Interreg
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Danube Transnational Programme
SaveGREEN

Preparatory Actions for Implementing the Local Cross-sectoral Operational Plan – Zakarpattia Region, Ukraine

Part of Output T2.3

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Table of contents

1. Overview of the actions implemented

During the implementation of the project, our experts commented, translated and edited a number of developed methodological publications, such as: standardized monitoring methodology of structural and functional connectivity; capacity-building program for public authorities and other key stakeholders; handbook of best practices for planning and implementation of mitigation measures.

Next important objective was to elaborate a Cross-Sectoral Operational Program for the Zakarpattia pilot area. The goal of the "CSOP" was to identify major threats/pressures to connectivity and the general objectives to address them, as well as relevant sectors and main stakeholders/actors focusing on the pilot site. The two major threats discussed such as barrier effect and changes in agricultural land in Zakarpattia region. Six main problems are identified, the main measures and actions are proposed in the section 5 Problems, Measures and Actions.

Also monitoring activities provided based on developed local monitoring plan of the Zakarpatska pilot area. It represents a first response to the problem identified in the Zakarpatska Oblast pilot-area – the lack of systematic monitoring and date. The criteria for selection of monitoring sites were as follows:

1. Bridges and culvert selected for monitoring are defined as potential migration passes under E-50 and H-09 motorways (basing on the results of previous inspections and data received from other studies).
2. The monitoring sites located out of settlements (important for large mammals) in the mountain area of the regions.
3. A transect along Tisza river is situated on the place where border fence ends which creates favorable conditions for accumulation and migration of large mammals (potential migration corridor).

The target species groups are presented in the table below:

Group	Species	Notes	Type of relevant ecosystems for monitoring of target species
Large-sized mammals	Bear, Wolf, Lynx, Wild boar, Red deer, Roe deer		Forest, grassland, forested grassland, riparian, agriculture.

Besides these target species findings of other species (e.g. wildcat, fox, badger, otter and other mustelids, reptiles) will be recorded.

Also the fruitful cooperation with relevant stakeholders established trough the several meetings, workshops and trainings in the region.
One online capacity building event was conducted online on 8th November 2022. Event tytle was “Hydrotechnical objects and roads as factors of fragmentation of natural ecosystems: solutions during military operations and the period of reconstruction”. Number of participants: 36.
Three online meetings with local working groups and other relevant stakeholders were conducted online on 03rd October, 05th October 30th and 20th October 2022. Number of participants: 23 in total. Different subjects were discussed, such as peculiarities of environmental impact assessment during land allocation, urban planning and road construction; key actions to conserve and manage wildlife core areas and migration corridors treated by grey infrastructure development and monitoring approaches; scientific approach to conserve, manage and monitor wildlife core areas and corridors treated by grey infrastructure development.
Two round tables on analysis of possible environmental risks during the reconstruction period under the condition of a limited environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedure succesfully conducted during the project. Number of participants: more than 80.
Also training event was conducted online on 3rd November 2022. Event title was "Peculiarities of EIA during the planning of construction of transport infrastructure and analysis of potential environmental risks under the condition of a limited environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedure in the post-war period". Number of participants: 24. The peculiarities of carrying out EIA procedure in war and post-war time in Ukraine was the main goal of the training event. The review of environmental risks during the restoration of roads under the conditions of a limited EIA procedure were presented by project experts. Also, the practical experience of conducting ATS during the design of the northern

bypass of the city of Lviv was discussed. Meeting was organized in informative dialoge style.
In addition to national workshops, we also held a transnational technical experience exchange workshop. This event was conducted online on 30th November 2022. Number of participants: 30. During the international workshop the obtained results of the project and important achievements were actively discussed by Project coordiator and experts. Also the the pilot area and results of animal crossing sites in the Transcarpatia region wewre presented by project experts. Also, the EIA procedure for the construction and reconstruction of roads were viewed and recommendations for post-war reconstruction of infrastructure (highways) in Ukraine discussed.

Another important project target was developing of the recommendations towards the integration of mitigation measures/ green infrastructure into sectoral and spatial planning policy and decision making. Within this frame our experts prepared and disseminated to national authorities several documents with recomendations.
The most important recommendations in infra (transport) sector for Ukraine discussed and prepared by project experts.

Briefing papers:

1) Ensure low-impact design of roads: Sign the State Standard of Ukraine “Roads. Wildlife crossings. Requirements for design” as implementation mechanism for the governmental decree "On Approval of the National Transport Strategy of Ukraine for the Period until 2030", which highlights the need to conduct strategic environmental assessment during the development of plans and programs for the transport sector, in particular the need to investigate alternatives to prevent or minimize negative impact on the environment, forests, and protected areas by e.g. construction of wildlife passages for terestrial and water ecosystems.

2) Protect ecological corridors: Draft legislative amendments to ensure proper management of animal migration corridors (e.g. restriction of fencing) both land and water.

3) Facilitate EIA transparency: Publication of information in the EIA register on the web-site of the State Road Service, and the media. EIAs should be done according to the best practice and be based on sufficient, up to date data. Environmental mitigation and compensation measures derived from such high-quality EIA should be designed and implemented without delay and under sufficient allocation of funding.

4) Reduce collision with wildlife: Monitor location and type of wildlife mortality along roads and rail to understand were critical sections are located that endanger both wildlife and people (danger of collision) in order to design mitigation measures such as warning road signs and speed limitations. Data should feed into an integrated database to enable decision making.

Based on these recommendations the recommendations for relevant bodies regarding green infrastructure standardization in UA have been provided.
Based on the discussed and prepared most important recommendations in infra (transport) sector for Ukraine (Activity 3.1.3.) the expert proposals to the Recovery Plan of Ukraine developed and officially submitted via WWF-Ukraine as one of the members of the Ministerial Working Group.
Document developed in Ukrainian and includes proposals for 3 infrastructure sectors:
1. The railway transport
2.The maritime and inland water transport
3. The automobile, urban electric transport, highways and road management
Analysis of situation on auto and railway transport in Ukraine in 2022 (in war period) provided by project experts and recommendations towards integration of mitigation measures provided. Mitigation hierarchy for the transport infrastructure planning described.

2. Lessons learnt

Some of the activities were difficult to implement due to the situation with the Covid pandemic, as well as the military situation in the country. First of all, this concerns face-to-face meetings, field trips, meetings with national authorities in Kyiv, etc. Also, there is still a ban on access to infrastructural facilities, in particular bridges, where we set up monitoring sites and conducted monitoring with the help of camera traps before the war. Starting from March 2022 entry to these areas is completely prohibited, which significantly affected the planned monitoring.

Also, based on conducted investigations and achived results our experts can conclude that there is any appropriate monitoring system for connectivity in Ukraine. There are its fragments but entire system is missing in principle. SaveGreen, together with another thematic project for large carnivores, have minor monitoring elements but they are not sufficient even for the Ukrainian part of the Carpathians and can serve as base for building up monitoring systems but cannot serve as the whole system. Even before large-scale war the plans of Ukraine to develop network of roads since 2014 (beginning of Russian invasion in the Crimea and Donbas region) due to very limited financial resources and inaccessibility of EU funds Ukraine focused mostly on repair and reconstruction of existing road network. There were only few projects of construction of new roads (Lviv by-pass and Zhytomyr connection) but they were not implemented due to the beginning of large-scale war in 2022. Moreover, lack of appropriate monitoring does not allow to provide sufficient data about ecosystems connectivity and barrier effect of national road network. Such data could be an argument for the decision-makers.

In the conditions of lack of funds even for support of existing road network and for ecological research projects the position of Ukrainian government is not very active. COVID restrictions and war changed the behaviour essentially both in terms of people and national and regional priorities, funds etc.

In this conditions, there should be a focus on support of existing cooperation and work and develop the sphere related to legislation (however it is quite difficult to persuade decision makers to deal with

legislation related to nature protection when they deal with energy security, food security and support of army). It is reflected in the proposed CSOP.

The Action Plan for post-war recovery and development of Ukraine analyzed and commented by SG Project experts. The official statement with proposals prepared by experts and submitted via WWF-Ukraine as one of the member of the Ministerial Working Group. Statement was developed based on two documents: (1) the recommendations in infra (transport) sector for Ukraine and (2) proposals to the Recovery Plan of Ukraine submitted to Ministry of Infrastructure. Document developed in Ukrainian and includes proposals for 5 economic sectors. SG team provided their comments to the Sector 3 (Reconstruction and development of infrastructure). Taking into account that Ukraine plans to join EU so EU legislation will be part of Ukrainian legislation and taking into account that the war have been changed the state of things, possible risks of post-war reconstruction which will not consider nature as a priority, there is a need to reconsider and very likely change priorities of connectivity work in Ukraine and plans for the future.