



FINAL MEETING REPORT

17th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Biodiversity, including the Large Carnivores Expert Group
24 February 2026, 9:00 – 12:40 CET – online

All the presentations delivered during the Working Group on Biodiversity (WG Biodiversity) meeting are available on the [Carpathian Convention website](http://www.carpathianconvention.org)¹

Session I – Introduction

1. Opening of the 17th WG Biodiversity meeting

Harald Egerer, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, formally opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and emphasizing the importance of the large carnivore agenda, which currently constitutes a key focus of the Working Group on Biodiversity (WG Biodiversity). He underlined that the topics identified for discussion are crucial for ensuring substantive and successful outcomes at the upcoming Carpathian Convention 8th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP8), scheduled to take place in 1-4 December 2026. Mr. Egerer also expressed his appreciation for the effective chairmanship of the WG Biodiversity and extended his sincere thanks to the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic for its support in organizing the meeting.

2. 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.

Ms. Rolfová acknowledged the significant progress achieved in the conservation of large carnivores in the Carpathians. She highlighted in particular the achievements of the LECA project in promoting coexistence and supporting the conservation of Carpathian large carnivores, as well as the process of developing the Carpathian Lynx Strategy, which has been initiated. Both initiatives were recognized as providing a solid framework for advancing work on large carnivores under the Carpathian Convention and as being highly relevant for the upcoming Carpathian Convention COP8.

Ms. Rolfová also emphasized the importance of ongoing and future projects that continue to support large carnivore conservation efforts in the Carpathians.

3. Adoption of the agenda

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

SESSION II – DEVELOPMENT OF THE CARPATHIAN LYNX STRATEGY

4. Presentation of the process and next step and discussion

Jochen Krebs, Stiftung Natur und Umwelt RLP, on behalf of Urs Breitenmoser, IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group, presented the background, objectives, and overall roadmap for the development of the Conservation Strategy for the Carpathian lynx (*Lynx lynx carpathicus*) in the Carpathians. The initiative was launched following the decision of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild

¹ <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/2026/02/10/17th-meeting-of-the-working-group-on-biodiversity/>



Animals (CMS) COP14, accompanied by a Concerted Action that specifically calls for the preparation of such a Strategy, alongside related activities aimed at strengthening coordinated conservation measures across the species' range. The process has recently been formally initiated with the establishment of an Expert Group tasked with drafting the Strategy. The first official workshop of this group was scheduled to take place immediately following the WG Biodiversity meeting, marking an important milestone in the development process. Members of the WG Biodiversity, as well as representatives of the Large Carnivores Expert Group, were warmly invited to actively engage in and contribute to the process.

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

SESSION III - THEMATIC GUIDANCES ON MONITORING HARMONISATION, CONFLICT PREVENTION, AND POACHING INVESTIGATION

5. Consultations on draft Thematic Guidances on monitoring harmonisation, conflict prevention, and poaching investigation deriving from the LECA project

Martin Duľa, Mendel University in Brno and Lead Partner of the LECA Project, presented the project's ongoing efforts to promote the coexistence and conservation of large carnivores in the Carpathians. He highlighted in particular the development of thematic guidance documents in three priority areas: monitoring harmonisation, conflict prevention, and poaching investigation.

Mr. Duľa informed participants that the project's final conference is scheduled to take place on 16–17 March 2026 at the Technical University in Zvolen, Slovakia. The conference will present and discuss the project's final results, which are expected to provide important input for the forthcoming revision of the International Action Plan on Large Carnivores in the Carpathians, which was adopted by the Carpathian Convention COP6.

He further provided a detailed overview of the current status of the guidance document on monitoring harmonisation, outlining key methodological approaches and progress achieved to date. The thematic guidance on conflict prevention was subsequently presented by Mr. Dávid D. Sütő (WWF Hungary), while Ms. Tereza Thompson (WWF Slovakia) introduced the guidance document focusing on poaching prevention, highlighting practical tools and recommendations to strengthen enforcement and cross-border cooperation.

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

The advance draft of the thematic guidances will be circulated as a follow-up to the WG Biodiversity and the Large Carnivores Expert Group for written comments and inputs.

SESSION IV - IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN ON THE CONSERVATION OF LARGE CARNIVORES AND ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY IN THE CARPATHIANS

6. Preparation for the next report on the population status of large carnivores and monitoring in the Carpathians

Eliška Rolfová provided background information on the [International Action Plan on the Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians](#) and its implementation. She explained that the Action Plan, adopted at CC COP6 in 2020, is scheduled for revision in 2026. Among its key provisions is the preparation of regular reports on the population status of large carnivores and related monitoring efforts in the Carpathians. In line with this mandate, the next report is due in 2026. The previous report, finalized in 2020 with contributions from all Parties, proved instrumental in guiding subsequent activities on large carnivores in the region, including the development of the LECA project. In this context, the Chair invited the WG Biodiversity to consider whether the forthcoming report could be prepared and finalized within 2026, with a view to presenting it at COP8 at the end of the year. **The WG**



Biodiversity members are requested to provide written feedback on their readiness to contribute data and inputs to the report and to assess the feasibility of finalizing the document by autumn this year. If feasible, the nomination or identification of an expert to support the harmonization and consolidation of national inputs and monitoring data would be highly appreciated. For reference, the previous report is linked in the meeting report: [Report on Large Carnivore Monitoring in the Carpathian Mountains](#)

7. Presentation of the way forward and next steps for the revision of the Action Plan – Carpathian Convention Secretariat

Klaudia Kuraś, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, presented an overview of the current Action Plan and outlined the proposed process for its revision, with the objective of submitting a revised version for approval at CC COP8. The Action Plan, originally developed with the support of the ConnectGREEN project (Interreg Danube Programme), is structured around seven Strategic Objectives. While these objectives provide a solid and comprehensive framework, they remain relatively general in nature. In light of the evolving knowledge base and the substantial outcomes of recent and ongoing projects – such as LECA, NaturaConnect, and ForestConnect – it would be beneficial to update and further specify these objectives. The intention of the revision process is to refine and strengthen the existing Strategic Objectives, without fundamentally altering their structure, while ensuring a balanced approach across all objectives. More detailed guidance documents and strategic frameworks, including the LECA thematic guidance documents and the forthcoming Carpathian Lynx Strategy, could be referenced under the relevant Strategic Objectives and annexed to the revised Action Plan.

Members of the WG Biodiversity and the Large Carnivores Expert Group are invited to review the current version of the Action Plan and provide comments and inputs, particularly concerning its overall objective and the Strategic Objectives. The Secretariat will update the introduction and legal background sections. **An editable version of the Action Plan will be circulated by the Secretariat, with a request to submit a first round of comments and inputs by 23 March 2026.**

Based on the feedback received, the Secretariat will prepare a first consolidated draft for further consultation to be held via electronic exchange, led by the Secretariat. According to the proposed timeline, the revised final draft should be submitted to the next WG Biodiversity meeting, planned for early September 2026. Following its finalization by the WG Biodiversity, the document will be submitted to the CCIC for clearance and subsequent consideration and adoption at COP8.

SESSION V - COOPERATION WITH OTHER RELEVANT NETWORKS AND PROJECTS

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

Elena Fischer, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, presented the development process and relevant activities of the CARPATHIAN LIFE Strategic Nature and Biodiversity Project (SNaP) proposal. The project is designed to secure large-scale, long-term funding for transnational and cross-border biodiversity actions in the Carpathian region, building on and operationalizing the Carpathian Biodiversity Framework (CBF) and its Implementation Plan. The CBF Implementation Plan 2027-2035 was recently developed as a concrete action plan for realising the CBF's eight Strategic Objectives into tangible biodiversity outcomes on the ground, which the CARPATHIAN LIFE project aims to implement. The proposal passed the first application stage in September 2025, and will be submitted in March 2026. The project is coordinated by Eurac Research, and includes approximately 46 partners, primarily public authorities, research institutions, and NGOs, reflecting the scale and ambition of the initiative. It aims to mobilize up to €50 million over a nine-year implementation period. Notably, the project foresees a dedicated Work Package on large carnivore conservation, which Ms. Fischer presented, along with other large carnivore-related activities foreseen under the project. Should the project be awarded funding, these proposed actions would be directly relevant to – and could significantly inform – the forthcoming update of the Action Plan.



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

9. 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 updates in the implementation of the NaturaConnect project, which works to design a resilient, coherent, and ecologically representative Trans-European Nature Network (TEN-N) to help achieve the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 goals. Upcoming activities include a series of webinars and stakeholder events, such as:

- 17 March: Providing feedback on priority areas for implementing European area based biodiversity targets organised by IIASA Registration link
- 26 March: Navigating Climate Change: Methodologies and Applications for Conservation in cooperation with Sapienza, EUROPARC Federation & WWF
- 23 April (TBC): Webinar on Land Use in cooperation with University of Amsterdam, EUROPARC Federation and WWF
- September: Final event.

The project is also developing platforms for engagement and dissemination, such as the “NaturaConnector” decision support tool and new learning modules to further empower stakeholders in implementing TEN-N effectively, contributing to a truly connected and climate-resilient European nature network.

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

10. 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. A **Strategic Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience-Enhancing Forest Management in Ecological Corridors for Large Carnivores** was developed to guide climate-adaptive forest management in ecological corridors, whose advanced draft was circulated among relevant Carpathian Convention Working Groups for feedback. Ms. Zakrajšek emphasized the need for synergies among the projects and processes within the Carpathian Convention, and stressed the relevance of the ForestConnect Strategic Action plan for the revision of the Action Plan for conservation of large carnivores in the Carpathians. The finalised ForestConnect Strategic Action Plan will be publicly available and shared soon.

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

Session VI – Closing of the meeting

11. Any Other Business

No additional topics were raised at the meeting.

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



The Chair expressed appreciation for the presenters and participants for attending the 17th meeting of the WG Biodiversity. The following next steps were proposed:

- **Development of the Carpathian Lynx Strategy** – Members of the WG Biodiversity and the Large Carnivores Expert Group were invited to actively engage in the consultation process. Those who are not yet part of the Expert Group responsible for drafting the Strategy are encouraged to contact the Secretariat, which will be pleased to facilitate their involvement.
- **Further consultation on the LECA project thematic guidance documents** – Once an advanced draft becomes available, it will be circulated to the WG Biodiversity and the Large Carnivores Expert Group for written comments and feedback.
- **New report on large carnivore monitoring in the Carpathians (2026)** – The WG is requested to provide written feedback by 23 March 2026 regarding their readiness to contribute data and inputs to the report, as well as to assess the feasibility of finalizing the document by autumn 2026. If possible, the nomination or identification of an expert to support the harmonization and consolidation of national inputs and monitoring data would be highly appreciated.
- **Revision of the International Action Plan on the Conservation of Large Carnivores and Ecological Connectivity in the Carpathians** – Members of the WG Biodiversity and the Large Carnivores Expert Group are invited to review the current version of the Action Plan and provide comments and inputs, particularly concerning its overall objective and Strategic Objectives. The Secretariat will update the introduction and legal background sections. An editable version of the Action Plan will be circulated, with a request to submit a first round of comments and inputs by 23 March 2026.
- **18th Meeting of the CC Working Group on Biodiversity** – The meeting is planned for early September 2026 and will most likely be held in an online format

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