NaturaConnect receives funding under the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 101060429

Invitation

Connecting the Carpathians: Turning NaturaConnect Science into Action

NaturaConnect Project Side Event at COP8 to the Carpathian Convention

Location: Room CR1

Date: 2 December, 17:00-18:15

Dear Participants of the 8th Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention,

We cordially invite you to the upcoming side event of the NaturaConnect project '**Connecting the Carpathians. Turning NaturaConnect Science into Action**'.

NaturaConnect is a Horizon Europe-funded project supporting European countries in the development of a coherent Trans-European Nature Network (TEN-N). By bringing together universities, research institutes, governmental bodies, and non-governmental organisations, NaturaConnect works at the **science-policy-practice interface** to support implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Carpathians are among Europe's most important ecological regions, yet increasing habitat fragmentation, infrastructure development, and climate change continue to threaten ecological connectivity. Ensuring that protected and restored landscapes remain connected is essential for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem resilience.

This event will explore how the scientific knowledge, tools, datasets, and practical guidance developed through NaturaConnect can support national and regional efforts to:

- Strengthen ecological connectivity across the Carpathian region;
- Prioritise protected area expansion and restoration efforts;
- Support implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation;
- Contribute to the achievement of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 targets;
- Improve cost-effective conservation planning and decision-making;
- Foster long-term uptake of NaturaConnect results beyond the project's lifetime.

The session will host a panel to discuss how science can effectively inform policy and action within and beyond the Carpathian region.

We warmly welcome your participation and look forward to a fruitful discussion on shaping the future of ecological connectivity and biodiversity conservation in the Carpathians.

Sincerely,

The NaturaConnect Consortium

Hildegard Meyer (WWF-CEE)

Rafaela Schinegger, Carina Seliger, Georg Gruber (BOKU University)

Carla Freund, Martin Jung (IIASA)

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Provisional Agenda

17:00-17:10 **| Welcome and Introduction**

Hildegard Meyer, WWF-CEE

- Welcome and objectives of the session
- Short introduction to the NaturaConnect project

17:10-17:25 | **NaturaConnect: Key Scientific Findings – the European Perspective**

Martin Jung, IIASA

Highlights from project research:

- Context: protected area coverage, biodiversity assessment, conservation status, ecological connectivity status, fragmentation
- Trans-European Nature Network: the concept and its added value
- Ingredients of the NaturaConnect approach in a nutshell

17:25-17:40 | **Science-Based Planning Tools for Connectivity in the Carpathian Region and its Possible Application**

Georg Gruber & Rafaela Schinegger, BOKU University

- Connectivity modelling approach for the Carpathians
- Prioritisation method and decision-support tool
- How can scientific results inform spatial planning and infrastructure development?

17:40-18:10 | **Panel Discussion "How Can NaturaConnect Results Be Used in the Carpathians and Beyond?"**

Moderator: Carla Freund, IIASA

Panelists:

- Eliška Rolfová, Chair of the Carpathian Convention Biodiversity Working Group
- Elena Fischer, Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention
- Rafaela Schinegger, BOKU University
- Representative of the ICPDR, tbc

18:10-18:15 | **Closing**

Hildegard Meyer, WWF-CEE

18:15-18:45 | **Reception**