successful request to incorporate transboundary issues into the Nature Restoration Law and ongoing collaboration with the BiodivRestore Knowledge Hub. Upcoming activities include technical workshops, expert consultations, and strategic meetings for contributing to the Alpine Biodiversity Plan by early 2026, which will include cooperation with the Carpathian Convention.

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

Following the presentation, Ms. De Kermadec discussed the importance of fostering synergies among the four core groups (Monitoring, Restoration, Conservation, Connectivity), with the upcoming Work Plan expected to outline areas of cooperation. Participants discussed the nuances of cross-border versus river-border cooperation and suggested aligning efforts with the European Centre for River Restoration. Participants also explored how to align the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework Action Plan with the Alpine Biodiversity Action Plan—with ecological connectivity between the two regions identified as a potential bridge. Exchange of best practices and collaboration to address common challenges such as the decline of pollinators was discussed. The Alpine Convention plans to submit its Action Plan to the Carpathian Convention for consultation via the ABB. A joint approach through National Restoration Plans and possibly a shared letter to the European Commission on transnational cooperation were also proposed. The discussion underscored the crucial collaboration between the two conventions, with the Carpathian Convention having inspired Alpine initiatives such as LIFE SNaP and large carnivore projects.

12. Moderated session on the EU Nature Restoration Law

The Chair moderated a discussion on the Nature Restoration Law (NRL), adopted in June 2024 under the EU Biodiversity Strategy, focusing on the preparation of National Restoration Plans (NRPs) or related national strategies, including those from Serbia and Ukraine. Ahead of the meeting, participants were invited to share updates, best practices, challenges, identify synergies with other processes like NBSAPs and the Carpathian LIFE SNaP proposal, and explore opportunities for transboundary cooperation and stakeholder engagement.

Czech Republic: They have taken a proactive approach to nature restoration, having initiated work on its National Restoration Plan (NRP) even before the adoption of the NRL. Building on a strong foundation of habitat mapping, monitoring schemes, and a rich restoration database coordinated by the Nature Conservation Agency, the country is aligning its NRP with the ongoing update of its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and other related strategies, ensuring strong synergies. Their approach to pollinator conservation involved merging it with agricultural restoration. The development process is notably inclusive, with 20–30 diverse stakeholders involved in each expert group, and efforts are underway to develop a communication strategy and socio-ecological research is being conducted through public questionnaires to better understand what people value about nature. Responses indicated appreciation of local landscapes and agricultural land. Challenges include financing constraints and the tight deadline to prepare NRPs by September 2026.

Hungary: Led by the Ministry of Agriculture, they have been actively developing its NRP. A planning framework with defined indicators is in place, and thematic expert groups—comprising academia, NGOs, government bodies and national parks—have been established to guide measures across four key areas: forests, grasslands and agriculture, water and wetlands, and urban ecosystems. Discussions are ongoing about whether to treat pollinators as a separate thematic area. Stakeholder engagement has included both in-person and online meetings. A forthcoming government decree will define roles and



responsibilities, giving the NRP a formal legal foundation as a national strategic document. Hungary shares similar challenges with the Czech Republic and is keen to learn from others' approaches.

Poland: Led by the Ministry of Climate and Environment, with support from the State Institute of Environmental Protection, they have initiated its NRP process by establishing working groups and holding consultations with NGOs. A dedicated website for the NRL was launched. The working groups are expected to complete their work by late 2025 or early 2026. Key challenges include financing, as there are currently no dedicated EU funds for restoration, a tight timeline with NRPs due by September 2026, and knowledge gaps. Poland is also exploring how to effectively integrate the NRP with its ongoing update of their NBSAP.

Romania: Early coordination with relevant ministries began even before the adoption of the NRL, and initial focus areas include peatland restoration and habitat mapping projects. While a comprehensive overview of progress is still lacking, this moderated discussion was seen as valuable for gathering ideas to bring back to national colleagues. Challenges include the lack of human resources as well as technical challenges in line with those presented by other parties. Financing also remains a key challenge, though there may be opportunities for support through the Carpathian LIFE SNaP initiative.

Slovakia: They have established a working group composed of relevant ministries and agencies, focusing on key areas such as urban ecosystems (led by the Slovak Environment Agency), forests, ecosystem services, Natura 2000 sites, and pollinators (led by the Slovak Nature Conservancy). Ongoing national discussions are considering whether to develop a new law or a new strategy to implement the NRL. As with other countries, financing remains a central concern.

13. Presentation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Mountain Programme of Work

Jamal Annagylyjova, CBD Secretariat, provided an overview of the Mountain Biodiversity Programme of Work (PoW), originally adopted at COP7 in 2004, and its evolution through subsequent CBD COP decisions. As part of the broader CBD framework, the PoW focuses on conservation, sustainable use, and benefit-sharing in mountain ecosystems. At CBD COP16, key decisions included the launch of the Cali Fund, the establishment of a new subsidiary body to enhance Indigenous and local community contributions, and a call for strategic reviews of all PoWs to align with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF). The upcoming SBSTTA-27 in Panama (October 2025) will review these updates ahead of COP17, where mountain-specific gaps—such as land-use planning, human-wildlife conflict, pollution, and sustainable livelihoods—will be addressed. Ms. Annagylyjova also highlighted the growing role of mountains in international processes, including dialogues on glaciers and climate change, and emphasized the need for a unified voice among mountain countries to elevate the mountain agenda from Cali to Yerevan.

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

Following the presentation, the discussion focused on the [potential joint work programme among the three Rio Conventions](#). The CBD Secretariat is currently gathering input from Parties on this initiative, with a [technical exchange scheduled for 15 June in Bonn, Germany](#), where focal points from all three conventions will convene. Ms. Annagylyjova emphasized the importance of ensuring mountain ecosystems are explicitly included in this joint programme. Countries were encouraged to submit their views by the end of May and to review the EU's submission for common elements. It was also suggested that regional representatives attend the Bonn meeting to ensure mountain perspectives are well represented. The joint work programme will be presented at SBSTTA-27, where recommendations will be discussed. An additional discussion point was the importance of cooperating with the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 and the importance of connectivity for ensuring species survival and resilience to climate change.

14. Implementing the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework: Presentation and Workshop of the Carpathian LIFE Strategic Nature Project (SNaP)



Dorothea Palenberg, Blue! advancing european projects, presented the development process and strategic importance of the Carpathian LIFE Strategic Nature and Biodiversity Project (SNaP), which could provide large-scale and long term-funding for transnational and transboundary activities in the Carpathian region, based on the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework (CBF). The project will be developed in two phases: a Concept Note due in September 2025 and a Full Proposal by March 2026. It aims to support the implementation of the CBF and align with national and EU biodiversity strategies, including NBSAPs and NRPs. The project will be led by a core drafting team involving the Carpathian Convention Secretariat, national coordinators, and experts, with a consortium of 20-30 partners, primarily public authorities. The SNaP offers up to €50 million over a 10-year period, with a flexible, phased implementation structure. Success will depend on a strong, transnational consortium, broad stakeholder support, and measurable, cross-border biodiversity outcomes.

Interactive Session: Consortium & Stakeholders for the Carpathian LIFE SNaP

Using Mentimeter, participants then contributed their ideas regarding:

1. Which organisations and institutions should be project partners in the Carpathian LIFE SNaP?

- Ministry of Climate and Environment (PL)
- Institute of Nature Conservation, Polish Academy of Sciences (PL)
- Regional environmental directorates, regional forest directorates, Carpathian national parks (PL)
- Responsible authorities on environment and protected areas
- National Park Directorates, including those near both sides of country borders
- 1–3 national parks per country
- Responsible nature conservation bodies (national parks, authorities, etc.) (HU)
- 2 National Park Directorates as beneficiaries and Ministry of Agriculture (format of engagement not yet decided) (HU)
- State Forest Administration (UA)
- Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation Agency (Moravian-Silesian regional office) (CZ)
- Ministry of Regional Development (CZ)
- Universities focused on the Carpathian region (e.g., UPOL, UTB Zlín, Charles University, MENDELU) (CZ)
- State Nature Conservancy (SK)
- Regional authorities
- City of Vienna (as associate partner)
- National Forest Administration (RO)
- Park administrators, Ministry of Environment, Iasi University, open-minded landowners of biodiversity hotspots (RO)

2. Which additional stakeholders should be involved in implementation (not as project partners)?

- Research institutes and NGOs in both EU and non-EU countries
- Universities
- WWF CEE (as Beneficiary)
- WWF CZ and WWF in the Carpathian countries
- Major landowners of potential project sites (HU)
- Long-term Carpathian Convention partners already involved in cooperation
- Actors at the local level
- Local and regional governments and authorities (RO) and municipalities
- Tourism development agencies (CZ)
- Agriculture organizations (CZ)
- Lesy ČR (state forestry, CZ)
- FoE (Friends of the Earth) – LCs programme (CZ)



- Candidate and non-EU countries

3. **Which networks or partnerships should be strengthened?**

- CNPA (Carpathian Network of Protected Areas)
- CWI (Carpathian Wetland Initiative)
- S4C (Science for the Carpathians)
- CESDEN (Carpathian Education for Sustainable Development Expert Network)
- CWI and ESD (jointly)
- Park Administrations Association (RO)
- Alpine Convention
- CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity)
- S4C–Caucasus Science Network (Memorandum of Understanding)
- IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)
- CCIBIS (Carpathian Convention Information System)
- EEA (European Environment Agency)
- CERI
- CMS (Convention on Migratory Species)
- Peace Park
- Endemic Species Network
- Monitoring networks (e.g., GEO BON)
- International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists Global Alliance, FAO-hosted Mountain Partnership Secretariat
- Carpathian Convention Inventory of Virgin and Quasi-Virgin Forests

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

Interactive Session: Workshop of the Carpathian LIFE SNaP

Following the Mentimeter session, Ms. Palenberg then introduced the proposed structure of the Concept Note, outlining key work packages such as project management, conservation and restoration, governance, capacity building, dissemination, and monitoring. She emphasized the importance of aligning the Concept Note with the CBF Action Plan, and set the stage for an interactive workshop, where participants were split into three discussion groups, focused on three main themes:

1. **Thematic clusters and concrete activities to be included in the CBF Action Plan**

Participants were invited to contribute ideas on topics or challenges that should be addressed in the CBF Action Plan.

Pastoralism and Traditional Land Use

- Cooperate with UN International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026
- Loss of traditional land use and agricultural biodiversity
- Large carnivores & herds

Ecosystem Degradation and Restoration

- Decline of endangered species and ecosystems typical to the Carpathians
- Assessing state of ecosystems (forests, grasslands/pastures)
- Habitat restoration and social adaptation
- River connectivity (longitudinal and lateral)
- Protect endemic species in the Carpathians and animals other than large carnivores (e.g., beaver)

Sustainable Land Use and Forestry

- Unsustainable land use in agriculture and forestry



- Close-to-nature forestry
- Resilient forest management under climate change
- Preparing a MoU for the forestry group

Large Carnivores and Species with Ecosystem Functions

- Consider habitat approach and ecosystem services of large carnivores
- Structural element: "Species with an Ecosystem Function"
- Benefits to agriculture and forestry
- Knowledge hub on large carnivores
- Implement International Action Plan on conservation of large carnivores and ensuring ecological connectivity in the Carpathians

Ecological Connectivity and Corridors

- Blue and green connectivity
- Ecological corridors
- No clear legislation for ecological corridors
- Connect with Restoration Law and IENE 2022 Declaration
- Avoidance of future fragmentation

Transport and Infrastructure

- Cross-border activities on transport
- Mainstreaming biodiversity into transport (e.g., road permeability)
- Use Draft Joint Strategic Action Plan (2021–2023)
- Use "Wildlife and Traffic in the Carpathians" guidelines

Monitoring, Data, and Knowledge Platforms

- Monitoring networks (e.g., EuropaBON)
- Species measurement in the canopy
- Long-term studies beyond typical 3-year projects
- Tools and platforms for information collection

Climate Change and Natural Hazards

- Grasslands and forest fires
- Connection with climate change
- Equipment for rangers and firefighters, including sensors
- Need for short-term explanations of extreme weather events (e.g., flooding, heavy rainfall)

Legal and Policy Integration

- Stronger integration with the Nature Restoration Law (NRL)
- LIFE Call 2025 recommendation to focus on NRL

Education and Awareness

- Education measures on river connectivity

2. **Dissemination and replication based on best practices**

Participants were invited to contribute ideas on sectors, target groups, and governance levels to disseminate and/or replicate best practices, and the mechanisms to employ.

Dissemination Channels

- International Platforms: Use global conventions (e.g., CBD side events, IPBES assessments) to reach broader audiences.



- Digital Tools: Leverage websites (centralized, multilingual), newsletters, and social media campaigns tailored to national languages.
- Local Engagement: Organize local meetings, conferences, and involve local authorities, mayors, and even local celebrities or influential leaders.
- Educational Initiatives: Conduct summer schools for NGOs, students, and authorities to address specific themes or knowledge gaps.

Strategy: Internal vs External

- Internal: Use partner annual meetings for coordination and knowledge sharing.
- External: Tailor communication to either inform or influence, depending on the country context and level of Carpathian awareness.

Target Groups & Replication Activities

- Local Landowners/Stakeholders:
 - Focus on practical benefits (e.g., pasture improvement, bear management).
 - Use pilot projects and in-person engagement to build trust and involvement.
 - Promote local ambassadors—respected community members showcasing best practices.
- Agriculture & Forestry Stakeholders:
 - Share success stories in conservation and sustainable use.
 - Organize study visits (e.g., forest fire management, Natura2000 sites).

Replication Process: Cascade Approach

- NGO Networks: Act as intermediaries, supported by small grants.
- Village-Level Advice: Empower local communities to manage ecosystems.
- Professional Networks: Engage engineers, environmental impact specialists, and firefighters to spread knowledge.
- Existing Projects: Utilize networks from Horizon and Interreg projects for broader reach.

3. **Mainstreaming biodiversity into other sectors**

Participants were invited to contribute ideas on mechanisms for integrating biodiversity into other sectors and broader policy frameworks using the Carpathian Convention's structures.

Participants identified forestry, agriculture, and transport as the highest-priority and most feasible sectors for mainstreaming biodiversity in the Carpathian region, with specific focus areas such as farmers and livestock keepers, game management, and linear infrastructure. Additional sectors mentioned included spatial planning, energy, tourism, education, military defence areas, and water management.

Key activities proposed included promoting ecosystem services and nature-based solutions, raising awareness of biodiversity loss and its impacts, and highlighting the benefits of conservation—such as the role of large carnivores in forest health. Suggestions also emphasized capacity building, public campaigns, scientific engagement, and interdisciplinary cooperation.

Mechanisms for mainstreaming included implementing protocols, organizing joint Working Group meetings, maintaining active Carpathian networks, and encouraging cross-ministerial collaboration, particularly with education and science sectors. Regular multi-sectoral events like workshops and conferences were also recommended to foster ongoing dialogue and integration.

DAY 2 | 14 MAY

Session IV – Cooperation with other relevant networks and projects

15. Updates and Outlook from the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA)



Mircea Verghelet, Piatra Craiului National Park and the Chair of the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (CNPA), delivered a presentation on the activities of the CNPA Steering Committee and ongoing awareness raising initiatives. The Central Parks Final Conference held in Wieliczka in March 2022 brought together key representatives from several protected area networks to discuss collaboration and the future of protected area systems. The CNPA Steering Committee, with participants from five countries, reviewed a questionnaire assessing member interests in thematic cooperation, communication, capacity building, and the potential formation of a formal CNPA association. The results, based on 79 responses, highlighted strong interest in joint activities and staff training, as well as mixed views on legal and financial feasibility for establishing a new association. Additionally, the 2024 edition of “Youth at the Top” engaged 350 young people across the Alps and Carpathians in nature-based educational events, and they continued school-based outreach through [Carpathian Day 2024](#). All protected areas and other organization are invited to join the initiatives in 2025. Mr. Verghelet also announced the development of a new CNPA website, with the hope it will be public soon.

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

Following the presentation, participants noted that the CNPA will be an important component for including in the Carpathian LIFE SNaP.

16. Updates and Outlook from the Science for the Carpathians (S4C)

Joanna Zawiejska, University of the National Education Commission, Kraków and the Chair of the Science for the Carpathians (S4C), introduced the S4C as an interdisciplinary network of researchers dedicated to advancing sustainable development and conservation in the Carpathian region through science-policy-practice collaboration. S4C supports the development of a regional research agenda, fosters transdisciplinary dialogue, and connects with Alpine and Caucasus scientific networks. At the 7th Forum Carpaticum, 125 participants from 15 countries explored critical transitions in the region, with sessions on endemic species, Ukraine, and plastic pollution. The 8th Forum Carpaticum will take place 9-11 September 2025 in Bratislava, Slovakia, and will include themes such as empowering vulnerable groups, bridging natural and social sciences, and promoting nature-based solutions. Ms. Zawiejska highlighted published articles and research that S4C scientists are engaging in, including land use change, biodiversity, wildland-urban interfaces, carnivores, and the ecological value of forests and grasslands. Additional S4C initiatives include education for sustainable development, heritage interpretation, the Peace Park initiative, and seasonal schools and training programs.

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

17. Updates and Outlook from the Carpathian ESD Expert Network

Tamara Mitrofanenko, Carpathian Convention Secretariat, presented recent activities of the Carpathian ESD Expert Network (CESDEN). In 2024, the CESDEN supported several regional initiatives, such as the Student Conference on Conservation Science, Carpathian Day celebrations, and the “Steps Forward” Education Festival in Košice, Slovakia. Its members also contributed to the development and implementation of several projects like Shifting Towards Ecotourism through Heritage Interpretation and ProBioTIC. The latter aims to facilitate contributions from youth and early-career scientists to the Carpathian Convention WG Biodiversity. WG members and observers were kindly encouraged to respond to outreach from students participating in the ProBioTIC project. The Carpathian Convention Secretariat is currently implementing the project, “Linking education for sustainable development (ESD) with biodiversity, cultural heritage, and pastoralism across the Carpathians,” funded by the German Federal Environment Ministry’s Advisory Assistance Programme, which includes key activities such as Carpathian Day celebrations in 2025 and 2026, assessing existing curricula about pastoralism, supporting workshops for herders, supporting the inscription of Carpathian pastoral practices to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, and fostering collaboration between Carpathian Convention Working Groups and international networks. Upcoming events such as Forum Carpaticum 2025, the



International Mountain Conference, and the Multifunctional Farming Conference will further deepen regional cooperation.

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

Following the presentation, the idea of officially recognizing Carpathian Day as a national holiday in Romania was raised, which emerged as a result of collaborations between CESDEN and experts related to Carpathian pastoralism.

18. Updates and Outlook from the Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWI)

Natália Kubicová, State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic and Coordinator of the Carpathian Wetland Initiative (CWI), provided updates on the CWI achievements in 2024 and priorities for 2025. A regional Ramsar initiative dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands across the Carpathian Mountains, the CWI supports wetland restoration, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience through policy integration, ecological connectivity projects, and public awareness campaigns like World Wetlands Day. Recent achievements include strengthened governance, capacity-building workshops, and active involvement in the Danube WILDisland Ramsar Regional Initiative and the MedWet Coalition for Wetlands. A key transboundary effort is the restoration of the Latorica River floodplain between Slovakia and Ukraine, aiming to enhance biodiversity and climate adaptation through landscape-scale collaboration. In 2025, CWI will focus on integrating wetland services into Carpathian Convention frameworks, expanding Ramsar site networks, promoting nature-based solutions, and developing a new strategy for 2025–2030.

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

19. Presentation of the NaturaConnect project: Building a resilient ecological network of conserved areas across Europe for nature and people

Hildegard Meyer, World Wildlife Fund Central and Eastern Europe, presented the NaturaConnect project (2022–2026) that works to design a resilient, coherent, and ecologically representative Trans-European Nature Network (TEN-N) to help achieve the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 goals. Ms. Meyer introduced the project's application of the CARE principles—Comprehensive, Adequate, Resilient, and Effective—to address biodiversity data gaps, ecological connectivity, climate resilience, and effective protected area management. NaturaConnect supports national implementation through open-access GIS databases, case studies (including the Danube-Carpathian region), and tools for conservation planning. It also offers a self-paced learning platform and a Training Needs Assessment Tool to build capacity among conservation professionals. Upcoming activities include a series of webinars and stakeholder events throughout late 2025 and early 2026, covering topics such as strategic expansion of protected areas, financing opportunities, integrated green and blue infrastructure, and political economy analysis. The launch of the "NaturaConnector" decision support tool and new learning modules will further empower stakeholders to implement TEN-N effectively, contributing to a truly connected and climate-resilient European nature network.

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

Session V – Cooperation with Ukraine

20. Presentation of the Secretariat's Initiatives for Supporting the Ukrainian Carpathians

Tamara Mitrofanenko, Carpathian Convention Secretariat, outlined the Carpathian Convention Secretariat's current efforts to support Ukrainian Carpathians amid the ongoing war. Such efforts are based upon the "Ministerial Declaration on impact of the war on the environment in Ukraine and the need for cooperation and assistance" and other decisions adopted by the Convention's Parties to address the environmental impacts of the conflict, emphasizing biodiversity protection, sustainable development, and regional cooperation. To implement these mandates, the Secretariat is currently supporting or



developing key projects in capacity-building, green recovery, transboundary conservation, and enhancing a protected areas network in Ukraine through strategic partnerships and programs such as the Global Environment Facility, EU LIFE, and UNIDO. The Secretariat also fosters academic collaboration, civil society engagement, and knowledge exchange to strengthen Ukraine's environmental governance and resilience through regional networks like S4C, CESDEN, working group meetings and more.

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

21. Presentation on the Peace Park initiative between Ukraine and Romania

Gabriel Paun, Agent Green, presented on the Carpathian Peace Park, which outlines an ambitious vision to create a transboundary protected area between Ukraine and Romania through ecological diplomacy and shared stewardship. Framed as a symbol of peace, resilience, and regeneration, it would aim to be classified under the IUCN "Park for Peace" type of Transboundary Conservation Area, and aims to preserve biodiversity, promote cultural heritage, and foster sustainable development. A Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between five institutions in support of establishing a Peace Park, including the Carpathian Convention Secretariat. Another idea to carry out the objectives of promoting ecological diplomacy is to develop a 1500 km Carpathian Peace Trail, connecting communities across six countries. The initiative emphasizes cooperation, climate resilience, and community-led conservation.

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

Following the presentation, the discussion highlighted both opportunities and challenges in establishing a transboundary protected area between Ukraine and Romania. While Ukraine already has a park in place, Romania would need to create a new one, requiring expert-led biodiversity and land-use studies. The Romanian delegation emphasized the need for a scientific foundation and the fact that Romania does not officially recognize the IUCN "Park for Peace" designation. It was suggested using IUCN Category V (less restrictive) rather than Category I (strict national park), to better align with local community interests. However, it is up to the local administrations to decide whether they would agree with the proposed protected areas. Nonetheless, existing extensive cooperation between Romanian and Ukrainian partners was acknowledged through cross-border Interreg programmes. Financial support remains a key issue, with potential help from the SNaP initiative and the Green Belt programme. Mr. Paun clarified that the initiative could use a flexible branding approach and requires a bottom-up strategy involving local communities to ensure national-level approval. It was also mentioned that the Carpathian Convention working groups on cultural heritage and sustainable tourism worked on a Carpathian cultural heritage trail project that was not approved, but the process and plans would be relevant for any future Carpathian-wide trail development.

Session VI – Closing of the meeting

22. Any Other Business

A question was raised regarding how to update contacts to the CNPA. Mr. Verghelet will circulate the list of CNPA contacts in coordination with the Secretariat, for the Parties to update.

Ms. Meyer reminded participants that if future projects would like to involve WWF-CEE, they must be notified as soon as possible.

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

The Chair expressed appreciation for the presenters and emphasized the WG's role as a central hub for ongoing activities within and beyond the Carpathian Convention. Key discussion points included the importance of consulting the Large Carnivore Expert Group for finalizing the LECA guidance and lynx strategy. The Chair noted that the WG Biodiversity Work Plan 2024-2026 is progressing well, with most topics addressed during this meeting. The SNaP initiative was highlighted as vital for implementation,



with further consultations planned, including the upcoming June workshop. The next WG Biodiversity meeting is tentatively scheduled for spring 2026, to be decided in coordination with other events.

Mr. Egerer noted the thematic overlap between the forest and biodiversity WGs, stressing that both are integral to the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework (CBF) Action Plan, which is a vital process and eventual document that will proceed regardless of SNaP's approval.

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