

Preparatory Actions for the Târgu Mureș – Târgu Neamț Pilot Area, Romania

Part of Output T2.3

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1. Introduction

The Târgu Mureş – Târgu Neamţ area was chosen for the importance it has on large mammal fauna, being located in a part of Romania which has a high fauna density and is linked through ecological corridors to all of the other Carpathian sections, both in Romania and Ukraine. The area also presents an interest due to the development of one of the most important motorways proposed to be built in the near future, the Târgu Mureş – Târgu Neamţ motorway. The SaveGREEN project and the motorway development project ran more or less simultaneous, and through the activities done in the SaveGREEN project, and through the implementation of the CSOP, the motorway project was improved from the point of view of ecological connectivity.

The development of the Cross-sectoral Operational Plan (CSOP, Output T2.2), involved local stakeholders from Târgu Mureş, with a rich experience in monitoring the mammal fauna of the area. During the development of the CSOP and the motorway project there were engagements with the relevant stakeholders of the area, including game managers, forestry officials, local authorities, protected area managers, etc.

One issue which was specific to this Pilot Area and this CSOP, compared to the CSOPs of the other Pilot Areas in the project, was the fact that it dealt with a project in its design stages. Thus, impact avoidance and mitigation measures were proposed and included in the project design, therefore reducing the potential impacts of the project on the area.

A detailed description of the pilot area can be found in the CSOP for the Târgu Mureş – Târgu Neamţ motorway, uploaded to the project website (www.interreg-danube.eu/savegreen/outputs).

2. Stakeholder analysis and results, description of contact effort and methods

The stakeholder analysis was done through discussions with the project partners in Romania, during working groups and meetings.

The first step involved listing the main barriers identified in the Târgu Mureş – Târgu Neamţ area, and identifying the responsible stakeholders for each barrier. This was presented in detail in deliverable D.T2.1.1.

During the development of the Târgu Mureş – Târgu Neamţ project, relevant stakeholders were contacted and informed on the need to ensure ecological connectivity. One particular instance was represented by discussions with the local authorities, on the need for afforestation of an agricultural land, in order to ensure connectivity with a proposed ecoduct.

3. Main achievements

3.1 Monitoring activities

The monitoring activities done through SaveGREEN complemented existing data from the area, collected over more than 10 years. The monitoring activities were done in areas considered to be important from the point of view of connectivity, and where the motorway project proposed structures with a high degree of permeability (tunnels, viaducts, bridges, etc.). Establishing the monitoring points also took into consideration the modelling done within SaveGREEN for determining the areas most likely to be frequented by wildlife for transit. Local knowledge from experts was also used for determining the monitoring points.

Monitoring activities were done through the use of transects and through camera traps. Camera traps were used only for one month of the monitoring period, as there was a high risk for them to be stolen (one camera was stolen and the data recorded on it was lost).



Figure no.1 Bear tracks and individual observed in the Târgu Mureş – Târgu Neamţ Pilot Area © Milvus Group

The monitoring results were recorded using the QField app and the QGS package prepared in WP T1. The results showed a high density of mammals, particularly bears. Following the monitoring results and the proposals of the CSOP, changes to the project design were proposed.

The entire monitoring set up and results are available in the SaveGREEN document “Deliverable T2.3.2 Monitoring report”, available in the library on the project website (www.interreg-danube.eu/savegreen) and in the GIS database(<https://metadata.savegreen.at/geonetwork/srv/eng/catalog.search?sessionId=node01acb436jya2hb14bi7folwcpr91003.node0#/metadata/712a3be0-6aa8-4722-b7d3-ce89a1721051>).

QR code to the GIS database:



3.2 Changes to project design

Following the monitoring activities, consultations with stakeholders at local level and the proposals of the CSOP, there were several proposals done for the motorway project. Among the most important ones were related to Problem 3.1.1. identified in the CSOP, which highlights the need to maintain permeability also of adjacent roads near the motorway. The construction of the motorway will increase the traffic on these connected roads, further fragmenting the landscape of the area.

The measures included in the project design are related to the need for construction of several ecoducts on National Roads, including in locations that are not close to the motorway, but are 10 to 15 km from the project location. These ecoducts will be proposed on National Road sectors where there is a high traffic density and where currently there are many victims of collision with road traffic among the local fauna (including accidents with bears). In order to be integrated in the landscape, the ecoducts will be surrounded by vegetation, with certain areas proposed for afforestation. This will allow for the maintenance of structural connectivity in the areas which are currently already used by wildlife for movement, but which now also present a high risk for accidents due to traffic.

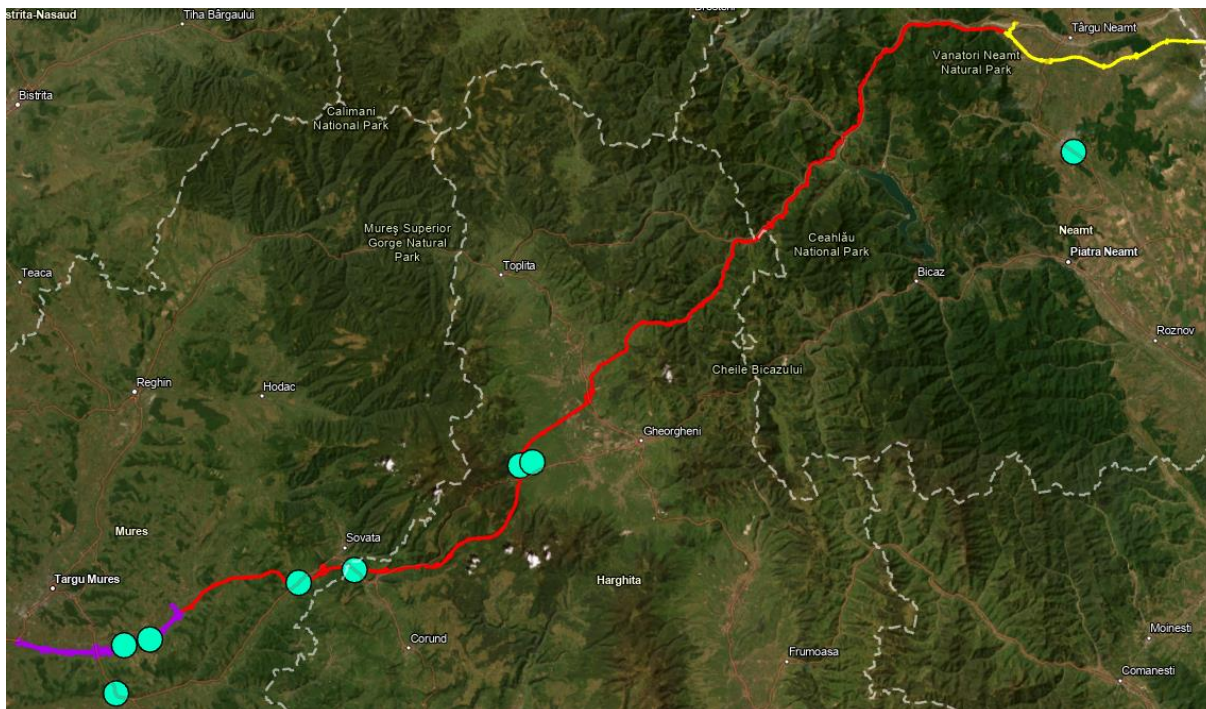


Figure no. 2 The locations of the proposed ecoducts in the area of the Târgu Mureș – Târgu Neamț motorway

3.3 Communication of the project results

The general public, both from the Pilot Area and at a national level, was also informed on the need for ensuring ecological connectivity. Apart from the articles on the Interreg website and the social media dissemination of information, during October 2022 a press field trip was organised in Târgu Mureș. This press field trip included a short field visit in the areas where ecoducts have been proposed through the project.



Figure no. 3 The press field trip done for the Târgu Mureș – Târgu Neamț Pilot Area © EPC Consulting

The press field trip resulted in several local and national level news segments on television, radio and online. In these, it was highlighted how important ecological connectivity is for this area, considering the high density of wildlife which transits it. These segments were also disseminated through social media, including by the representatives of the Ministry of Transport in Romania.

4. Lessons learnt

The main lessons learnt from the SaveGREEN project are related to the need to include in assessments the at-distance types of impacts, which are related to the motorway, and specific measures for addressing these impacts. This approach is a novel one in the EIAs done so far in Romania, but it sets the stage for further assessments on similar motorways, which will also need to have this kind of analysis.

Through the development of the CSOPs, it is much clearer what the next steps will be, at the construction and then in the operation stages of the motorway. The logframe developed in the CSOP will help the key players, especially local NGOs to monitor and check the compliance of the construction and operation process with the planning phase and to apply the necessary requests, if deemed necessary.

The development of the motorway planning and the CSOP saw an almost unprecedented level for Romania of cooperation between project beneficiaries, designers, consultants and NGOs, with the aim of identifying the best possible solutions for addressing landscape level connectivity in the area of the new motorway,