

Workshop: How to progress from TSG 3 Flagships towards EUSAIR macro-regional in the Multiannual Financial Framework period 2021-2027

Protection and enhancement of natural terrestrial habitats and ecosystems

PET HAB ECO

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Duško Ćirović
Faculty of Biology, Belgrade



What is PET HAB ECO?

One of pillars (out of four) of **European Union Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)** is **Environmental Quality (3.)**.

The specific objectives for this pillar are:

1. To ensure a good environmental and ecological status of the marine and coastal environment by 2020 in line with the relevant EU acquis and the ecosystem approach of the Barcelona Convention.
2. To contribute to the goal of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restore them in so far as feasible, by addressing threats to marine and terrestrial biodiversity.
3. To improve waste management by reducing waste flows to the sea and, to reduce nutrient flows and other pollutants to the rivers and the sea.



What is PET HAB ECO?

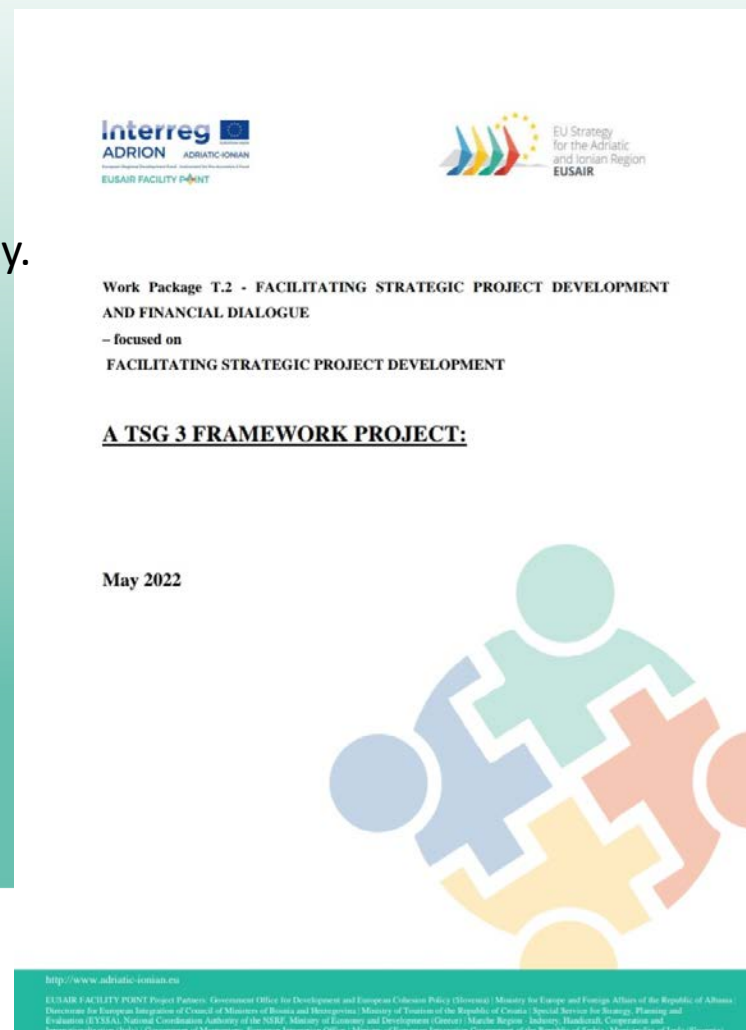
In relation to pillar 3. **Environmental quality**, two topics are identified as pivotal in the Adriatic-Ionian Region:

Topic 1 - The marine environment;

Topic 2 - Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity.

Actions under both topics are expected to contribute to attaining a good ecological and environmental status for marine, coastal and terrestrial ecosystems by 2020.

In order to reach the pillar objectives, the **Technical Steering Group of Pillar 3 (TSG-3)** promotes the development of specific projects entitled **Protection and enhancement of natural terrestrial habitats and ecosystems** (acronym **PET HAB ECO**) in Adriatic-Ionian region



Large Carnivores in Adriatic-Ionian region

Three Large Carnivore are present in the Adriatic-Ionian region: Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) and Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*).

In addition, eleven European Large Carnivores populations are present in the Adriatic-Ionian region.



Brown bear:
Alpine, Dinaric-Pindos,
Apennine and Eastern
Balkan populations.



Gray wolf:
Alpine, Dinaric-Balkan
and Carpathian
populations.



Eurasian lynx:
Alpine, Dinaric, Balkan
and Carpathian
populations.



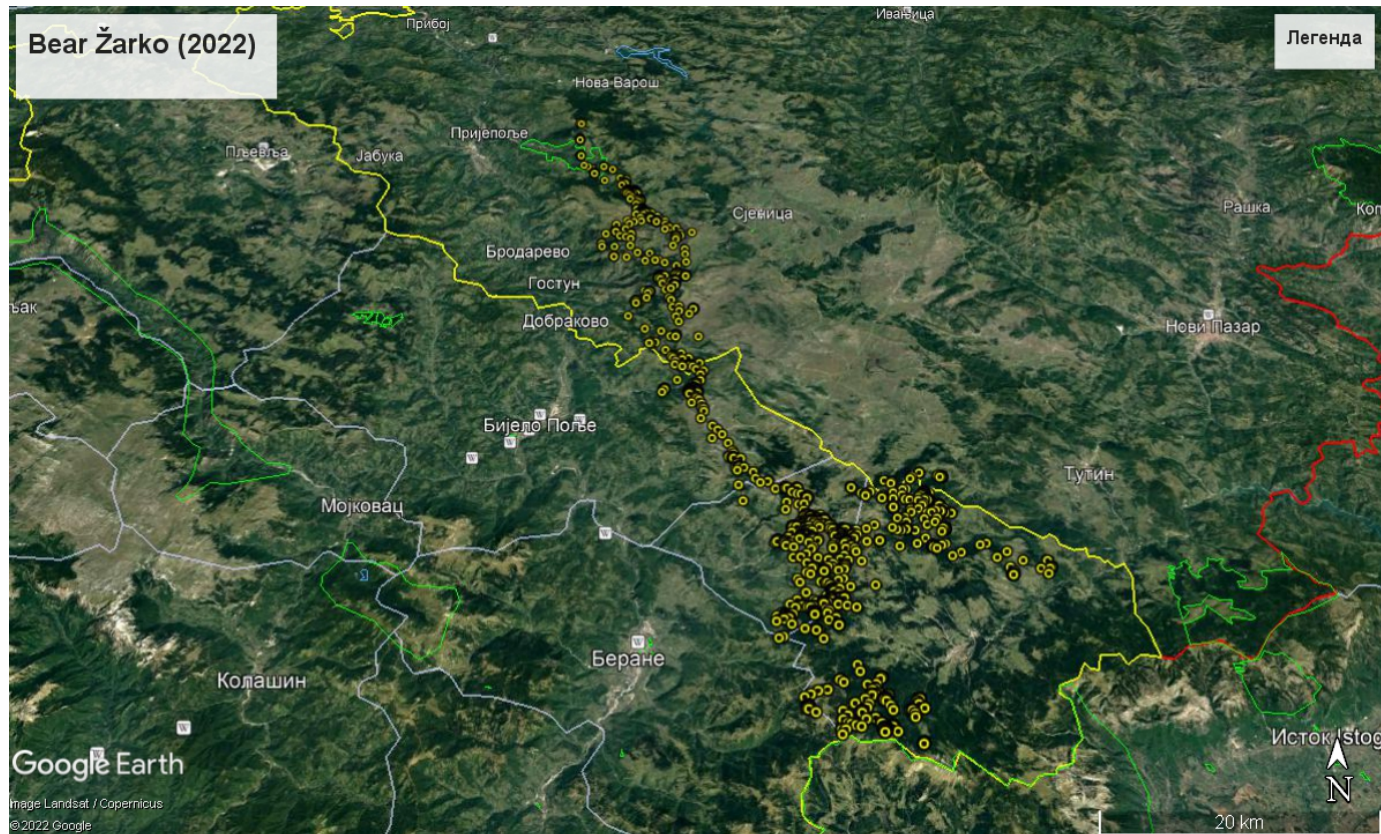
Large Carnivores home ranges



Large carnivores have very large area requirements, with individuals using from 100 to 1000 km² (even more) each for their territories. As a result, they occur at very low densities. This implies that they never reach very high densities – typically ranging from 0.1 to 3 per 100 km².



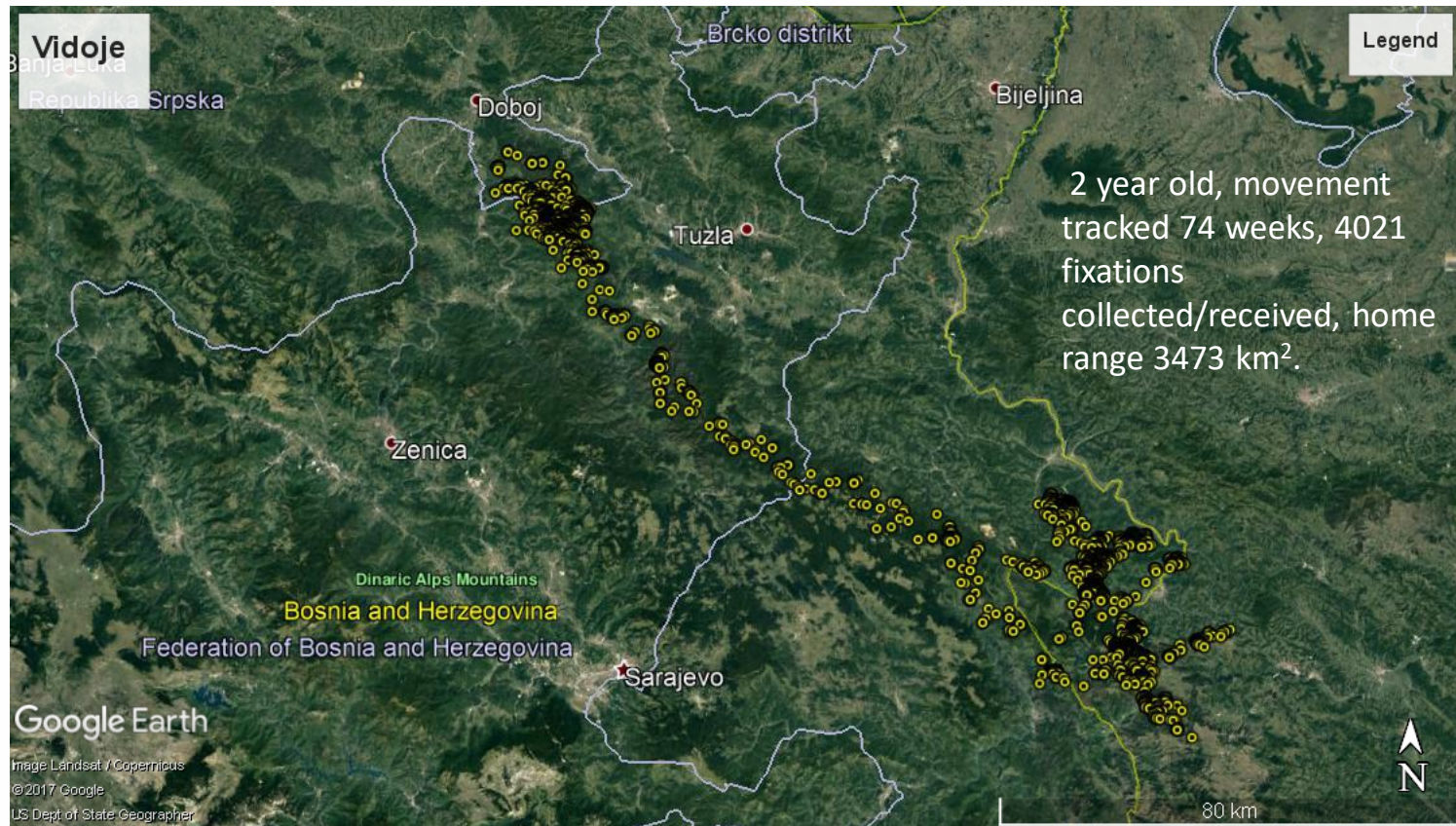
Home ranges and movement of Large Carnivores



A consequence of this is that their populations tend to spread over very large areas. On a continent like Europe this means that populations spread across many administrative borders, both within and between countries. Effective conservation therefore requires that the responsible authorities in different areas and/or countries coordinate their management and conservation actions.



Home ranges and movement of Large Carnivores



In addition to these characteristics of resident, adult individuals, juvenile large carnivores often range widely during their dispersal phase, with some individuals moving over hundreds of kilometres. A consequence of this is that populations of these species do not fit into protected areas, or even with national borders. In fact very few protected areas inside Adriatic-Ionian region are able to embrace the home ranges of more than a few individuals of any Large Carnivore species.



Habitat fragmentation



Highway Miloš Veliki
(in constraction)

In present days, habitat fragmentation is one of the main treat factor, which highly negatively affect Large Carnivore populations. Many human activities negativly affect contectivity between suitable habitats, such as touristic infrastructure, urbanization, mining etc. In partikulat connectivity are negative effect by infrastructure - roads, solar plants, find farms, pipelines, electric lines etc.



Habitat fragmentation



Highway Miloš Veliki
(in construction)

Ambitious plans for the development of the highway network in the Adriatic-Ionian region which includes areas inside distribution range of three Large Carnivores will significantly contribute to the fragmentation of their favorable habitats.



Fragmentation – “hot challenges”



Fenced borders can also pose as important limitations in animal movement and it can significantly contribute to the effect of fragmentation. It is completely novel barriers which limits, or even can halt transboundary movement of large carnivore or other medium size and large mammals. Also fences on the border lines can negatively impact efforts for population (transboundary) level management.



Different approach could be used



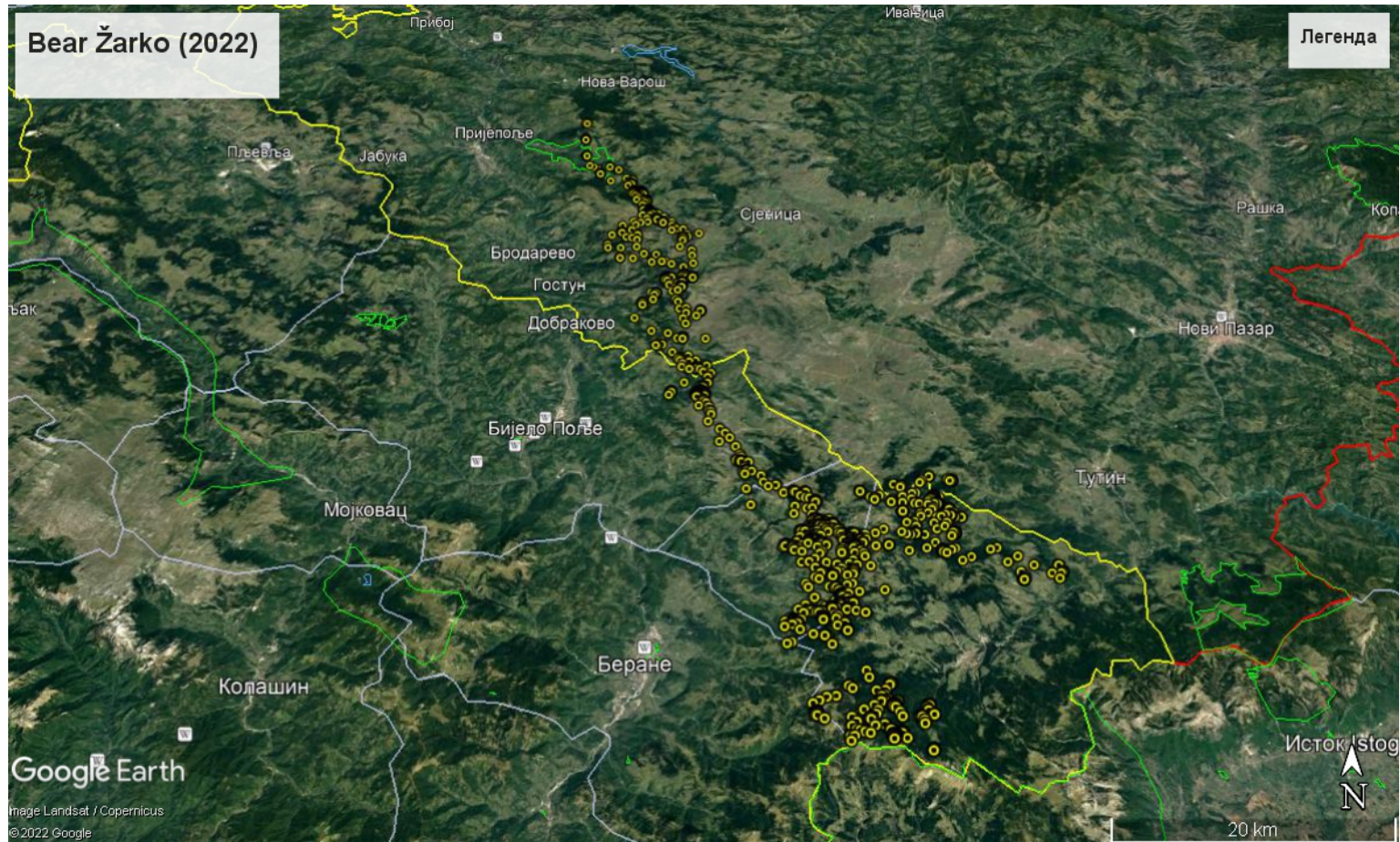
Conservation measures with the aim to improve connectivity and minimize effects of different type of barriers can not be always “traditional”. Some innovative approach could be more effective.

This bear painted on the wall says “Ograja mora pasti” - “the fence must fall!”

Ljubljana today



Habitat and population connectivity as main conservation driver



Bear movement (regional and transnational –transborder movement) show us that connectivity between habitats must exist at national and transborder (population) level. Protecting of the Large Carnivores as umbrella and key stone species, we are in the fact protecting forested Insapces and all animals and plant communities inside eceosystems.

Habitat and population connectivity as main conservation driver



Protecting and restoring green infrastructure in the area of Adriatic-Ionian region are essential for further conservation, management and recovery of Large Carnivore populations in coming years. For all three Large Carnivore species, forested mountain areas are most important for their survival and population recovery. In this reason protection and restoring connectivity between forested areas are most important conservation actions. Keeping and restoring corridors between forested habitats in mountain regions in Adriatic-Ionian region we actually allow existing of viable metapopulations of Large Carnivores.



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Capacity building and communication is of paramount importance for targeted topics. Macro-regional cooperation in the field of environment can only be successful if there are adequate legislative and institutional conditions at the national level. Moreover, after the necessary legislation has been put in place, environmental protection requires monitoring and enforcement. Capacity building and communication can contribute to raising awareness of the issues and ownership of efforts to address them as well as to aligning national environmental legislation to existing EU legislation, thereby also improving implementation where relevant.

Many of the actions listed under both topics depend on research, monitoring and innovation for reliable and up-to-date data for identifying baseline situations and hence for monitoring progress. There is a clear need for sharing existing knowledge and development of scientific cooperation, and data exchange platforms across the AIR and across sectors.



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PET HAB ECO

PET HAB ECO is rooted within the scope of EUSAIR Pillar 3 Environmental sustainability Topic 2 - Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity. In the presentation of this topic is highlighted that macro-regional cooperation needs to focus on the protection and preservation of terrestrial ecosystems, in particular transnational habitats and landscape elements of central importance for large carnivores and migratory bird species.

The framework project is expected to engage more than 10 participant partners (PP) from the member countries of EUSAIR including EU Member States and non-EU countries. In the case of the cross-border projects, 4-5 partners from 2-3 countries are expected. Expected duration for the framework project is 30 months. The project should involve the following typology of partners with responsibility PET HAB ECO: national, regional and local authorities, private and public research institutions, environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), enterprises and other institutions/organizations.



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During the preparation of the project some interviews have been performed with relevant stakeholders (for example from Slovenia, Serbia, BIH and Croatia).

The proposal has been already presented in discussed with beneficiaries on 3 international events (conference DINALPCONNECT and EUSAIR event in Montenegro, and workshop in Slovenia).

INTERREG EURO MED open call has been identified for a possible application of PET HAB ECO project. INTERREG Euro-MED is a large European Territorial Cooperation Programme that covers 69 Mediterranean regions of 10 EU countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain) and 4 IPA candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia).

Other possibilities are ADRION calls or other INTERREG cross-border programs between AIR countries, for example between Slovenia and Croatia, Slovenia and Italy, between EU and IPA candidate countries (for example Croatia - Bosnia and Herzegovina) and so on...



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One of the work package in the project (WPT1: Eco-corridors and green infrastructure network) had aim develop measures for protecting and restoring eco-corridors and green infrastructure network.

The main challenges of Large Carnivore conservation stem from the most fundamental their characteristic – as top predators these species need a lot of space. Due to laking of enough space in protected areas (very few protected areas are able to embrace the home ranges of more than a few individuals of any large carnivore species) in Adriatic-Ionian region, these species are present in the matrix of multi-use habitats (majority lanscapes in region) that surround these protected areas. In order to protect connectivity between habitats, PET HAB ECO recomendet pilot intervention, innovative methodologies to improve the efficiency of the eco-corridors in Aadriatic-Ionian region which will be implemented through future projects.



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PET HAB ECO Objectives

PET HAB ECO **overall objective** is to improve the resilience of large carnivores' populations at transnational level in a territory characterized by human dominated or fragmented ecosystems in the face of environmental threats and risks also caused by climate change impacts.

The activities to be undertaken are primarily related to conservation and restoration of large carnivore populations, transboundary large carnivore management synchronization, public awareness activities to bring these unique species to the public's attention and restoration of ecosystems in which they play a key role and protect the important habitats. Target species are ecosystems' keystone species; hence other biodiversity components will also benefit from their conservation.



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Main specific goals and outputs

The Main specific goals and outputs are:

- A) Enlarged and improved ecological corridors networks for LC to prevent habitat fragmentation and ensure ecological connectivity;
- B) Improved jointly developed innovative tools, shared common database and networks for large carnivores' populations and habitats monitoring, available research information on large carnivore populations, habitats, climate change and anthropogenic impacts on LC populations;
- C) Increased knowledge transfers and straightened competencies/skills of the stakeholders achieved by tailored capacity building and communication activities;
- D) Development of regional guidelines, action plan and cooperation agreement for integrative, ecosystem approach in large carnivore transboundary management.



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Expected results

Main expected results are:

- i) creation of a database of large carnivores' populations and their habitats, by standardized and harmonized monitoring procedures of large carnivores;
- ii) jointly developed regional guidelines and action plan for management, monitoring and protection of large carnivores, preventing habitat fragmentation and ensuring ecological connectivity which will lead to improved conservation status of populations and habitats;
- iii) human – large carnivore conflicts properly addressed and substantially minimized in a timely manner (communities and institutional capacity building implemented, exchange and implementation of know-how, knowledge, best practices transfer is improved).



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Work Package: Management (WPM)

M 1.1 Project start-up activities

M 1.2 Day-to-day management and coordination

M 1.3 Financial management

M 1.5 Steering and monitoring

Work Package: Communication and capacity building (WPC)

C 1.1 Communication and Capacity Building Strategy, Action Plan and Post project communication Strategy

C 1.2 Project promotional materials, publications and press conferences and events, project official Web page and social media

C 1.3 “LC learning in schools” AIR network (primary and secondary level schools)

C 1.4 LC e-learning tools, course syllabus and certification scheme (adult education and HEIs)

C1.5 “LC coexistence with humans” LC and ecological connectivity” - storytelling video

C 1.6 Strategy to improve institutional capacities and cross-sectoral cooperation, including tailored networking, education and awareness rising activities

C 1.8 Social media campaign and other communication tools for decreasing “emotional impacts”, and improve co-existence between people and LC

C 1.9 Communication activities (establishment of working group and a web platform) for conflict management



Eco-corridors and green infrastructure network (WPT1)

T 1.1 AIR network of eco-corridors for large carnivores

T 1.2 Tools and guidelines for GI intervention necessary for LC conservation

T 1.3 Recommendation for forests habitats enlargement as most important habitats for large carnivore and their connectivity in mountain regions

Monitoring tools and common database (WPT2)

T 2.1 Digital database platform for the interoperability of existing monitoring databases, assuring data availability

T 2.2 Advanced tools for mapping, diagnosing, protecting and managing large carnivores' populations and habitats

T 2.3 Recommendations regarding harmonized monitoring protocols, data acquiring methodology and data transparency

T 2.4 Tools and protocols for LC populations and habitats climate change impacts assessment

T 2.5 Transboundary network of volunteers for LC collecting data support and citizen science projects

T 2.6 Common LC monitoring and assessment reference framework in AIR



Regional guidelines and action plan for large carnivores' management (WPT3)

T 3.1 Integral AIR action plan and cooperation agreement for large carnivore management with ensured eco connectivity (integrated ecosystem approach)

T 3.2 Guidelines for LC transboundary management and harmonization of national laws (including policy and law framework avoiding illegal killings or poisoning of large carnivores)

T 3.3 Establishment of working group for the development of transnational terrestrial protected areas and habitats devoted to large carnivores' protection, conservation and recovery, and integration thereof in the ecotourism product of the AIR

T 3.4 Guidelines for policy makers regarding mitigation of climate change impact on LC population and their habitats

T 3.5 Guidelines for Spatial planners on LC population and habitats conservation and adaptation measures framework in the spatial planning in the EUSAIR



Preliminary budget

WP1: Project management	€ 300.000,00
WPC: Communication and capacity building	€ 800.000,00
WPT 1: Eco-corridors and green infrastructure network	€ 1.200.000,00
WP T2: Monitoring tools and common database	€ 1.200.000,00
WP T3: Regional guidelines and action plan for large carnivores' management	€ 1.200.000,00
TOTAL	€ 4.700.000,00



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Durability, transferability and synergies

As project durability and sustainability will be achieved through the practical use of competences/skills acquired during the project actions and achieved results which will be available and in function after the project is finished, the project will have a long-term impact .

The whole project concept leads to sustainable results as it represents a major investment in knowledge, understanding, trainings and awareness-raising activities of several target groups (researchers, youth, general public, local, regional and/or national authorities, professional from different sectors) and other potential stakeholders connected through the transnational cooperation network. The project results will allow them to use the acquired knowledge/skills/competences in their future work.



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Durability, transferability and synergies

On national and transnational level, we expect the transferability will be assured by networking of relevant stakeholders, production of awareness-raising materials that can be used after the project expires. The project materials will be available to the public on the project website and established IC platforms (“Transnational monitoring frameworks and database platform”) also after the end of the project duration. Additionally, any publications will be made available on the basis of principle of “open access”.

PET HAB ECO project is linked with several initiatives such as UNDP Nature action, UN REED, FAO forestry, IUCN, LCIE etc, as well as many EU projects such as LIFE or INTERREG. Actually PET HAB ECO project is rooted in many of these EU projects carried out in last decade.



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Synergies with ongoing LIFE project in AIR



LIFE Bear-Smart Corridors (LIFE20 NAT/NL/001107, 01/10/2021 - 30/09/2026)

This project is expected to improve the conservation status of the brown bear in Italy (subspecies: *Ursus arctos marsicanus*) and Greece (*Ursus arctos*) in six previously identified bear expansion corridors, by developing 18 Bear Smart Communities. By gaining the support of local communities and key stakeholders, the conservation actions will be implemented in both core and corridor areas for bears, with the main objective to develop measures aiming to improve human-bear coexistence. This will allow bears to migrate into and across critical corridors to substantially increase bear range and population.

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Synergies with ongoing LIFE project in AIR



LIFE Lynx (LIFE16 NAT/SI/000634, 01/07/2017 – 31/03/2024)

Project's primary objective is rescuing the Dinaric-SE Alpine lynx population from extinction and to preserve it in the long term. Currently, the population is small, isolated, and extremely inbred. It urgently needs reinforcement by introducing additional, healthy animals from another population. The project will reinforce the Dinaric-SE Alpine population with lynx from the viable source population in the Carpathians, while maintaining high public support. Project partners will collaborate across all EU countries sharing this population to develop and implement a systematic approach to ensure long-term viability of the reinforced population.

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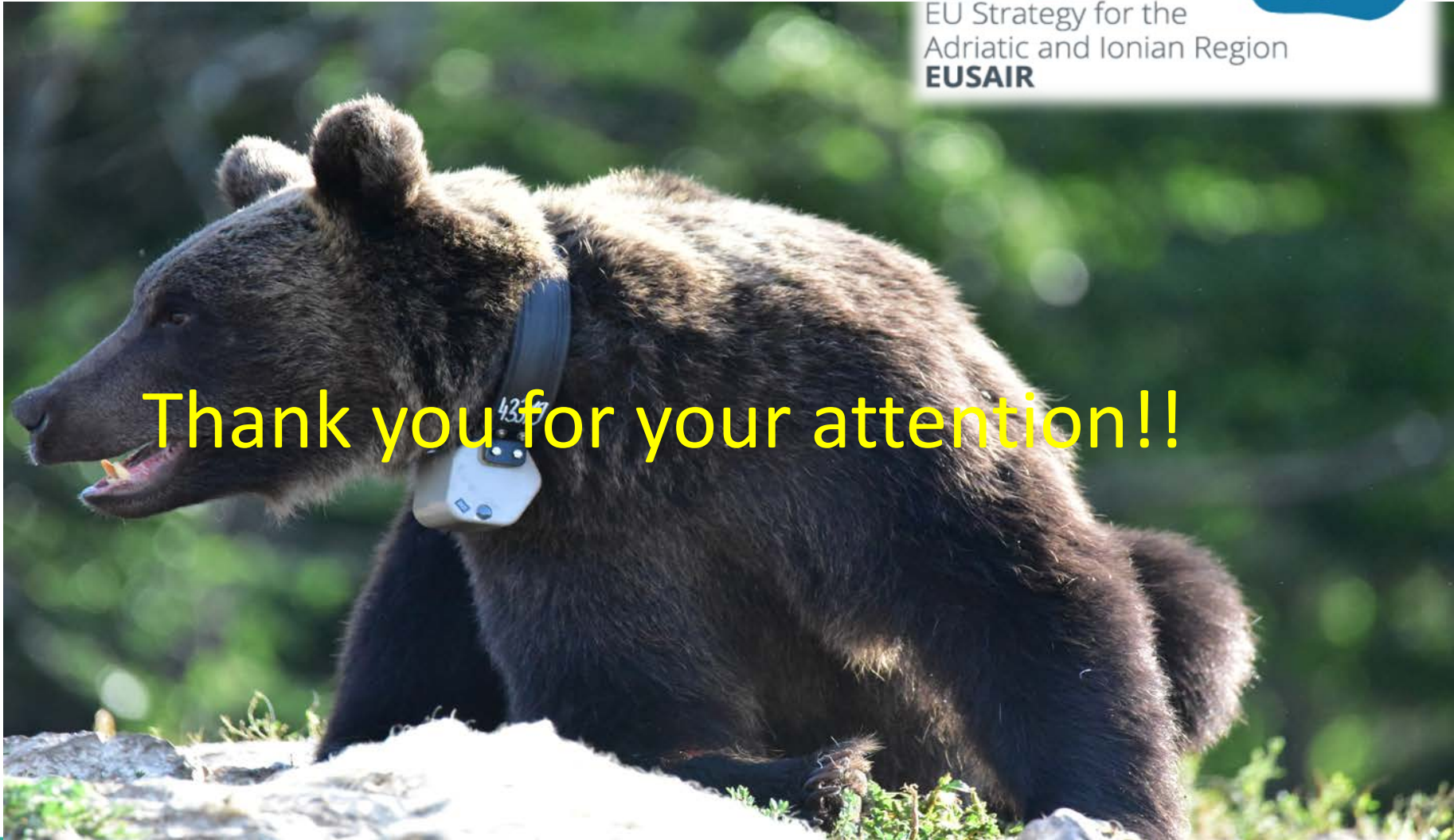
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Thank you for your attention!!

