(Projects funded under the Call 2014 onwards must use this format)

LIFE Project Number

LIFE18 NAT/RO/001082

Final Report

Covering the project activities from 15/07/2019[1] to 14/07/2025

Reporting Date[1]

30/09/2025 – updated 23/03/2026

LIFE PROJECT NAME or Acronym

LIFE CARPATHIA

Data Project

Project location:	Romania
Project start date:	15/07/2019
Project end date:	14/07/2024 **Extension date:** < 14/07/2025 >
Total budget:	€ 27,619,867
EU contribution:	€ 9,378,982
(%) of eligible costs:	33.96%

Data Beneficiary

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[1] Include the reporting date as foreseen in part C2 of Annex II of the Grant Agreement

Package completeness and correctness check **Obligatory elements**	**✓ or N/A**
Technical report	
The correct latest template for the type of project (e.g. traditional) has been followed and all sections have been filled in, in English *In electronic version only*	✓
Index of deliverables with short description annexed, in English *In electronic version only*	✓
Mid-term report: Deliverables due in the reporting period (from project start) annexed Final report: Deliverables not already submitted with the MTR annexed including the Layman's report and after-LIFE plan Deliverables in language(s) other than English include a summary in English *In electronic version only*	✓
Financial report	
The reporting period in the financial report (consolidated financial statement **and** financial statement of each Individual Beneficiary) is the same as in the technical report with the exception of any terminated beneficiary for which the end period should be the date of the termination.	✓
Consolidated Financial Statement with all 5 forms duly filled in and signed and dated *Electronically Q-signed or if paper submission signed and dated originals* and in electronic version (pdfs of signed sheets + full Excel file)*	✓
Financial Statement(s) of the Coordinating Beneficiary, of each Associated Beneficiary and of each affiliate (if involved), with all forms duly filled in (signed and dated). The Financial Statement(s) of Beneficiaries with affiliate(s) include the total cost of each affiliate in 1 line per cost category. *In electronic version (pdfs of signed sheets + full Excel files) + in the case of the Final report the overall summary forms of each beneficiary electronically Q-signed or if paper submission, signed and dated originals**	✓
Amounts, names and other data (e.g. bank account) are correct and consistent with the Grant Agreement / across the different forms (e.g. figures from the individual statements are the same as those reported in the consolidated statement)	✓
Mid-term report (for all projects except IPs): the threshold for the second pre-financing payment has been reached	N/A
Beneficiary's certificate for Durable Goods included (if required, i.e. beneficiaries claiming 100% cost for durable goods) *Electronically Q-signed or if paper submission signed and dated originals* and in electronic version (pdfs of signed sheets)*	✓
Certificate on financial statements (if required, i.e. for beneficiaries with EU contribution ≥750,000 € in the budget) *Electronically Q-signed or if paper submission signed original and in electronic version (pdf)*	✓
Other checks	
Additional information / clarifications and supporting documents requested in previous letters from the Agency (unless already submitted or not yet due) *In electronic version only*	✓
This table, page 2 of the Mid-term / Final report, is completed - each tick box is filled in *In electronic version only*	✓

**signature by a legal or statutory representative of the beneficiary / affiliate concerned*

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2. List of key-words and abbreviations

The short forms of the following are used throughout this report:

2.1. Beneficiaries

2.1.1 Coordinating beneficiary

FCC	Foundation Conservation Carpathia

2.1.2 Associated beneficiaries

AOSC	Asociația Ocolul Silvic Carpathia
AVPCFC	Asociația de Vânătoare Piatra Craiului Făgăraș Conservation
CAF	SC Carpathia Agro & Finance SRL
CC	Conservation Capital Consulting Limited
IJJA	Inspectoratul de Jandarmi Județean “Basarab I” Argeș (Argeș County Gendarmerie)
IJJA	Inspectoratul de Jandarmi Județean ‚Basarab I’ Argeș (Argeș County Gendarmerie)
PPK	ProPark - Foundation for Protected Areas

2.1.3 Selected consultants/external assistance providers

ACDB	Asociația pentru Conservarea Diversității Biologice
AER	Asociatia de Ecoturism din România
APDTSS	Asociația pentru Dezvoltarea Turismului de Sănătate și Social
Bath & Associates	Bath and Associates Inc.
Cornel & Cornel	SC Cornel & Cornel Topoexim SRL
DivjaLabs Ltd	DivjaLabs, company of Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana.
Euro Sim Construct	SC EURO SIM CONSTRUCT SRL
Geoprocessing	SC Geoprocessing SRL
Izibiz	SC Izibiz Consulting SRL
Milvus	Asociația pentru Protecția Păsărilor și a Naturii Grupul Milvus
Muncons	SC Muncons SRL
Rogalski Damaschin	SC Rogalski Damaschin Public Relations SRL
SRS	Societatea Română de Sălbăticie
AGM	Asociatia Grupul Milvus

2.2. Abbreviations and terminology

CAEN	Richita Nature Activities and Exploration Center
CEP	Conservation enterprise programme
CINEA	European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (successor to EASME)
EASME	Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
EBCC	European Bison Conservation Centre
EBPB	European Bison Pedigree Book
ELP	Endangered Landscapes Programme
ELMEN	Provider of assistance for the technical and financial monitoring of LIFE projects
FR	Final Report (LIFE)
IAS	Invasive alien species
MTR	Mid-Term Report (LIFE)
NCVF	National catalogue of virgin and semi-virgin forests (Catalogul naţional al pădurilor virgine și cvasivirgine din România)
NFG	National Forest Guard (Garda Forestieră Națională)
PLT	Project Leading Team (Barbara & Christoph Promberger)
PCT	Project Coordination Team (Daniel Bucur & Andrei Strugariu)
RIT	Rapid Intervention Team
Romsilva	National Forest Administration (organised in county forest departments, manages state-owned forests, and private forests through contracts)
SICAP	Sistem Informatic Colaborativ pentru mediu performant de desfasurare al Achizitiilor Publice (public procurement platform)

2.3. Note for the reader

The additional/revised information is marked with blue colour.

The report was developed using the template provided by CINEA, and the text includes references to certain documents (deliverables, annexes) and webpage hyperlinks. Deliverables are identified by the activity codes (A.3, D.2, E.1, etc.) followed by the letter D for “deliverable” and the sequential number of the deliverable within that activity, e.g. A.3.D.1 – action 3, deliverable 1. Annexes are identified similarly to deliverables, except that after the activity code they are followed by the letter ‘O’ and the sequential number of the annex within that activity, e.g. A.3.O.1 – action 3, Other deliverable (annex) 1. **A full list of Deliverables and Annexes** is inserted at the end of the report.

3. Executive Summary

Overall conclusion

LIFE Carpathia has successfully achieved its objectives, delivering durable environmental, social and economic benefits. LIFE Carpathia has successfully achieved its objectives, delivering durable environmental, social and economic benefits. It restored over 1,200 ha of habitat, secured 2,757 ha of forest, reintroduced two keystone species and built a credible foundation for the proposed Făgăraș National Park. Some ecological effects - such as long-term forest recovery and population stabilisation of reintroduced species - will continue to unfold beyond the project's lifetime. Nevertheless, the groundwork established ensures lasting contribution to the EU Biodiversity Strategy, Natura 2000 network resilience and regional sustainable development.

Project objectives

The LIFE Carpathia Project (LIFE18 NAT/RO/001082) aimed to restore and protect the natural ecosystems of Romania's Făgăraș Mountains, establishing the ecological foundation for a future national park. Its main objectives were to:

1. Acquire and strictly protect at least 2,000 ha of high-conservation-value forests (habitats 9410 and 9110).
2. Restore degraded forest and alpine ecosystems through active reforestation, invasive-species removal and reconversion of spruce monocultures.
3. Reintroduce keystone species such as the European bison (*Bison bonasus*) and Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*).
4. Implement a hunting-free wildlife-management system over approximately 81,000 ha, demonstrating coexistence between people and large carnivores.
5. Strengthen local socio-economic resilience through nature-based enterprises, conflict-mitigation measures and public awareness initiatives.

Key deliverables and outputs

Forest protection and restoration: 2,757 ha of natural forest were purchased and legally secured; 1,116 ha entered the National Catalogue of Virgin and Semi-Virgin Forests. A total of 1,208 ha of degraded forest and alpine habitat were restored, with 2.4 million native trees planted and 20 km of erosion tracks rehabilitated.

Reintroductions: 81 bison and 62 beavers were released, forming viable, monitored populations that contribute to ecosystem regeneration.

Human-wildlife coexistence: Creation of 81,000 ha of no-trophy-hunting areas produced a 41 % reduction in overall conflicts and a 10 % drop in carnivore-related incidents.

Invasive-species control: 152 km of riparian corridors were cleared of invasive alien species, improving water quality and habitat connectivity.

Community development: 24 conservation enterprises and 53 full-time jobs were created under the Conservation Enterprise Programme, while the *Roadele Munților* Food Hub enhanced sustainable markets for local products.

Public engagement: Over 100 journalists attended field visits, generating 1,182 media pieces with a combined reach exceeding 100 million people.

Comparison of planned and achieved activities

Forest purchase, IAS control and enterprise creation surpassed initial expectations. Habitat restoration achieved 93% of its target despite constraints.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused temporary delays in fieldwork and events, which were compensated through digital dissemination and community support activities. Later, the 2024 Forestry Code restricted alpine planting, limiting active restoration to 41 ha, although we have

achieved our overall restoration goals. Inflation required a 2023 budget amendment to cover construction costs, resulting in higher-quality, permanent visitor centres that significantly improved visibility.

Achievements, deviations and difficulties
Major achievements include:

- Demonstrated rewilding at landscape scale through non-lethal wildlife management.
- Legal protection of virgin forests and large-scale ecological restoration.
- Tangible social impact through enterprise creation and conflict-mitigation programmes.

Deviations were mostly external: legal changes, price inflation and pandemic restrictions. The project responded with adaptive management - adjusted planting techniques, reallocation of funds and extended monitoring of reconverted spruce areas. These actions-maintained progress and preserved overall objectives.

Replication, transferability and cooperation
Replication potential is high. Study exchanges in Poland, Italy, France and Sweden demonstrated transferability of the Carpathia model. The combination of land acquisition, non-hunting wildlife management and community enterprise support provides a scalable framework for other Natura 2000 regions. Romanian authorities have expressed interest in adopting elements of this model in national park planning and green-economy initiatives.

4. Introduction

Description of background, problems and objectives
The LIFE Carpathia Project (LIFE18 NAT/RO/001082) was designed to safeguard and restore one of Europe's most valuable natural landscapes - the Făgăraș Mountains and neighbouring Natura 2000 sites (ROSCI0122 Muntii Făgăraș, ROSPA0098 Piemontul Făgăraș, ROSCI0381 Râul Târgului–Argeșel–Râușor, ROSCI0194/ROSPA0165 Piatra Craiului, and ROSCI0102 Leaota). This contiguous mountain complex hosts extensive natural forests, alpine meadows, and intact riparian ecosystems that support viable populations of large carnivores such as the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), and Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*).

Overall and specific objectives
The project's overall goal was to contribute to the restoration and long-term conservation of the Făgăraș Mountains ecosystem by protecting key habitats and species, while demonstrating an integrated model of rewilding and sustainable local development. Specific objectives included:

1. Purchase and ensure the legal protection of at least 2,000 ha of natural forests (mainly habitats 9410 and 9110).
2. Restore 1,300 ha of degraded forest and alpine habitats through replanting, reconversion of spruce monocultures, and erosion control.
3. Reintroduce keystone species — European bison (*Bison bonasus*) and Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*).
4. Establish an 80,000-ha hunting-free wildlife management area promoting human–wildlife coexistence.
5. Remove at least 50% of invasive alien species along two major river valleys and improve habitats for golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), marmot (*Marmota marmota*), and capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*).
6. Develop a new conservation-based rural economy through enterprise support, job creation and education.

Sites and targeted habitats and species

The project focused on habitats of Community importance, including:

- 9410 Acidophilous Picea forests,
- 9110 Luzulo-Fagetum beech forests,
- 91V0 Dacian beech forests,
- 91E0* Alluvial forests with *Alnus* and *Fraxinus*,
- 4070* Alpine *Pinus mugo* and *Rhododendron myrtifolium* scrub.

Target species comprised large carnivores, forest indicator birds (*Tetrao urogallus, Ficedula parva, Dendrocopos leucotos*), saproxylic beetles (*Rosalia alpina*), raptors (*Aquila chrysaetos*), and large herbivores (*Bison bonasus, Cervus elaphus*).

Main conservation issues and socio-economic context

Following post-communist land restitution, extensive private ownership led to uncontrolled logging and the loss of over 15,000 ha of forest. Unsustainable forestry, overgrazing, illegal hunting and expanding tourism infrastructure threatened biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.
The local economy, reliant on short-term exploitation of natural resources, provided little incentive for sustainable practices. The project thus sought to demonstrate that conservation and local economic resilience could coexist, offering communities viable alternatives through ecotourism, local gastronomy, and nature-friendly enterprise.

Expected longer-term results

At the start of the project, the expected longer-term outcomes were:

For habitats and species

- Legal protection and active management of at least 2,000 ha of natural forest (≥1,000 ha of habitat 9410 and ≥600 ha of 9110).
- Restoration of 1,300 ha of degraded habitats: 500 ha of clear-cuts, 500 ha of spruce monocultures, and 300 ha of alpine areas.
- Recovery of alluvial and riparian ecosystems along 40 km of riverbanks.
- Establishment of self-sustaining populations of *Bison bonasus* (75 individuals) and *Castor fiber* (90 individuals).
- Improved habitat and population status for listed bird and mammal species within Natura 2000 sites.
- Reduction of human–wildlife conflicts through non-lethal mitigation measures and participatory management.

Replicability and transferability

The project aimed to develop and demonstrate an integrated rewilding model combining land acquisition, restoration, species reintroduction and community development. Its replication potential was considered high within the Carpathian region and across the EU, particularly for regions balancing rural development with biodiversity protection.

Socio-economic and policy benefits

- Creation of at least 10 nature-based enterprises employing 50+ people, generating €2 million annual turnover by 2023.
- Strengthened public acceptance of protected areas by at least 20%.
- Development of innovative compensation schemes and conflict-prevention tools for farmers.
- Contribution to national and EU biodiversity and climate policies through improved carbon sequestration, reduced land degradation, and enhanced ecological connectivity.

In the long term, LIFE Carpathia was expected to secure a continuous, resilient ecosystem core in the Southern Carpathians, forming the ecological and social foundation for Romania's future Făgăraș National Park.

5. Administrative part

Project management, implementation and amendments

The project was managed according to the structure submitted with the project proposal (F.1.O). The Project Coordination Team (PCT), with oversight from the Project Leading Team (PLT), monitors and coordinates overall project progress through regular meetings with team leaders within Carpathia entities (FCC, AOSC, AVPCFC, CAF) and project managers with other beneficiaries (PPK, CC, IJJA), as well as other staff and collaborating organisations (see F.1). The management structure combined strategic coordination by FCC with decentralised field teams for forest restoration, rewilding, communication, and community engagement. Progress was reviewed in monthly/quarterly coordination meetings and through a shared digital monitoring platform.

The project applied an adaptive management approach, integrating science-based restoration with participatory community involvement. Implementation relied on close collaboration with local authorities, foresters, and landowners. Monitoring data, GIS tools, and field inspections guided habitat restoration and species management.

Key challenges included the COVID-19 pandemic, which delayed field activities and awareness campaigns, inflation and supply-chain issues that significantly raised costs of forestry works and construction. In addition, new forestry regulations (2024 Forestry Code) limited alpine planting and required the revision of restoration targets. Early community scepticism towards no-hunting and compensation schemes was addressed through continuous dialogue and demonstrable benefits. Despite these difficulties, **all core objectives were achieved**.

Partnerships provided strong added value: FCC and its affiliated entities ensured land acquisition, strengthened trust, awareness; ProPark led training and education; Conservation Capital delivered socio-economic outcomes.

Communication with CINEA and ELMEN monitoring team was regular, transparent, and constructive. Progress was reported through interim and final reports, complemented by online meetings and monitoring missions. Recommendations from CINEA and ELMEN were integrated into project planning, improving risk management and indicator tracking.

One **amendment** (2023) to the Grant Agreement was approved. It responded to high inflation (+108%), redirecting funds from savings to visitor centres, which substantially enhanced long-term visibility and educational value. These adjustments ensured financial balance and successful completion of all major deliverables.

In summary, LIFE Carpathia was managed effectively through cooperation, flexibility, and adaptive planning, achieving all strategic objectives despite external constraints, while building a durable framework for future conservation in the Făgăraș Mountains.

6. Technical part

The LIFE Carpathia project successfully restored natural ecosystems in the Făgăraș Mountains by protecting and restoring valuable habitats. It involved land purchase, habitat restoration, key species reintroduction, monitoring species, wildlife management model and stakeholder engagement.

6.1. Technical progress, per action

A list of deliverables, milestones and other documents submitted with this report is given in section **Error! Reference source not found. - Error! Reference source not found.**. Where these are re ferenced in the text, the first part of each code denotes the action or sub-action number, and the final letter indicates whether it is a deliverable (D), milestone (M) or other (O) document, e.g. A.9.D, E.7.M.2, A.7.2.O.

The clarifications requested by CINEA following the monitoring visits in 2022 and 2025 are addressed below, including the relevant code from the follow-up letter, e.g. (**Issue X/2025)**.

6.1.1 Action A.1: Conclusive assessment of pristine forests in the Făgăraș Mountains

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q4 2019
Foreseen end date: Q3 2020 Actual end date: Q3 2021
In February 2020, FCC hosted a meeting with NGO, state, and academic representatives to discuss identifying and protecting virgin and semi-virgin forests in the Făgăraș Mountains. Cooperation was agreed to support mapping and inclusion in the National Catalogue of Virgin and Semi-Virgin Forests (NCVF). Data were shared by WWF, Rottenburg University, and the Ministry of Environment. Using aerial photos, orthophotos, and CORONA satellite imagery (1975), areas of potential virgin forest were identified, despite limited landowner access. A total of 26,846 ha of potential old-growth forest was mapped, from which **16,260 ha were assessed** as probable virgin or semi-virgin. AOSC contributed to a Ministry-commissioned study confirming 2,328 ha in Argeș County as semi-virgin, with fieldwork by AOSC rangers. Virgin forests identified on state land will be proposed for NCVF inclusion. A final map of these forests in the Făgăraș Mountains was produced.

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR, listed in Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.2. Action A.2: Assessment of clear-cuts, spruce monocultures, and alpine grasslands and reconfiguration of forest types for 1,000 ha of degraded forests

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q4 2019
Foreseen end date: Q4 2020 Actual end date: Q4 2022

Sub-actions A.2.1–A.2.3 focused on identifying and mapping clear-cuts, spruce monocultures, and alpine grasslands. AOSC, with Geoprocessing support, used orthophotos, CORONA imagery, and forest management plans to map clear-cuts, informing land purchase priorities and enabling acquisitions beyond targets. FCC's GIS expert produced maps highlighting clear-cuts, replanting areas, and ownership; over 4,000 ha were identified as likely lacking regeneration. Spruce monocultures below 1,400 m were mapped (~16,000 ha) to guide restoration and acquisitions. Alpine grasslands and sheepfolds above 1,300 m were also mapped, revealing 17,311 ha of pasture and 21,117 ha of shrubland, though grazing intensity assessment was limited by variable livestock data. Through Sub-action A.2.4 we planned restoration of 619 ha of clear-cuts, 237 ha of monocultures, and 245 ha of pasture, with 347 ha of clear-cuts targeted for replanting under C.2, based on forest data, site conditions, and climate projections.

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.3 Action A.3: Assessment of invasive alien plant species along two mountain drainages

Foreseen start date: Q4 2019 Actual start date: Q4 2019
Foreseen end date: Q4 2020 Actual end date: Q4 2020
This action ran from July 2019 through summer 2020. FCC's botanist surveyed 164 km along the Dâmbovița (57 km) and Argeș (107 km) Rivers, assessing invasive alien species (IAS) presence. Areas were classified by invasion level (low, medium, high), and six IAS were identified. Priority zones for removal were detailed in a report (A.3.D.1), and an action plan (A.3.D.2) was developed for managing species such as *Erigeron annuus ssp. strigosus, Conyza canadensis, Reynoutria japonica, Impatiens parviflora, Impatiens glandulifera and Xanthium orientale ssp. italicum.*

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.4 Action A.4: Assessment of forest regeneration and erosion problems on purchased clear-felled areas and vegetation composition of degraded riparian forests

Foreseen start date: Q4 2019 Actual start date: Q2 2020
Foreseen end date: Q4 2021 Actual end date: Q2 2021
We assessed the condition of riparian forests, natural regeneration, and erosion on FCC-purchased clear-cut areas to develop restoration plans (A.2.4), which guided the replanting and erosion control (C.2.1, C.2.2). AOSC assessed the regeneration on nine land parcels in Argeș County, identifying **619 ha with poor regeneration**. Within these, 374 plots were analysed for density, height, and species, then compared to original compositions (A.4.1.D), informing replanting plans (A.2.4.D). A separate assessment of erosion across the same area mapped **32 km of degraded logging tracks** requiring restoration (A.4.2.D). For riparian habitats, FCC and AOSC used imagery and field surveys to assess conditions along 154 km of waterways, prioritising areas with land access. A detailed plan (A.4.3.D.2) was created for the first 16 km, with restoration begun under C.3. Stakeholders, including Romsilva, were engaged in both assessment and planning through consultations held in 2020.

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.5 Action A.5: Production of saplings in nurseries

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2024
This action was successful. To support large-scale restoration, AOSC operated seven tree nurseries and two greenhouses, with a dedicated staff member since February 2020. Existing nurseries were expanded by 9,500 m², and two new ones were established (Valea Găina & Frunți), adding ~ 900 m². A new 110 m² greenhouse was built. By the end of the project, we have exceeded the target of 500,000 saplings and produced 641,000 saplings of spruce, fir, beech, sycamore, ash, elm, rowan, juniper, and dwarf pine. Shade trees were planted to protect the saplings in the tree nurseries and various quantities of tree seed have been collected.
We have identified and propose a list of nine beech seed reservation out of which six were accepted by the NFG to be introduced in the National Catalogue of seed reserve.
During the project period we have collected 369 kg of seeds (beech, sycamore, ash, elm, etc.) for habitat restoration.

Deliverables: not applicable.
Annexes: Map of active tree nurseries attached to the FR. Section 10 Index of Annexes.

6.1.6. Action A.6: Analysis of potential anthropogenic impacts on the integrity of ecosystems and on key ecological corridors in the Fagaras Mountains

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q2 2020
Foreseen end date: Q4 2020 Actual end date: Q2 2021

We finalised this action before MTR. ACDB, a biodiversity focused NGO, was hired to conduct this analysis. They assessed relevant existing data and compiled a library (A.6.M.1), developed a GIS database (Annex of A.6.D), and created maps (A.6.M.2) showing ecosystems, threats, and pressures on bear and wolf populations, as well as key connectivity corridors. The final study (A.6.D) evaluated ecosystem integrity, large carnivore connectivity, and human impacts, and was shared with PPK to support the stakeholder platform and expert group (E.1). It concluded that most native species in the central Carpathians had healthy populations, and that connectivity between

ROSCI0122 and ROSCI0381 was strong. However, it emphasized the need to prioritize corridors linking the Făgăraș Mountains with the Perșani and Bucegi Mountains. These findings are relevant to future planning, including protected area zonation (E.1), visitor planning (E.3), and land purchase (B.1).

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.7. Action A.7: Prepare reintroductions of European bison and beaver according to IUCN guidelines

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2020 Actual end date: Q3 2022

We successfully obtained all necessary approvals and permits for the reintroduction and release of European bison in three project locations: Bunea, Lerești, and Nucșoara. We contracted an architect for the permitting process of the acclimatisation enclosures, and their construction was completed in 2019, 2020, and 2022. In parallel, we procured the equipment needed for construction, transport, and monitoring.

Regarding the beavers in Romania, a beaver population assessment study had to be carried out in the capture area – in the northern Făgăraș Mountains – to demonstrate that relocations would not negatively impact the source population. This study had not been planned initially. Capture and relocation permits have been issued periodically, specifying the number of individuals and the locations for capture and release. We specifically aimed to carry out relocations from areas where complaints had been received from local communities regarding damage caused by beavers.

Prior to relocations, we have conducted a feasibility study for finding the best suitable locations for beaver release in the Southeastern Făgăraș Mountain rivers.

As for the planned relocations of beavers from Germany, things did not go as expected. Our German partners were unable to locate individuals of the *Castor fiber albicus* subspecies in the Elbe basin, as originally believed. Therefore, we focused our efforts on actions within Romania.

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.8. Action A.8: Golden Eagle conservation plan, including population survey, localization of nests and survey of the two main prey species – Capercaillie and Marmot

Foreseen start date: Q4 2019 Actual start date: Q2 2020
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2024
For this activity, we contracted the Asociatia Grupul Milvus, a renowned Romanian organisation specialised in bird conservation. They carried out baseline studies to estimate the populations of golden eagle and marmot in the Făgăraș Mountains, as well as the distribution of the capercaillie population. Final monitoring results are presented in section 6.1.22 Action C.5: Reintroduction of missing mammal species on several sites in the South-Eastern Fagaras Mountains.
The reports estimated that there are approximately 10-13 pairs of golden eagles within the project area (A.8.D.2). Regarding food availability, the study estimated a population of 600-1,000 marmots in the Făgăraș mountain colonies, and the presence of capercaillie was found to be widespread throughout the study area (A.8.D.1, A.8.D.3, A.8.D.5). The studies on the marmot (A.8.D.4) and capercaillie populations (D.5.D.3) have been delivered by the AGM and uploaded in BUTLER.

These findings helped us to focus our conservation efforts, and whenever possible, we acquired land for conservation purposes - see deliverables (maps) under action C.6.
Finally, the AGM experts developed a Conservation Plan (A.8.D.6) for the Golden Eagle in the Făgăraș Mountains, which we intend to implement after the project ends, using available resources – **Issue 27/2025**.

Additional information:
Issue 27/2025 – The conservation measures proposed in the Golden eagle conservation plan are included in our Foundation multiannual masterplan. The wildlife reintroduction department produced an action plan (A8.O1) with concrete actions attached. The actions will be prioritised based on the funds available.

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER and listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables**.

6.1.9. Action A.9: Establishing intervention team and training it for resolving wildlife-human conflicts

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2019
Foreseen end date: Q4 2019 Actual end date: Q4 2019
Two Rapid Intervention Teams (RITs) were established to cover the five hunting concessions managed by Carpathia, comprising 10 senior and junior wildlife technicians.
Additionally, 16 gendarmes supported these teams on a rotating basis.
ACDB was subcontracted to deliver RIT training. Two sessions were held: in Rucăr, Argeș (July 2020) and Focșani, Vrancea (November 2020) (A.9.M, A.9.O.1, A.9.O.2). The training combined classroom and fieldwork and covered:

- Human-wildlife conflict and coexistence
- Wildlife capture, tranquilisation, and monitoring (theory and practice)
- Livestock predation by large carnivores in the project area
- Types of wildlife damage
- Legal frameworks for intervention and compensation
- Ecology and behaviour of bears, wolves, and lynx, and patterns of livestock attacks by carnivores and dogs, based on a guide from the Wolf LIFE project (LIFE13NAT/RO/000205)
- Damage cause analysis, with local case studies
- Best practices for damage prevention adapted to Romanian conditions

ACDB developed a human-wildlife conflict and damage (A.9.D) report using data from four neighbouring county environmental authorities, which was used also as a training support for RIT. Rucăr was selected as the main case study area, being a key RIT focus, and one of the most affected by reported conflicts.
With the entry into force of Government Ordinance No. 81/2021, interventions involving the bear species may only be carried out by game management concessionaires holding contracts with the respective communes, with the mayor acting as the leader of the intervention team. Accordingly, the partner organisations AOSC and AVPCFC have concluded contracts with seven communes within the wildlife management area and continue to carry out their activities to this day.

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.10 Action A.10: Human dimension study on attitudes towards bison and beaver

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q1 2021
Foreseen end date: Q2 2020 Actual end date: Q3 2022

We have concluded this baseline study as Bath & Associates were contracted in January 2021 to conduct research on existing attitudes and beliefs toward the reintroduced species. The activity began later than planned due to delays in contracting, the recruitment of a human dimensions (HD) research assistant (April 2020), and movement and meeting restrictions during the pandemic, which prevented surveys in 2020. As Bath & Associates, based in Canada, were and remained unable to travel to Romania, it was agreed that ProPark would distribute questionnaires through pupils involved in their educational programme.

In February 2021, Bath & Associates designed a questionnaire on local attitudes, beliefs, and acceptance of bison and beavers (A.10.M). PPK distributed the questionnaires in Brașov County in April and May 2021, with collection scheduled for September. A preliminary baseline report, using data collected by PPK in Argeș in March 2020 with ELP co-financing (A.10.D), showed that 64% of respondents supported bison reintroduction and 55% supported beaver reintroduction.

Given continued restrictions, Bath & Associates proposed replacing the Common Ground Matrix (CGM) with a Common Ground Analysis (CGA), a comparable method more suitable under the circumstances. This change did not affect the project budget, and a CGA was requested as the new deliverable. The consultants developed a CGA questionnaire to capture responses by interest group, and 17 field operators were trained in its use. Coordinated by FCC's HD research assistant, the team collected questionnaires by March 2021 from respondents in Argeș, Vâlcea, Sibiu, and Brașov.

The CGA report shows that while both groups would like bison and beaver in the Romanian landscape for future generations, respondents were more supportive of bison than beavers in the region (A.10.D.1).

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR (A.10.D.2) and uploaded in BUTLER (A.10.D.1), listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.11 Action A.11: Socio-economic study in the communities along the chain of Natura 2000 sites

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q2 2020
Foreseen end date: Q4 2020 Actual end date: Q2 2021

We finalised the evaluation of the socio-economic conditions of communities in the project area. Bath & Associates were hired to lead the research. After defining a focused questionnaire, the data collection was carried out by the pollster firm Izibiz, coordinated by FCC's HD research assistant. A total of 550 responses were gathered across the 28 communes in October and November 2020, using a mix of in-person interviews (28%), online surveys (24%), and questionnaires distributed to parents of school pupils (48%), in response to COVID-19 restrictions.

The socio-economic report was completed in June 2021, based on an analysis of the collected data and both planned deliverables were submitted with the MTR.

Overall, respondents expressed a positive attitude towards nature conservation and believed that nature-based employment, particularly eco-tourism, could support post-pandemic local economic recovery. Support for a national park was higher in Argeș, Brașov, and Sibiu compared to Vâlcea.

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.12 Action A.12: Assessment of the current status and existing plans of recreation and tourism for understanding the current visiting patterns

Foreseen start date: Q1 2020 Actual start date: Q2 2020
Foreseen end date: Q4 2020 Actual end date: Q2 2021

The assessment of how to integrate conservation into visitor management planning for the future development of the Făgăraș Mountains as a tourist destination was contracted to APDTSS. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, they replaced planned workshops with a series of online and face-to-face interviews with tourism stakeholders.

APDTSS identified two distinct tourism zones in the area: Făgăraș and Iezer. Their findings highlighted a lack of shared vision and collaboration among stakeholders, the need for strategic integration and professional destination management teams and noted that local entrepreneurs lacked the expertise and financial capacity to develop high-quality, sustainable tourism. Their full report is annexed (A.12.D).

The activity started later than planned due to the project's delayed launch (6.2.1), and the external assistance contract was extended to allow additional interviews.

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.13 Action A.13: Preparing the conservation enterprise programme

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q2 2020
Foreseen end date: Q2 2020 Actual end date: Q2 2021

The preparatory phase of LIFE Carpathia focused on building the foundations for the Conservation Enterprise Programme (CEP) and the Carpathia Fund, strengthening the project's long-term socio-economic impact.

Under **Action A.13.1 (Capacity Building)**, the initial CEP team was recruited and trained. An internal work plan and a draft Conservation Enterprise Strategy framed team objectives and processes. Although the training plan was developed in 2020, its implementation was delayed and revised in May 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Through **Action A.13.2** (Design of the CEP), a comprehensive strategy was completed, supported by sectoral studies for forestry, food production, and tourism, along with stakeholder and spatial analyses. The pandemic prompted revisions to reflect changing market conditions - particularly in tourism -requiring extended analysis. Deliverables included a **CEP Strategy** outlining key threats, priorities, and implementation plans, three **sector-based analyses** detailing market trends, opportunities, and regulatory context, a **stakeholder analysis** mapping land use, local economies, and governance structures, a **spatial plan** integrating conservation and enterprise objectives, and **16 detailed business plans** for conservation-based ventures, with financial models and market assessments.

Under **Action A.13.3 (Design of the Carpathia Fund)**, significant progress was made in developing its legal structure and commercial strategy. Legal and fiscal frameworks were defined, and the draft Fund Strategy prepared for internal approval. Although the preparatory stage took

longer than anticipated, it produced a robust framework for rolling out conservation enterprises and sustainable financing mechanisms during implementation.

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.14 Action A.14: Development of a GIS & Remote Sensing database and mobile data collection applications for monitoring

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2024

FCC's GIS expert assessed the project's needs in GIS and remote sensing, defined database requirements, and acquired the necessary hardware and software, including Esri ArcGIS Online licenses. He also developed a comprehensive GIS and remote-sensing **database** following consultations with all departments, and the concept of the database was developed and detailed in a technical report (A.14.D.1). High-resolution **aerial imagery** was commissioned from Cornel & Cornel to identify spruce monocultures, alpine grasslands, and other habitats. The processed orthophotos enabled the creation of additional map layers for clear-cuts and habitat assessment. However, the analysis showed that multispectral imagery alone could not reliably identify all habitat types, requiring some field verification (A.14 D.2).

To meet diverse data collection needs, FCC developed a suite of centrally synchronised mobile applications. A revised approach, supported by Esri USA's offer of free enterprise accounts and technical assistance, allowed savings to be redirected to producing a custom vectorised base map. This new map is more detailed, up-to-date, usable offline, and supports measurement and terrain analysis. **Sixteen Esri Survey123-based apps** are now used for various monitoring activities - such as beaver tracking, invasive species control, vegetation surveys, and anti-poaching patrols - with all data automatically synchronised to ArcGIS Online, enhancing efficiency and integration across field teams.

We used **drones** to test their efficiency in collecting various information such as planting success, land purchase assessment, wildlife, with conclusions presented in the report A.14.D.3.

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.15 Action A.15: Stakeholder Analysis for the project area

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q1 2020
Foreseen end date: Q2 2020 Actual end date: Q1 2021

ProPark, in collaboration with SRS, conducted a stakeholder analysis to identify key actors and assess their relevance in terms of land use and natural resources, with the aim of informing a strategic approach to community involvement in zoning the future protected area.

Due to travel and meeting restrictions (6.2.2) and a lack of willingness from some community representatives to engage in dialogue (6.2.4), large group meetings could not be held. As a result, the analysis was based on desk research.

PPK and SRS collected and analysed publicly available data and findings from previous studies on the 28 communes overlapping the Făgăraș Mountains Natura 2000 site. Using common factors—especially those linked to conservation priorities, such as land ownership and use, livestock

numbers, and key natural resources—they created a stakeholder database that is continuously updated (A.15.O).

Communes were prioritised based on their relevance to conservation objectives, to better target future communication, community engagement, and conservation actions. The priority communes identified were Arefu, Nucșoara, Rucăr, Lerești, Căineni, Recea, Porumbacu de Jos, Perișani, Hârseni, and Șinca. Stakeholders from these areas will be involved through tailored consultations, interviews, participation in project activities, and awareness campaigns.

The stakeholder analysis report (A.15.D) was completed in January 2021 and updated in March to include additional areas.

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.16 Action A.16: Prepare and implement capacity development activities for local stakeholders, for the direct and indirect conservation actions

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q1 2021
Foreseen end date: Q4 2021 Anticipated end date: Q4 2021

PPK identified representatives from entities involved in strategic sustainable development planning and natural resource management as the target group for capacity building. The training topics, shaped by PPK's and FCC's engagement with key stakeholders, focused on the role of natural values in sustainable development and their potential to support local development—particularly within the context of the Green Deal, the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

Based on these themes, PPK developed a tailored curriculum, a two-day agenda, and selected appropriate trainers. Training materials and the participant list are included in A.16.M and A.16.O. The first training session took place in Sibiu in June 2021, with additional sessions scheduled for July, September, and October in Vâlcea, Brașov, and Argeș.

This action began more than a year later than planned due to the project's delayed start (6.2.1), travel restrictions (6.2.2), and the timing of the 2020 elections, during which local engagement was postponed avoiding politicising the Făgăraș National Park initiative. Identifying target groups and relevant training topics also depended on direct community engagement through E.1.2 and A.15, both of which faced similar delays.

Deliverables: Submitted with the MTR, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.17 Action B.1: Purchase of 2,000 ha natural forests, 1,000 ha of degraded forest areas, and 300 ha of alpine meadows in the Făgăraș Mountains for full protection and rewilding

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2025

An agent was engaged to identify suitable land for purchase and carry out due diligence assessments. We aimed to acquire any forest land available for sale in the south-eastern Făgăraș Mountains to expand the area that could be included into the future national park mentioning the purpose of conservation in the documents. All purchases were made through sales contracts formalised by a notary public and recorded in the National Land Registry (B.1.D). We assessed the purchase plots under actions A.1, A.2, and A.4 to identify areas for restoration and conservation.

FCC purchased a **total of 4,944 ha** of land in the reporting period. This includes 2,771 ha of natural and managed forests (2,000 ha target), 1,435 ha of degraded forest habitats consisting of clear-felled areas and spruce monocultures (1,000 ha target) and 737 ha alpine pastures (300 ha target).

All the purchase contracts have been uploaded into the LPD application, and an updated map was produced (B.1.O) – **addresses Issue 6/2025**.

Additional information

Issue 6/2022 – We have updated and attached the map of the land purchase (B.1.O).

Funding has been secured to continue acquiring land for conservation after the project period ends.

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**
Annexes: Map of all purchased land (B.1.O) attached to the FR. Section 10 **Index of Annexes.**

6.1.18 Action C.1: Achieve conservation status for purchased forests and alpine grasslands

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2025

We protected the acquired land by including the phrase *"for conservation*", in the purchase documents (C.1.D.1). During the project, **4,944 ha** received this designation and are located within Natura 2000 sites, thereby automatically benefiting from this level of protection – addresses **- Issue 15/2025**.

Additional information:

Issue 15/2022 – a document with more details about the conservation status and actual management of the purchase land is annexed (C.1.O.3).

Issue 29/FR - In respect of habitats, in section 6.3 we mentioned that we acquired 2,771 ha of managed forests/forest ecosystems (1,309 ha of 9410, 1,398 ha of 9110, and 65 ha of 4070*). The difference up to 4,944 ha is represented, on the one hand, by degraded habitats which do not exhibit their normal characteristics (such as clear-cuts and spruce monocultures) and, on the other hand, by pastures. The term 'managed or natural forests' was used to characterise forests/forest habitats of various ages and species, which are managed according to national law, based on forestry management plans and represents all forest habitats acquired by the Foundation, except the clear-cuts and the spruce monocultures. The 816 ha which we included in the National Catalogue of Virgin Forests are included in the 2,771 ha.

Land acquisition did not proceed exactly as initially planned, as it was dependent on market availability. Our research indicates that while large areas of artificial spruce monocultures remain in the Făgăraș Mountains, these are often unavailable for purchase, either being State-owned or held by land-ownership associations (*composesorate*), or simply not offered for sale by private owners. This has not affected the overall objectives of the project, as we have exceeded our land acquisition objective and all purchased land benefits from the conservation status of the Natura 2000 sites (ROSAC0122 and ROSAC0381) and the land registry entry 'land for conservation'. Purchasing more alpine areas than foreseen is also a positive achievement for the project aim, due to alpine

areas put under non-intervention to foster natural processes, therefore increasing the overall area put under this level of protection and benefiting from conservation measures.

Furthermore, we are committed to ensuring these areas achieve a higher protection status (strict protection/non-intervention) through the future integration into updated Natura 2000 management plans or the potential establishment of a national park.

In addition, we managed to register 816 hectares of FCC-owned land in the National Catalogue of Virgin Forests (C.1.D.2). Following our analysis of potential virgin forests still existing, the Argeș Forestry Directorate added a further 300 hectares (C.1.O.1).

Another level of protection has been ensured through the leasing, by FCC-affiliated entities, of 81,000 hectares of hunting grounds, whose management excludes sport hunting and focuses primarily on preventing and mitigating human - wildlife conflicts.

We must mention that the Ministry of the Environment, through external consultants, has carried out a project to identify and designate new strictly protected areas. For this reason, we proposed to the consultant the inclusion of FCC properties (C1.O.2) in 2024. The Ministry of the Environment has not yet finalised this process.

At present, we initiated a founding study for the Făgăraș Mountains National Park, in accordance with the legal provisions. Once completed, it will be submitted to the Ministry of the Environment for the initiation of public consultation procedures.

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**
Annexes: C.1.O.1 and C.1.O.2 attached to the FR. Section 10 **Index of Annexes**.

6.1.19 Action C.2: Carry out forest and grassland restoration work on purchased properties

Foreseen start date: Q2 2020 Actual start date: Q4 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2025
AOSC, coordinated by FCC, has **restored 1,586 hectares of forest and grassland habitats** out of the 1,300-hectare target. This includes 896 hectares of replanted clear-cuts (C.2.1), 271 ha of spruce monoculture reconversion (C.2.3), and 41 ha of alpine grasslands (C.2.4). We included **additional 378 ha of alpine habitats under non-intervention area** to naturally recover.
In terms of habitat type, we restored 789 ha were of habitat 9410 and 374 ha of habitat 9110.
Alpine restoration reached 419 ha (17 ha of 4060 and 24 ha of 4070* restored in alpine areas and non-intervention – 124 ha of 4060 and 254 of 4070*).
We used over 2.4 million saplings of native tree species, primarily spruce, beech, fir, and sycamore. With 93% we are slightly below the initial target, as we acquired fewer spruce monocultures than expected (330 of 500 hectares), but also because alpine restoration proved challenging – see section **6.2.2** .
We halted erosion along 20 km of logging tracks (gullies) by machine-levelling the land, planting native saplings, and ensuring proper drainage (C.2.2).
In addition, we planted a 17 km line of alder trees along the Doamnei River and Valea Dambovitei, to support the establishment of the 91E0* riparian habitat. By the end of the project, we restored four hectares of habitat *91E0 (a detailed map is attached as annex C2.O6).

Additional information
Issue 30 - C.2.3 - The restored area of artificial spruce stands was smaller than originally planned in the project. The primary reason for this was that we did not acquire sufficient land during the early years of the project. Furthermore, in order to plan and approve thinning operations in these spruce stands, it was necessary to revise the forest management plans - a process that took between two and three years before work could actually commence. In several instances, previous forest owners did not officially update or revise their forest plans, and we had to do it. One illustrative example is UPII Rucăr, where the final approval of the forest management plan was granted at the end of November 2024. Given that the winter season of 2024–2025 followed immediately, there was a high risk that restoration works could not be implemented within the LIFE project timeframe. As a result, restoration activities were already carried out using other funding sources, and these actions (covering 40 hectares) are reported within this project.

Furthermore, the acquisition of a single plot does not automatically trigger the approval process for a forest management plan; specific conditions must first be met. The total area for which a forest management plan update is requested must be at least 100 hectares, meaning it often takes time to acquire enough plots to reach this threshold. Another requirement is that the plots must be geographically clustered within an area historically managed by the same state forestry district; for instance, if two plots were located within the former jurisdictions of two different forestry districts, two separate forest management plans would be required.
Consequently, we requested approval from CINEA to intervene in areas purchased prior to the project's start to overcome this setback.

All spruce monoculture areas owned by the Foundation are mapped, prioritized, and included in a continuous restoration and monitoring process. New restoration interventions are required every 5–6 years. We intend to continue this work following the conclusion of the project and estimate that we will complete at least 250 hectares by 2030.

C.2.4 – The non-intervention zones within the alpine areas were established through our own analysis and initiative. These areas are protected under their status as **Natura 2000 sites**; however, they also benefit from our protection as their landowner and manager. The alpine habitats we declared as nonintervention areas will continue to allow natural processes to take place, as a conservation measure. The Carpathia Masterplan 2026-2030 has included the specific objective to further exclude the nonintervention areas from grazing.

This aligns with the Foundation's vision to create a **national park in the Făgăraș Mountains**. These areas may be included in the future internal zoning of the Făgăraș Mountains National Park (FMNP) as **strictly protected zones**.

We have annexed map C2.O5 to show their location within the project area.

Deliverables: not applicable.
Annexes: C.2.O.1 - C.2.O.4 attached to the FR. Section 10 **Index of Annexes**.

6.1.20 Action C.3: Removal of at least 50% of the invasive alien plant species along at least 40 km of mountain rivers in the Southeastern Fagaras Mountains

Foreseen start date: Q2 2021 Actual start date: Q2 2021
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2024

Within LIFE Carpathia, systematic control of invasive alien species (IAS) was implemented to restore riparian habitats. Our rangers were trained in IAS identification and eradication techniques by our botanist, who prepared a short guide (C.3.O). The rangers began work on the Rivers Dâmbovița, Râul Târgului, Valea Doamnei, and their tributaries, focusing on areas with the highest invasion levels, as outlined in the action plan (A.3.D). We initiated annual actions targeting especially *Erigeron annuus ssp. strigosus, Conyza canadensis, Reynoutria japonica, Impatiens parviflora, Impatiens glandulifera, Xanthium orientale ssp. italicum and Hemerocallis fulva*. The primary removal method involved uprooting, either manually or with simple tools, timed for when most IAS plants began flowering in June and July.

By the end of the project the IAS management covered a cumulative 152 km of riverbanks and a map with the distribution of the cleared areas of invasive species has been produced (C.3.D). These interventions curtailed IAS spread, improved native vegetation regeneration, and enhanced ranger capacity for long-term IAS management in compliance with EU Biodiversity Strategy objectives.

We **achieved three times more** than initially planned, and in most of the monitoring plots we registered a strong decrease in IAS cover.

In addition to these actions, we have initiated a very impactful communication campaign about the negative impact of the invasive species on native species and biodiversity in general (C.3.O.1).

Additional information

Issue 28, 31/FR - We conducted the botanical assessment in 57 monitoring plots (39 in restoration areas previously invaded by IAS and 19 in IAS-free reference areas), located along 152 km of riverbanks, on which we removed the identified IAS from 2021 to 2024. In 2021 we removed the IAS on 37 km (24%), in 2022 on 31,5 km (20%), in 2023 on 107,35 km (69%), and in 2024 on 149 km (96%). Some of the areas were visited several times during 2021-2024, sometimes every year, sometimes once every two years and other areas were visited once, to eliminate IAS. The areas visited for IAS elimination were selected each year, in the field depending on the degree of IAS infestation. In conclusion, we appreciate that the removal of IAS was done at 380% - 152 km vs. 40 km – with various degrees of infestation reduction – e.g. *Conyza canadensis* eliminated completely in Portareasa 3 sample plot) (see section Results and discussions of the D2.D2 IAS monitoring report). We attach an updated monitoring report D2.D2 IAS Monitoring report_updated-2026, for reference.

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

Annexes: C.3.O.1. see Section 10 **Index of Annexes**.

6.1.21 Action C.4: Development of a functioning wildlife-human conflict resolution system on an 80,000 ha area of the South-eastern Făgăraș, Piatra Craiului, and Leota Mountains

Foreseen start date: Q1 2020 Actual start date: Q3 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2025

This has been one of the most successful actions of the project, made possible by securing the hunting concessions that enabled the development of the wildlife - human conflict mitigation programme. Initially, two concessions (no. 21 and no. 22) were managed by Carpathia entities; during the project a further three concessions were acquired (no. 8, no. 18 and no. 20). This

expanded Carpathia's managed area to 81,000 ha of hunting concessions. Combined with Piatra Craiului National Park, this created a hunting-free area of more than 95,000 ha.

The conflict mitigation programme included rapid intervention teams (RITs), anti-poaching patrols, electric fences, deterrent devices, livestock guardian dogs, and a compensation scheme for livestock losses. Established in 2019, the RITs were fully equipped and operational in their intervention areas (as described in A.9). Since 2020, conflicts and prevention measures have been recorded using a mobile app, with 2019 data serving as a baseline. IJJA assigned 16 gendarmes to the RITs, participating in regular patrols, while in other project areas IJJA operated independently.

The RITs carried out 947 interventions (conflicts, alerts, and prevention), of which 682 involved active conflicts (68% caused by bears). They also recorded 37 ha of damaged crops and installed 118 electric fences to protect livestock and crops from predators and wild boar.

Each year (2020–2025) a contract was signed with a local livestock owner for joint livestock operations. The contractor provided cattle and sheep husbandry services, including feeding, grazing, breeding preparation, supervising births, and raising young. Surplus livestock from Carpathia was used to compensate owners whose animals were lost to bear depredation (192 animals).

We promoted the use of traditional Romanian Carpatin Shepherd Dogs as an additional livestock protection. In 2019, we established a kennel at the Cobor Biodiversity Farm with seven pedigree dogs, and advertised the donation of pups through community posters. Following an informal evaluation of the farmers, we provided 63 pups under lease contracts to 33 farmers; after one year of monitoring, ownership was transferred to the farmers.

With project support, a regional committee was established to engage local stakeholders in conflict management. Following the adoption of Government Ordinance no. 81/2021 (on bear interventions), similar committees were officially created in each municipality, chaired by the mayor. These committees decide on measures in a gradual sequence - deterrence, relocation, or elimination - for bears causing conflicts in built-up areas. Based on committee decisions and derogation quotas, the RITs eliminated 11 bears during the project period.

In addition, 64 tonnes of domestic animal waste were collected and disposed of from Rucăr households, preventing it from being dumped in nature, where it attracts bears. AI-based alarm systems and sound repellents were also tested and implemented to deter bears; these proved effective but require regular calibration.

Through these combined measures, we have demonstrated a modern wildlife management programme centred on conflict resolution, thereby ensuring a safe environment for local communities while keeping a no-trophy-hunting policy.

Additional information:

Issue 29/FR – Based on the analysis of the human-wildlife conflict mitigation programme's key performance indicators (number of interventions, location, livestock predation figures, number of compensatory measures, etc.), we conclude that measuring the efficiency of the programme is a process that extends beyond the project's five-year duration. For instance, regarding sheep predation, figures fluctuated from 7 cases in 2020 to 32 in 2021, 18 in 2022, 48 in 2023, and 33 in 2024. A similar trend was observed in cattle attacks, rising from 4 in 2020 to 5 in 2021, 11 in 2022, 9 in 2023, 15 in 2024. Although the intervention frequency of our teams remained constant, these fluctuations are driven by factors such as the availability of natural food sources (e.g., beech mast

years) and the increased awareness of the compensatory support provided by Foundation Conservation Carpathia, which has fostered greater trust in reporting incidents.

Conversely, incidents involving wild boar showed a steady decline, from 49 in 2020 to 20 in 2021 and to 3 in 2024. Factors influencing this result include the sustained activity of our Rapid Intervention Teams, combined with the outbreak of African Swine Fever in 2021-2022 and natural food availability.

Consequently, the human-wildlife conflict mitigation programme includes a vital social component; through collaboration with authorities and local residents, we prevent the escalation of incidents and deter poaching or 'vigilante' actions (snares, poisoning). During the reporting period, 'problem' bears were removed to ensure public safety. Thus, the conservation status of the project's target species (bear, wolf) has not been adversely affected but rather maintained by preventing degradation.

Some of the activities mentioned (such as the collection and incineration of animal waste and the use of sound repellents) demonstrate our adaptability to the local context. Following a **change in legislation** in 2021 (Emergency Ordinance 81/2021**)**, all municipalities with reported bear incidents are required to **conclude intervention contracts** with hunting area managers for interventions in the event of a bear alert. In this context, our hunting units (AOSC, AVPCFC, and GTS), which manage the five hunting concessions, have signed agreements with the following municipalities: Bughea de Sus, Lerești, Valea Mare Pravat, Dragoslavele, Stoenești, Rucăr, and Cetateni. These agreements sustain the continuation of the Rapid Intervention Teams' activities after the project's end, with funding secured through our own resources.

New legislation regarding intervention in case of bear, requires a local intervention team in each commune, led by the mayor and representatives of the local Gendarmerie and hunting associations. As our affiliated hunting associations hold 7 wildlife intervention contracts, they must work together with the Arges Gendarmerie (IJJA) on every case. Therefore, we maintain a close collaboration for the permanent anti-poaching patrols and wildlife conflict interventions continuing in the after-LIFE project period. Moreover, we have been approved a new LIFE project, namely LIFE REFAG, mentioning the reintroduction of griffon vulture as one of the main Work Packages, for which IJJA is one of the main partners responsible to deploy vulture anti-poaching units and develop anti-poisoning risk mitigation measures.

Maintaining these teams is critical, as social pressure remains high - particularly in recent years, as reports of bear attacks have increased alongside political pressure to reopen trophy hunting as a national population control measure.

More details of the results of the human-wildlife conflict mitigation programme are presented in the Deliverable D.3.D.1. **Issue 32 and 36** are addressed under action D.3 description.

Deliverables: Submitted with MTR and uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.22 Action C.5: Reintroduction of missing mammal species on several sites in the South-Eastern Fagaras Mountains

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2025

The reintroduction of **European bison** in the Făgăraș Mountains has been a huge success, with 81 individuals released in the wild and more than 12 calves surviving during this period. After obtaining the necessary permits (environmental and construction), we built three acclimatisation enclosures at Bunea (2019), Lerești (2020), and Nucșoara (2022), each covering between 80 and 150 hectares. These enclosures periodically received small herds (3–8 bison) from various breeding facilities across Europe (Poland, Germany, England, Sweden, Romania) to ensure a high level of genetic diversity. We maintained close collaboration with the EBCC to record all individuals in the pedigree book. Following quarantine and acclimatisation, the animals were subsequently released, the first herd was released in spring 2020.

Throughout the process, our rangers ensured continuous monitoring and provided supplementary feeding during winter within the acclimatisation enclosures. The bison are tracked using GPS collars and VHF antennas, and their range has largely expanded as far as the north-western Făgăraș Mountains (see dispersal map C.5.O.1).

Monitoring activities will continue after the end of the project, supported by own funds or additional grants, while we are also exploring opportunities to ensure connectivity with the meta-population in the Țarcu Mountains.

This activity has attracted significant positive attention: videos of the bison have become some of the most viewed on our social media channels, have a very positive connotation, leading even to the local football club in Lerești renaming itself to ACS Zimbrii Lerești (Bison Leresti) in their honour.

We are happy to find that the reintroduction of bison and beavers has triggered new ecosystem processes, advanced the rewilding initiative while also created tourist attractions that support local businesses.

On the other hand, the **European beaver reintroduction** faced a more complex approval process than originally anticipated. The activity was delayed following the Ministry of Environment's request for an impact assessment of the source population, which had not been planned initially. In addition, the process of obtaining relocation permits - issued periodically for a fixed number of individuals - created extra administrative tasks.

Preparatory work included habitat enhancement by planting willows. In the springs of 2020 and 2021, we planted 3,500 saplings in Valea lui Coman, Valea Chiliei, Richita, and Bălțatu.

Within the project, we relocated a total of 62 individuals and released them in Valea Dâmboviței, Râul Târgului, Argeșel, and Bughița, with subsequent monitoring indicating that the population has expanded beyond the project area. They are tracked using GPS tags, although signals are eventually lost due to battery exhaustion.

A detailed analysis revealed that individuals originating from the Elbe River belong to a similar subspecies. However, transboundary relocation was not possible because the Ministry of Environment required a genetic variability certificate, which could not be provided in this case. Even though we released fewer individuals than originally planned, we still managed to inhabit all the foreseen areas, and we will keep supplementing if necessary. Relocation of individuals from the northern side of the Făgăraș Mountains remains feasible, particularly in response to requests from municipalities where conflicts have arisen. This effort will continue beyond the lifetime of the project.

An updated map has been produced to show the range of the released European beavers in the project area (C.5.O.2).

Additional information

Issue 26/2025 – We informed the Ministry o Environment and National Agency for Environment and Protected Areas, that the reintroduction of European bison and beaver was successful and we recommend to they proceed with updating the SDFs of ROSAC0122 and ROSAC0381. The letter is annexed to the updated report – C5.O3.

Annexes: C.5.O.1 and C.5.O2 see Section 10 **Index of Annexes**.

6.1.23 Action C.6: Implementation of conservation actions for golden eagles

Foreseen start date: Q1 2022 Actual start date: Q1 2022
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2025
This action is a continuation of A.8 and has started after the MTR. It was carried out by external experts from Milvus Group.
Between 2022–2024, five known nests from four territories were monitored. Only one required rehabilitation. In Territory 1 (Valea Curpănu), both nests were initially stable; however, nest 1, located on beech, disappeared in 2024, likely due to tree loss. Given its long-term abandonment, no artificial replacement was considered necessary. In Territory 2 (Șaua Apa Cumpănită) and Territory 7 (Valea Rea), cliff nests remained stable and required no intervention. In Territory 5 (Transfăgărășan), the tree nest used in 2022 collapsed in 2023; it was replaced with an artificial structure fixed on the same tree, designed to mimic a natural nest.
For future work, we recommend annual assessments of all known nests, especially tree-based ones, which are more vulnerable to disturbance, forestry activities, and weather. Ensuring nest stability is crucial, as degradation during breeding may compromise reproduction in this small population. A set of recommendations was included in the Golden eagle conservation plan (Deliverable A.8.D.6).
Through this action we have also produced maps of areas to be considered for conservation measures for the targeted species – Golden eagle, Marmot and Capercaillie (C.6.D.1, C.6.D.2, C.6.D.3).

Additional information:
Issue 34/FR - For the conservation of the Golden Eagle population in the Făgăraș Mountains, we did an action plan comprising at least the following measures:

- Execute annual monitoring of the eagle population and nesting sites to ensure the continuous adaptation of conservation measures.
- Identify landowners and land managers in the vicinity of nests and
- Inform the manager of the Natura 2000 sites (National Agency for Environment and Protected Areas) of the monitoring results while recommending minimum conservation measures. These measures may include formal notifications to owners and managers, as well as activity restrictions near nests.

To date, we have successfully acquired land parcels near a single nest, totalling an area of **52 hectares, but we also have acquired for protection, 100 hectares in marmot habitats and 3697 hectares** (see deliverables C6.D1-D.3). Should the opportunity to purchase arise, we will acquire further land either surrounding nests or within habitats critical to the eagle's prey species. Furthermore, the notifications sent to the NAEPA will contribute to the protection of the species in areas which not managed by the Foundation.

The final report on nest reinforcements (C.6.D.4), was completed by Milvus Group, in 2025. Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.24 Action C.7: Implementation of the conservation enterprise programme

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2020
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2025

C.7.1 Capacity building - The Conservation Enterprise Programme (CEP) began with the formation of a team that was trained by CC's experts. In 2022, **four online sessions** were conducted with 5 - 10 project team members each. However, instead of relying solely on conventional training sessions, knowledge was continuously transferred to the CEP Team throughout the entire project period. In total, more than 25 project team members received training, as planned. (D.6.D.1.2 - **Issue 16/2025 & Issue 5g/2025**).

C.7.2 - The Carpathia Fund – A funding strategy was finalised in 2021. Discussions with financial institutions, including BRD Societe Generale, explored fund capitalisation and the creation of a Conservation Entrepreneurship Hub to provide structured business support to local entrepreneurs. However, BRD withdrew from co-financing of the Enterpreneurship Hub with the European Investment Bank's NCFF due to the war in Ukraine.

A major step forward came with a successful grant from the UBS Optimus Fund (UBSOF), which provides 10% match funding on amounts over CHF 1 million. By mid-2024, **around CHF 1 million had been raised** or were in the pipeline.

Using UBSOF funds, the CEP team designed the first structured competitive Small Grants Programme under the Carpathia Fund in late 2023, targeting local enterprises with projects that met qualifying nature-positive criteria. **Grants totalling €29,300** were awarded in 2024, with additional support provided case-by-case to community projects. Additional business support to local enterprises has been secured through a partnership with ING.

C.7.3 Engaging and supporting nature-based businesses - Once COVID-19 restrictions eased in 2022, CC has initiated conservation enterprise (CE) training, focusing on building awareness of the programme, shaping nature-positive activities, and identifying and providing support needs. **Around 40 entrepreneurs** have been engaged in training and supported by the end of the project – nature guides, tourism operators, and food entrepreneurs, covering topics from guiding skills to social media marketing. Follow-up revealed that many local businesses were informal and required tailored one-to-one support rather than group sessions. Work also advanced on the *Roadele Muntilor* Food Hub, based in Rucăr, with an online sales channel launched through Freshful in October 2021. By 2024, there were **over 30 suppliers** to the Food Hub, Roadele Muntilor, which generated sales of around **€85,000 for local producers**.

The team also introduced **conservation fees** (Action C.7.3.5) via Travel Carpathia, **raising €30,000** from group bookings.

Partnerships with Romanian and international tour operators boosted awareness, leading to secured bookings in 2025 (Action C.7.3.6). The CEP team hosted **five tour operators**.

Branding work for the Food Hub (Action C.7.3.7) strengthened its identity as a platform for local producers, balancing individual brands with a unified conservation vision (C.7.D.3).

A more detailed description of C.7 activities is provided through the annual reports of CC. deliverables D.6. D.1.1 – D.6.D.1.5 and the final report D.6.D.1.

Deliverables: Submitted with MTR and uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.25 Action D.1: Monitoring the impact of the restoration activities on degraded habitats and indicator bird and arthropod species

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q2 2020
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2024

FCC, together with AOSC and external assistance, monitored the effects of the project's restoration activities by assessing changes in understory vegetation, indicator bird species, and terrestrial arthropods.

D.1.1 - **Understory vegetation** baseline monitoring was completed in 2020 whilst the second survey report was finalised in June 2025 by our botanist. The main conclusion was that the monitoring period was too short to capture major vegetation changes, except for sapling planting and vegetation cutting/removal (in >1 m layer) and the removal of spruce trees (in >3m layer). Monitoring every 3 - 5 years is recommended to track structural and compositional evolution toward natural forest types. The deliverable consisting of the scientific report (D.1.D.3) was uploaded to BUTLER, while the baseline report (D.1.1M) was submitted with the MTR.

D.1.2 – The changes in **bird** species populations in three targeted restoration areas (clear cuts, grasslands and spruce monocultures) compared to control areas in unrestored habitats have been assessed through three surveys: baseline in 2021 by Wildlife Management Consulting and 2nd and 3rd survey in 2022 & 2023 by Milvus. Based on two seasons of field data, it is premature to draw firm conclusions on ecological restoration success from the bird population abundance's perspective. Continued monitoring every two years is advised to track long-term trends and distinguish local effects from migratory influences. The deliverable consisting of the scientific report (D.1.D.2) was uploaded to BUTLER, while the baseline report (D.1.M.2) is annexed to this report.

D.1.3 – Between 2021 and 2023, external consultant SC Pro Biodiversitas SRL conducted monitoring of **arthropods** (baseline and repeated survey) in ~1200 km² of Făgăraș and Iezer-Păpușa Mountains. Eighty-eight plots were selected across spruce forests, clear-cuts, riparian habitats, and alpine meadows, with half undergoing ecological reconstruction.

Multivariate analyses suggest that, over time, restored areas may develop forest-like invertebrate communities. Indicator species were proposed for long-term monitoring, including *Carabus beetles, Morimus funereus, Bielzia coerulans, Drobacia banatica*, and *Erebia epiphron transsylvanica*.

The deliverable consisting of the scientific report (D.1.D.1) was uploaded to BUTLER, while the baseline report (D.1.M.3) is annexed to this report – **Issue 17/2022**.

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.26 Action D.2: Monitoring re-appearance of invasive alien plant species

Foreseen start date: Q2 2021 Actual start date: Q3 2020
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2024

D.2.1 - The **Fixed-Point Photography** (FPP) monitoring activity was executed by our botanist following the areas where removal work has taken place. From 2021–2024, we removed IAS along 152.19 km of riverbanks (37 km in 2021, 31.5 km in 2022, 107.35 km in 2023, and 149 km in 2024, some overlapping occur). Monitoring was conducted in 57 fixed-point plots (2022–2024; 10 since 2021), with photos and vegetation surveys showing overall IAS decline. Examples include *Erigeron annuus* decreasing from 30% (2021) to 1% (2024) in V. Dâmboviței 5, and *Impatiens parviflora* from 60% (2022) to 3% (2024) in V. Râul Târgului. Annual IAS (e.g., *Erigeron annuus, Conyza canadensis*) decreased significantly, while perennial *Reynoutrya japonica* showed limited reduction (92% in 2022 to 80% in 2024).
Full details and images are provided in the FPP Final Report (D.2.D.1), while a photo collection is archived in the beneficiary's project database.
D.2.2 - The **vegetation survey**, combined with fixed-point photography, was used to assess IAS management impacts on vegetation and habitats. Activities focused on 7 IAS species (*Erigeron annuus* ssp. *strigosus*, *Conyza canadensis*, *Reynoutria japonica*, *Impatiens parviflora*, *I. glandulifera*, *Xanthium orientale* ssp. *italicum*, *Hemerocallis fulva*) along Dâmbovița and Argeș tributaries in the Făgăraș Mountains. We established 57 monitoring plots (39 in restoration areas, 19 IAS-free references) along 152 km of riverbanks, where IAS removal was carried out. Botanical surveys and vegetation analyses were conducted for at least 3 years (2022–2024), and 4 years in 10 plots (since 2021). Results show overall IAS cover decreased with 29% to 69% (*Erigeron annuus*), and 12% to 19% (*Reynoutrya japonica*), while native cover increased, confirming the effectiveness of management activities. The activity was conducted by our botanist, and he provided a full report (D.2.D.2)

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.27 Action D.3: Monitoring of the changes in wildlife-human conflicts

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2025
Following the establishment of the Rapid Intervention Teams (RITs), the wildlife management team developed a methodology and indicators to assess the effectiveness of human–wildlife conflict mitigation measures. Our GIS expert developed mobile data collection tools linked with Esri ArcGIS. Georeferenced data were synchronised with ArcGIS Online for real-time mapping and analysis.
Between 2019–2024, **689 human–wildlife conflicts** were recorded: **440 with bears**, **195 wild boars**, **26 wolves**, and **28 other species**. Bear conflicts - mainly livestock depredation, property damage, and incursions - varied with food availability, peaking in poor mast years. Severe incidents declined from 35 annually to **20 in 2024**. Genetic analyses confirmed that a few male bears caused repeated attacks. Conflicts with wild boars dropped after the **African swine fever outbreak**, while wolf incidents remained rare.
Mitigation actions included electric fencing, RIT interventions, livestock donations, compensation, improved waste management, guarding dogs, and selective removals. Overall, these measures reduced damages and improved coexistence, though continued prevention and monitoring remain essential.

Additional information:
Issue 32, 36/FR – As stated previously in the description of action C.4, it is too soon to appreciate how effective the human-wildlife conflict mitigation programme was, but we know that the impact

on target species population (carnivores) was positive, maintaining stable populations and with an increasing trend. Looking at the numbers, **overall incidents/conflicts decreased** with 41%, from 143 in 2020 to 85 in 2025, with fluctuations in between. If we are looking at incidents with **carnivores** (target species of the project: bear, wolf, lynx) they **also decreased with almost 10%**, from 77 in 2020 to 70 in 2025, mostly done by bears.
The most significant reduction in incidents was recorded for wild boar, which saw a 94% decrease, falling from 49 incidents in 2020 to just 3 in 2024.
This demonstrates that the human-wildlife conflict mitigation programme is effective, relying on the permanent presence of Rapid Intervention Teams (RITs) and robust prevention measures (63 Carpatin shepherd dogs donated, 93 electric fences installed). The programme's objective is to reduce such incidents to a level that is socially acceptable to local communities. Coexistence with wildlife will always remain a challenge for settlements located near protected areas.
We attached a map to show the location of the H-W conflict mitigation programme (annex
Consequently, the programme will continue beyond the project's lifetime through the maintenance of the RITs, the continued management of hunting concessions, and ongoing monitoring via the mobile data collection applications and visualisation dashboards developed during the project.
Ongoing monitoring will allow us to identify new variables to better assess the efficiency of the H-WC mitigation programme and adapt our interventions accordingly.
Retaining management of the hunting grounds is essential, as ranger interventions are legally permissible only if the implementing body holds the status of hunting ground manager for the area where the intervention occurs. Continuing the H-WC mitigation programme remains an annual priority for the Foundation, and we intend to implement a new 'Bear-Smart Communities' type of project in the coming years.

Deliverables: Full report uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.28 Action D.4: Monitoring of re-introduced species and their impact on habitats

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q4 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2024

D.4.1 – **Bison** monitoring assessed both movement range and vegetation impact. We tracked nineteen individuals by GPS, covering over 500 km², with herd ranges varying between 42-234 km². Five herds were formed, each with 4-18 individuals. Habitat selection showed a preference for fragmented landscapes at lower altitudes, productive winter vegetation, and forest edges, with clear seasonal shifts between higher elevations in summer and lower in winter. GPS data supported mapping of release ranges (Annex C.5.O.1) and preparation of the scientific report on bison movements (D.4.D.4).

The impact on vegetation was assessed using 20×30 m macroplots with paired controls, revealed strong effects in clear-cut and riparian habitats but minimal impact in mixed, beech, or spruce forests. Bison presence accelerated natural regeneration in clear-cuts for up to five years by reducing early-successional herbs and shrubs, facilitating tree seedling growth and forest recovery even after herds moved on.

D.4.2 – Monitoring the impact of **beavers** focused on two aspects: (1) physical and chemical water parameters, and (2) variations in aquatic invertebrates. Both studies were carried out by our wildlife team in collaboration with external experts.

Between October 2019 and June 2024, our team monitored water quality using a portable multi-parameter probe (pH, temperature, conductivity, oxygen) and laboratory analyses for bioavailable nitrogen and phosphorus. We measured upstream and downstream of reintroduction areas and within beaver dams to assess how damming alters water dynamics and trophic structures. Standardised methods were used to determine ammonia, nitrates, nitrites, phosphorus, and total carbon. Samples were collected twice a year, alongside indicators such as macroinvertebrates, diatoms, and eDNA. FCC biologists designed the study, established protocols, conducted sampling, and analysed data, supported by a certified laboratory and the University of Bucharest. Beaver reintroduction has enhanced biodiversity, influencing macroinvertebrate communities through both direct habitat modification and indirect ecosystem effects. Continued comparative analysis with control sites is recommended to fully quantify these changes. Full details of methods and findings, including water parameters and macroinvertebrate responses, are presented in deliverables D.4.D.2 and D.4.D.3.
Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**
Annexes: Maps of released bison and beaver range attached to the FR (C.5.O.1 & C.5.O.2). Section 10 **Index of Annexes.**

6.1.29 Action D.5: Monitoring of species targeted by conservation actions

Foreseen start date: Q3 2022 Actual start date: Q3 2022
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2024

D.5.1 – **Golden eagle** survey – The activity is a continuation of the A.8 preparatory action. The study was carried out by experts of Asociatia Grupul Milvus across the Făgăraș Mountains, including the Iezer-Păpușa range. Initial surveys took place in June-July 2020 and April-July 2021, covering the golden eagle breeding season, with a repeat in May-August 2024. Most observations (86%) were made in June-July. The methodology followed the national bird monitoring guidelines (SOR & Milvus Group, 2020), based on raptor observations from vantage points 3–5 km apart. Given the vast study area, 130 points were established (98 at higher, 32 at lower altitudes); in 2024, 80 were revisited. Fifteen eagle observations were recorded from 11 points. Territories reconfirmed were: 1 Valea Curpănu, 2 Șaua Apa Cumpănită, 5 Transfăgărășan, 9 Dâmbovița, 10 Vârful Comisului, plus one sighting in the potential territory "3 Ciortea". In 2024, all known nesting pairs were monitored. Territorial pairs were observed in Curpănu, Apa Cumpănită, Transfăgărășan, and Valea Rea. While most breeding pairs were detected, some may have been missed due to terrain, visibility, or species detectability. Future surveys should improve logistics and focus on peak activity (excluding July). This study provides a baseline for long-term monitoring to assess population trends and threats, recommending follow-up surveys every 4-6 years. A full report was delivered by AGM in January 2025 (D.5.D.2).

D.5.2 – Assessing the changes in the abundance of **brown bear, wolf, Eurasian lynx and red deer** was conducted by our research team.

Baseline surveys in our monitoring programme have been undertaken in 2017 and 2018 for brown bear, in winter seasons 2017-2018 to 2019-2020 for wolf and in 2018, 2019 and 2020 for the Eurasian lynx. We resurveyed the brown bear population in 2022, wolf in winter 2023-2024, lynx in late 2023 and first part of 2024. We trained local human resources on wildlife monitoring with 45 practitioners now mastering the field methodologies. Furthermore, we streamlined genetic and camera trapping protocols in partnership with three universities from Romania and abroad and secured equipment needs for long term population monitoring.

Through the LIFE Carpathia project, our team implemented non-invasive monitoring of large mammals across the Southern Carpathians, combining DNA sampling, camera traps, GPS telemetry, and field surveys. For **brown bears**, we analysed 2,964 samples, producing 2,002 reliable genotypes and identifying 504 individuals. Density fluctuated from 18.6/100 km² in 2017 to 22.0 in 2022, reflecting shifting hotspots linked to food availability and human–bear conflict. For **wolves**, 748 samples (55% genotyped) revealed 76 individuals in 6–7 packs, with evidence of one wolf–dog hybrid. **Lynx** monitoring at 76 stations identified 67 individuals, with density declining from 1.7/100 km² (2019–2020) to 0.86 (2023–2024). **Red deer** density dropped from 34.5/100 km² in 2020 to 27.6 in 2024, as our experts tested a new camera trap distance-sampling method for efficient monitoring. These results establish a robust baseline for future large mammal conservation in the Carpathians. Methodology, results and conclusions are presented in a complete report (D.5.D.1) along with an additional study on non-invasive DNA sampling monitoring of brown bears (Annex D.5.O.1)

Additional information:

Issue 36/FR - Implications for Long-term wildlife management.

The findings suggest a shift from reactive to proactive, science-based management strategies. Conflict mitigation: High bear mobility and shifting density "hotspots" underscore the need for landscape-scale preventive measures rather than just local reactive interventions.

Management policy: The data supports replacing outdated "track counting" methods with robust genetic and camera-trapping frameworks to provide transparent data for policymakers and stakeholders.

Climate adaptation: Decreasing snowpack due to climate change has already made traditional winter snow tracking difficult, necessitating the continued use of non-invasive DNA and advanced camera-trapping technology.

Perspectives for After-LIFE monitoring. The project has established a foundation for continued monitoring in the post-LIFE period:

- Plans are already in place to resurvey these populations 10 years after the baseline to identify long-term trends.
- Future wolf monitoring will incorporate environmental DNA (eDNA) from snow footprints to increase sample sizes and reduce costs. For red deer, AI-driven camera trapping with distance sampling is being tested to provide more cost-efficient and accurate estimates.
- The project successfully trained 45 local practitioners and engaged 57 international students, securing the technical expertise needed for long-term data collection.
- The project aims to transfer these monitoring schemes to other "data-poor" national parks across Romania to create a transparent, national-level wildlife monitoring framework.

Monitoring activities regarding the efficiency of the conflict mitigation programme and the survey of large carnivores will continue beyond the project's end to ensure the availability of highly relevant data for implementing effective measures. It can be stated that both actions (C.4 and D.5) have successfully contributed to achieving Project Objective C – *to create a model of human-*

wildlife coexistence – both by maintaining carnivore populations and through the preventive and compensatory measures applied by the rapid intervention teams.

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**
Annexes: Attached to the FR, listed in Section 10 **Index of Annexes.**

6.1.30 Action D.6: Monitoring the development of conservation enterprises, changes in sustainable livelihood activities and assessment of the socio-economic impact of project activities

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2020
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2025

D.6.1 - After the preparation phase, our partner Conservation Capital Consulting (CC) informed by the results of A.11, A.13 & A.15, developed a set of indicators that provided a means of evaluating progress of the Conservation Enterprise Programme (CEP), structured around 6 key themes: growth in numbers of nature-based businesses, revenue, jobs and skills development, attitudes towards conservation and the wider impact of project activities. The key achievement is that the number of nature-based enterprises created in the project area has increased significantly over the project period, from 3 in 2019 to 16 in 2024. New businesses created have mainly been in food production and nature-tourism, leveraging the strong obvious synergies between these sectors. Full-time employment in nature-based enterprises (Carpathia and external) under the CEP has increased by a factor of 3, from 11 full-time equivalent jobs (FTE) in 2019 to 31 FTE in 2024, and plus 28 part-time and seasonal jobs, and an estimated further 60 indirect jobs in the local economy.

Detailed results are presented in the CEP final report (D.6.D1), along with the annual reports which show the progress during the project period (D.6.D.1.1 – D.6.D.1.5) – **Issue 18/2022**.

D.6.2 - The socio-economic research in 2025 was carried out by BrandBerry SRL. The overarching objective of this research was to assess the socio-economic impact of the project activities of the FCC across 29 Administrative Territorial Units (ATUs) located in the Făgăraș Mountains area, encompassing the four counties of the project area - Argeș, Brașov, Sibiu, and Vâlcea - comparing key indicators assessed at the beginning and the end of the project (type of jobs, income, attitudes towards creation of a National Park etc). The study utilized a quantitative methodology, involving face-to-face interviews conducted by trained field operators, and drawing on local knowledge of the area. Analysis and findings were informed by and compared with relevant information generated by project partners (e.g. household surveys and polling, attitude baseline studies from 2018 and 2021; A.10, A.11, A.15).

Additional information:

The research evidences clear shifts in perceptions and support for the creation of a National Park. Whilst the economic environment remains challenging for many business-owners and rural communities, there has been an increase in nature-based jobs as a result of the project, and optimism around nature-based businesses (notably organic / sustainable agriculture and ecotourism). Across communities there is now much stronger support for the creation of a national park (~60%) versus opposition to it (15%) as well as support for regulations to restrict damaging development. This highlights a shift in view of the environment as an asset to be sustainably managed, rather than exploited. Importantly, this shift in attitudes is strongest among communities in which there was more focused engagement and investment into local projects and

businesses, pointing to the return on investment of a well-planned programme of measures by FCC (infrastructure development, community projects, enterprise and job creation, political engagement) and the importance of sustaining and enhancing engagement in communities that remain more skeptical and ensuring they are involved in participatory planning processes in the development of the National Park.

A detailed analysis was concluded in S2 2025 (D.6.D.2) and uploaded in BUTLER.

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.31 Action D.7: Assessment of changes in conservation awareness and acceptance levels of protected areas due to project activities

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2020
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q4 2024
To assess changes in conservation awareness and public acceptance of protected areas, we engaged Bath and Associates, led by Professor Alistair Bath from the University of Newfoundland, Canada, an expert in human-dimension research.
D.7.1 - First study examined how **perceptions toward nature conservation** and the creation of the Făgăraș Mountains National Park evolved between 2018 and 2022 (D.7.D.2). Using the New Ecological Paradigm scale, our data show that although environmental concern slightly declined since 2020, respondents continued to express strong intrinsic values for nature. Agreement remained high that conservation protects both forests and livelihoods and that behaviour change is necessary. Support for creating a national park dropped by 37%, and belief that investing in conservation is a waste of time rose by 17%, though overall attitudes stayed positive. Support for restrictions on hunting and logging decreased, while approval for limiting grazing and wild product collection increased. Respondents consistently agreed that a national park would create more tourism jobs.
D.7.2 - The second study (2019–2022) analysed local **attitudes toward European bison and beaver** (D.7.D.1). Our surveys found a 23% decline in negative views of bison but a 155% increase in negative attitudes toward beavers, mainly due to concerns about property damage. Support for bison reintroduction strengthened, while support for beavers fell. Acceptance of monitoring and non-lethal deterrence increased, but tolerance for lethal control also rose when animals caused serious harm.
These findings highlight the need for future outreach to reinforce trust, demonstrate that conservation benefits both people and nature, and openly address concerns about restrictions on land and resource use.

Additional information:
Issue 28, 37/FR – We intend to periodically assess the attitude and beliefs after the project's end. This task is included in our Masterplan and prioritises according to the funding availability. For example, in 2024, outside LIFE project, we have conducted a survey of the local population in the same project area about their perception on vulture species. This was necessary to assess the public level of knowledge about the vultures prior to the reintroduction activities in the Fagaras Mountains. This informed our vulture communication campaign in 2025 and helped with acquiring the support of local communities where the aviary was planned (Website article). The survey was supported through our own funds. We also proposed in our 2025 LIFE application a study to reassess the perception of local population about the reintroduced vultures.

These targeted surveys help us adjust our communication levels and respond to people's questions and fears and future surveys could include topics on national parks or protected areas.

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.32 Action D.8: Monitoring the impact of the project - conclusions

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q4 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2025

By 2025, the project demonstrated substantial ecological and social impact, with all monitoring actions (D.1–D.7) completed and key deliverables uploaded to BUTLER. Ecological monitoring under Action D.1 confirmed early positive trends in habitat restoration. Vegetation and arthropod surveys indicate structural improvements and a gradual shift toward natural forest conditions, while bird monitoring suggests potential increases in diversity in restored areas, pending long-term confirmation. Invasive alien species (Action D.2) were effectively reduced along 152 km of riverbanks, with native vegetation recovering strongly, proving the efficiency of IAS removal measures.

Wildlife monitoring (Actions D.3–D.5) shows measurable progress in coexistence and species recovery. Human–wildlife conflicts decreased through improved management and rapid intervention teams. Reintroduced species—bison and beavers—established stable populations, enhancing ecosystem functions such as natural forest regeneration and wetland diversity. Large carnivore monitoring confirmed robust brown bear and wolf populations and provided the most comprehensive baseline to date for the Carpathians.

Socio-economic and perception studies (Actions D.6–D.7) reveal encouraging community engagement. Nature-based enterprises increased eightfold since 2019, generating new livelihoods and reinforcing positive conservation attitudes, despite persistent economic pressures. Surveys show that while public support for a national park remains strong, concerns about land-use restrictions persist, underlining the importance of continued dialogue and trust-building.

Overall, the project strengthened ecological integrity, enhanced local stewardship, and established a foundation for sustainable conservation in the Făgăraș Mountains, with all LIFE Project Indicators updated in the **LPI Webtool**. A list with the baseline indicators is presented in the deliverable D.8.D.1 and the overall conclusions of the key level indicators are detailed in the D.8.D.2 report.

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.33 Action E.1: Development of a stakeholder platform and expert group for a participatory approach towards zoning and land-use planning

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q1 2020
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2024

This action aimed to engage local stakeholders in sustainable development and land-use planning linked to the future Făgăraș Mountains National Park. Coordinated by ProPark with support from external experts, our team adapted its approach significantly during implementation.

In 2020, as part of the E.1.1 sub-action, we held four public presentations across the four counties. Strong reactions from landowners, forestry and hunting associations prevented the creation of a single stakeholder platform, so we shifted to multiple smaller meetings under sub-action E.1.2. Between 2021 and 2024, our experts from ProPark and the Romanian Wilderness Society worked in 26 communes, developing tailored strategic plans for 7–9 key localities. The first phase (2021–

2022) assessed community perceptions and interest in local conservation projects, while the second (2022–2024) focused on collaboration plans, capacity building and regional partnerships with GAL Valea Sâmbetei, ADI ITI Țara Făgărașului and local councils.
Our team achieved tangible results: gastronomic promotion in Ucea de Jos, the "Roua Cerului" trail in Arpașu de Jos, educational workshops in Cârțișoara, tourism support in Porumbacu de Jos, heritage trails in Racovița, the "Return to Prehistory" trail in Turnu Roșu, and the first "Făgăraș Adventure" event in Avrig.

Under E.1.3, we organised three high-level meetings with NGOs, policymakers and scientists to advance the national park designation. Field visits demonstrated restoration success, wildlife corridors and sustainable farming models. These discussions strengthened political and scientific support, expanded the Experts Platform, and defined next steps — consolidating biodiversity data and preparing a baseline study for the park's establishment – **Issue 19/2022**.

Additional information:

Issue 38/FR - We have made significant progress in engaging local municipalities in discussions regarding the creation of the Făgăraș Mountains National Park and its internal zoning. In 2024, we held three meetings with the municipalities of Lerești, Valea Mare Pravăț, and Nucșoara, where we conducted detailed **mapping exercises to discuss the zoning process**. There was a consensus that the future zoning must take into account the economic interests of the local communities.

To facilitate a better understanding of the socio-economic benefits associated with protected areas, several study visits were organised to the Bavarian Forest National Park (Germany) apart from the planned ones within action E.6. These delegations included mayors and local councillors from the following municipalities: Dambovicioara, Stoenești, Rucăr, Dragoslavele, Valea Mare Pravăț, Lerești, Nucșoara, Arpașu de Jos, Avrig, Racovița, and Turnu Roșu, alongside representatives from the Sibiu County Council. The primary objective of these visits was to provide local decision-makers with a first-hand perspective on how a national park can revitalise a mountain region through sustainable tourism and the creation of new business opportunities.

While several municipalities within the project area still oppose the national park concept, we tried another approach than meetings with each municipality, and we advanced the dialogue and established a very positive collaboration with the Sibiu County Council on this matter. We have agreed that the development of tourism infrastructure and local green businesses is essential to providing economic alternatives to the potential national park restrictions. To this end, we have already proposed several projects, including a thematic trail for the Mlaca Tătarilor nature reserve (a peat bog), the construction of a visitor centre, and technical support for local entrepreneurs.

The **necessary steps** for the establishment of the national park include securing sufficient support from local stakeholders and completing the required scientific documentation. The project's actions and results have been instrumental in increasing support from local communities; however, this support has not yet reached the decisive level required for the park's creation. Consequently, engagement efforts with communities and local decision-makers will continue beyond the project's lifetime. We are currently in discussions with the Sibiu and Argeș County Councils to establish a local development group prioritising ecotourism, environmental education, and the creation of the national park.

Regarding the second step, **the park's scientific documentation is largely complete**, building upon the results obtained through the expert platform in Action E.1.1. With the scientific documentation finalised and the necessary community support, the essential conditions will be met for the Ministry of Environment to initiate the formal declaration process.

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

Annexes: Attached to the FR, listed in Section 10 **Index of Annexes.**

6.1.34 Action E.2: Development and implementation of dissemination materials and activities

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2024

E.2.1 – At the start of the project, the FCC communication team developed a Communication Strategy (E.2.D.1) to ensure better coordination in delivering messages. During the project, we produced a range of informative materials that were distributed within communities or used at various project events and meetings.
In line with the project proposal, we have produced the following materials: 9 newsletters (E.2.D.5), 10,500 thematic brochures (E.2.D.3), a Coffee Table Book (E.2.D.4), with a print run of 2,000 copies, and 4,000 posters (E.2.D.2). A complete list of the materials produced is attached to the report (E.2.O.1 – **Issue 7/2025**).

Additional information:
Issue 7/2022; Issue 38/FR – a document with technical details and distribution of dissemination materials is annexed to the report (E.2.O.1).

Issue 38/FR - Layman – we updated the Layman's Report and prepared a Romanian version which is now uploaded on our website.

E.2.2 – According to the proposal communication actions, we have produced video content through an external provider, who edited a series of short clips for social media and four documentaries focusing on the European bison and the beaver. These were premiered in June 2024 and have since been screened at various events.
We have also developed the project webpage which can be accessed here.
We have surveyed our communication impact through yearly media monitoring reports (E.7.D.1 – 5) conducted by Media Trust a specialised company which also produced a final a comprehensive report at the end of the project (E.2.D.7).
Layman's report was developed by the Project Coordination Team with the Communication department and presented in a pdf form (E.2.D.6).
Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**
Annexes: Attached to the FR, listed in Section 10 **Index of Annexes.**

6.1.35 Action E.3: Visitor management planning and infrastructure development

Foreseen start date: Q1 2021 Actual start date: Q2 2020
Foreseen end date: Q4 2023 Anticipated end date: Q4 2023

E.3.1 – Visitor Management Planning. Our team, supported by ADPTSS consultants, completed the tourism assessment and final visitor management plan in 2022 (Deliverable E.3.D.2 - **Issue 20/2022**). We identified two key development axes: (1) the alpine ridge (East–West) and (2) the Transfăgărășan corridor (North–South), defining action plans to improve nature quality and visitor experience while reducing environmental pressures. For the piedmont zones – Țara Făgărașului and Ținutul Posadelor – we applied the ecotourism destination concept to guide sustainable tourism growth. The Iezer-Păpușa area received a dedicated plan integrating alpine recreation and nature interpretation. This study now serves as the main reference for local tourism and infrastructure planning.

E.3.2 – Visitor Infrastructure. Despite minor delays, our experts finalised three visitor facilities (Deliverable E.3.2.D): the Beaver House (Rucăr), the Bison House (Lerești), and the *Arhitecții Naturii* trail (Nucșoara), completed in 2024–2025 and already welcoming over 8,000 visitors. The sites were secured through land purchase, concession (25 years), or free-use agreements. All constructions used sustainable materials, local labour, and energy-efficient designs, strengthening local partnerships, awareness, and support for conservation and sustainable tourism.

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.36 Action E.4: Involving the Romanian civil society through ambassador, volunteer and education programmes, and local and national events

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q4 2024

E.4.1 – Ambassador Programme. Our team engaged 30 ambassadors, including public figures and content creators, through Rogalski Damaschin. Each shared at least five social media posts highlighting Făgăraș Mountains National Park. Strong interest and the FCC's reputation ensured swift engagement, resulting in over 200 posts that significantly boosted project visibility. The agency produced a detailed report on the programme (E.4.D.3).

E.4.2 – Volunteer Programme. Between 2019–2024, FCC welcomed 160 volunteers via LIFE18 NAT/RO/001082, supporting ecological restoration, flora and vegetation research, community outreach, and rural conservation enterprises. Volunteers contributed to wildlife monitoring (genetic and camera-trap studies of bears, wolves, lynx, red deer), habitat restoration, and species reintroduction (bison, beaver). Vegetation surveys tracked habitat changes, and volunteers removed invasive species. Others assisted at festivals, educational events, communication campaigns, and nature-based enterprises. Contributions are summarized in the volunteer report (E.4.D.4).

E.4.3 – Annual events. Our team organised Făgăraș Fest annually, attracting over 18,500 participants across multiple communities. Events featured workshops, cultural programmes, fairs, outdoor activities, films, concerts, and adventure races. Participation grew steadily: 2019 – 1000; 2021 – 2000; 2022 – 2500; 2023 – 6000; 2024 – 7000. The festival enhanced local economies, community engagement, and environmental awareness. Following project closure, Racovița commune was selected to host the festival for five years, with 2025 edition already delivered. PPK produced a summary report (E.4.D.2).

E.4.4 – Carpathia Photo Camp. Our experts ran two workshops (2021, 2022) with 8 photographers each in Dâmbovița Valley, generating ~600 images per session. Participants granted free usage of ~30 selected images each, providing visual material for outreach. Curated exhibitions of the best 40 photos at Făgăraș Fest (2022–2024) increased visibility of conservation goals and showcased the region's cultural and ecological richness (E.4.D.1).

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.37 Action E.5: Development and implementation of youth awareness and school education programmes

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2019
Foreseen end date: Q3 2023 Actual end date: Q3 2023
Between 2020–2023, our team implemented a comprehensive environmental education program in schools around the Făgăraș Mountains N2K. We mapped schools in four counties to enable targeted cooperation with inspectorates and an educational caravan. Our contest, *Discover the Treasure of the Făgăraș Mountains*, engaged **1,700+ pupils** in three interactive lessons and biodiversity, traditions, or human–nature projects. Forty top projects were presented locally, with winners rewarded through 13 five-day camps (219 participants) and 22 one-day field trips (445 participants). We trained **69 teachers** in experiential methods via five-day Nature Educator courses across the four counties, supported by new teaching materials. The complementary *How to Protect Nature in the Făgăraș Mountains* program reached all 28 communes through lessons, role play, films, and thematic camps, strengthening ecological awareness and community trust. We delivered four detailed teacher training reports and an English summary (E.5.D2).

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.38 Action E.6: Study tours for local stakeholders to model protected areas and enterprise operations

Foreseen start date: Q2 2021 Actual start date: Q4 2021
Foreseen end date: Q4 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2024
E.6.1 – International Study Trips. Our team organised three international study trips to expose local stakeholders from the Făgăraș region to successful community development and conservation models in Germany, Austria, and Romania.

- Bayerischer Wald NP, Germany (Oct 2021, 9 participants): Forestry, municipal, and NGO representatives learned participatory management, strong state support, sustainable tourism, environmental education, and community trust-building.
- Hohe Tauern NP, Austria (Oct 2022, 20 participants): Officials, teachers, business owners, and community leaders explored park-community integration, dual education approaches, support for local businesses, and collaborative governance for tourism and cultural preservation.
- Hohe Tauern & Straja, Romania (Jan–Feb 2024, 9 participants): Comparative observations highlighted Austrian best practices versus unregulated development challenges in Straja.

A **total of 38 participants** gained first-hand knowledge of participatory management, sustainable tourism, and nature-based education. They disseminated lessons through peer exchanges and community meetings (E.1.2). Deliverables include three reports and an English summary of study tour conclusions (E.6.D.1).
E.6.2 – Local Study Tours. In 2024–25, coinciding with the Small Grants Programme launch, our experts organised four study tours across the Făgăraș Mountains for 52 stakeholders, including businesses, officials, and nature-based enterprises. Tours focused on successful models, practical challenges, and collaboration opportunities:

- Sibiu: 15 businesses exchanged experience with Food Hub *Roadele Munților*.

- Cobor Biodiversity Farm: 8 guesthouse owners discussed tourism with Travel Carpathia.
- Vama Buzăului: 11 participants explored local gastronomic points with community leaders.
- North Făgăraș: Authorities and tourism actors assessed potential sites for visitor and education centres.

These exchanges strengthened networks, inspired sustainable service ideas, and reinforced integration of nature-based business models into local development strategies. Details are in the CEP annual report (D.6.D.1.5).

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.39 Action E.7: Media visits for journalists to various aspects of the project to demonstrate project progress and the advantages of the project for local communities

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2020
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2024

Journalist visits proved to be one of the project's most successful outreach tools, generating wide and favourable media coverage for FCC's work. Between 2021–2024, in partnership with Rogalski Damaschin PR agency, we organised **15 media trips** with about **100 journalists** from local and national outlets. Coverage reached an **audience of 106 million**, with annual peaks of over 60 million in 2021 and 36 million in 2022. The visits, supported by regular press releases, produced 1,182 news stories, including 725 media materials across print, TV, radio, online, and social media, ultimately reaching more than 8.3 million people. Reports consistently highlighted ecological forest restoration, bison and beaver reintroduction, wolf hybridisation research, invasive species, green businesses, and Făgăraș Fest. The PR agency delivered a full report with the press trips (E.7.D.6).

Annual media monitoring reports (E.7.D.1–E.7.D.5) and a final summary (E.2.D.7) confirmed the strong impact.

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.40 Action F.1: Project management and coordination of the project

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q3 2019
Foreseen end date: Q2 2024 Actual end date: Q2 2025

Our team launched the project with a kick-off meeting and signed partnership agreements. Each partner monitored progress through regular meetings, with PCT organizing monthly team leader meetings and an annual steering committee. We created a work plan to track implementation and guide corrective actions. FCC developed a database of activity indicators (hectares planted, km of erosion controlled, human–wildlife interventions) updated beyond project end. PCT managed EC relations, submitted reports, and maintained LIFE databases. Online meetings minimized travel while ensuring efficiency. Deliverables not applicable.

6.1.41 Action F.2: Networking with other LIFE and non-LIFE projects

Foreseen start date: Q3 2019 Actual start date: Q1 2020
Foreseen end date: Q3 2021 Anticipated end date: Q4 2023

Our team conducted four planned exchange visits, alongside additional networking and knowledge-sharing events. In October 2022, twelve FCC bison technicians and wildlife staff visited Bieszczady, Poland, participating in workshops, field trips, and demonstrations of good practices (F.2.D.2). Six FCC and PPK representatives visited Parc Naturel Regional de la Montagne de

Reims, learning about park-community relations, sustainable development, tourism, and education (F.2.D.1).
In October 2023, three FCC and three PPK staff visited several Swedish National Parks, engaging in workshops and documenting lessons learned in the excursion report (F.2.D.3). PPK organized the fourth exchange in Italy's Parco delle Madonie, gaining insights on protected area management, community involvement, tourism, and collaboration, summarized in the excursion report (F.2.D.4 - summary).
Additionally, our experts presented the LIFE CARPATHIA project at multiple national and international meetings, conferences, workshops, and forums (see Annex F.2.O.1).

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER, listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**
Annexes: Attached to the FR, listed in Section 10 **Index of Annexes.**

6.1.42 Action F.3: After-LIFE Conservation Plan

The After-LIFE Conservation Plan outlines how project results will be sustained and expanded beyond the LIFE funding period. It details actions for long-term habitat management, species monitoring, stakeholder engagement, and continued use of the GIS and mobile tools. The plan shows ongoing conservation impact, financial sustainability, and collaboration with partners to protect and restore the Carpathian ecosystems.
Following the reintroduction of the European bison (*Bison bonasus*) and the Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*), we will request from the relevant authority to proceed with the update of the Standard Data Forms for the Natura 2000 sites ROSAC0122 and ROSAC0381 – **Issue 26/2025**.

Additional information
Issue 39/FR - These six years during which we implemented the activities in the frame of the LIFE project have given our overall project a clear direction of how to continue our mission to establish the Fagaras National Park. More or less all activities of the LIFE project will be continued and even extended. We have created a Masterplan, which consists of:

- Conservation activities with 4 chapters (land conservation, wildlife conservation, wildlife reintroductions and research/impact monitoring)
- Business plans for the 3 conservation enterprises (Cobor Biodiversity Farm, Travel Carpathia eco-tourism programme, Roadele Muntilor Carpathia food hub)
- Activities to enhance community relations with 3 chapters (direct work with and for local communities, measures to transform the local economy, education)
- Communication activities including event organisation and campaigns
- Infrastructure development
- Creating support for a government decision towards a National Park
- Securing administrative support functions such as fundraising, finance administration, HR, legal issues or general administration.

The Masterplan has a series of objectives, which we want to reach in the various departments, each objective is defined by activities and tasks with key responsible, time lines, particular KPIs, and detailed budgets on an activity level.
The Masterplan covers activities for the next 4 years until the end of 2028 and foresees annual budgets of € 10-12m (excluding ongoing forest purchases).

Deliverables: Uploaded in BUTLER (F.3.D.1), listed in section Section 9. **Index of Deliverables.**

6.1.43 Action F.4: Auditing of the project

Foreseen dates: Q2 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024

Actual dates: Q3 2021; Q1 2022 and 2023; Q1 and Q4 2024

Since before the Mid-term Report, we have engaged Decreso Consult, a certified independent auditor, to verify and confirm the eligibility of expenses for FCC, AOSC and PPK. Audit reports covering the period 15 July 2019 – 31 December 2021 were finalised and submitted to CINEA. The audit report covering the entire project implementation period is currently being prepared and will be submitted together with the Final Report.

6.2. Main deviations, problems and corrective actions implemented

Though facing a series of challenges and barriers, we have managed to adapt and recover, ensuring the implementation of most activities proposed without significant deviations. This was possible due to a responsive consortium and high-level professionals.

6.2.1 Delayed start

In agreement with EASME, the project's contractual start date was 15/7/2019. Some preparatory work, including ELSP-co-financed activities, began earlier. The grant agreement entered into force on 12/11/2019, after which partnership agreements with non-Carpathia beneficiaries were concluded. Most activities started at least four months later. No external costs were assumed before notification, delaying procurement and some seasonal actions (e.g., A.8).

6.2.2 Legislation change

Restoration of **alpine habitats** faced many obstacles, and the results were lower than expected (41 out of 300 ha planned). Firstly, the lack of seedlings in the early phase of the project delayed the start of alpine habitat restoration as the collection of seeds in the wild and nursing dwarf pine and juniper seedlings in the greenhouse took much longer than envisaged. Later, these measures even became impossible, since the Forestry Code, in force since 2024, prohibits the planting of seedlings in high nature value grasslands – which our properties proved to be.

In addition, growing concerns of livestock owners who feared restrictions, prevented us from fencing the areas. To compensate, we identified **additional 378 ha** of naturally recovering alpine habitats where a **non-intervention approach** is now applied.

6.2.4 Covid-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges to the LIFE Carpathia project, impacting various aspects of its implementation. The restrictions on movement and social distancing measures hindered fieldwork and logistical operations of the restoration activities, e.g. smaller teams of daily workers. Community outreach and engagement activities were significantly affected and delayed. Public meetings and educational programs were postponed or cancelled due to health concern (e.g. Făgăraș Fest), but the project maintained the communication with local communities through digital platforms and small-scale, socially distanced initiatives to ensure continued involvement and support. Administrative and coordination meetings faced disruptions, with many being postponed or held virtually.

While the COVID-19 pandemic presented significant obstacles, we adapted our strategies and used virtual meetings where possible, invested more into strategic planning, and tried to get closer to communities, ensuring the achievement of projects objectives.

One very positive outcome is the development of our Food Hub: During the COVID-19 pandemic, rural communities in the Carpathian Mountains faced severe challenges due to lockdowns, limited access to food supplies, and the vulnerability of the elderly population. Many seniors, especially in remote villages, struggled with food insecurity as mobility restrictions prevented them from accessing markets and essential supplies. In response, we launched the Food for Elders programme to provide food packages and essential supplies to elderly individuals in isolated areas. Through partnerships with local authorities, businesses, and volunteers, we distributed thousands of food

packages to those most in need. Besides strengthening community relationships, this kind of initiative has also relied on local producers as the main source of products. This was a huge help for them too, as sales decreased during that period. Through this collaboration, we have developed a network of local producers who are now regular suppliers for Roadele Munților, the food hub created within the project.

6.2.5 Inflation

Inflation was one of the main reasons for requesting a budget increase of 108% for infrastructure via the 2023 amendment, but we also proposed new solutions to enhance the project's impact. Since 2018, construction material prices have risen by around 100 - 150%. Initially, we planned to install exhibitions in small buildings or rooms offered by town halls. This proved unfeasible due to unsuitable infrastructure (degraded buildings, poor access, and spaces that were too small). Based on architects' and designers' recommendations, we decided to target larger, more visible locations. Consequently, we purchased 500 m² of land in Rucăr with our own contribution (resulting in the Beaver's House Visitor Centre, 71 m²), leased a building from the municipality of Lerești on a 25-year contract (resulting in the Bison's House Visitor Centre, 92 m²), and obtained approval from Nucșoara Local Council to install a thematic trail on municipal land (resulting in the Nature's Architects Thematic Trail).
This change proved to be the best approach, as positively demonstrated by the 8,000 visitors since the opening of the first visitor centre in 2024.
Although the completion of infrastructure objectives deviated from the original schedule, all were successfully achieved by the end of the project.

6.3. Evaluation of Project Implementation

Action	Foreseen in the revised proposal	Achieved	Evaluation
A.1, B.1, C.1	Objectives: **A. To save at least 2,000 ha of natural forests in the Fagaras Mountains** (habitats 9410 and 9110) by purchasing them and to stipulate their complete protection in the National Catalogue of Virgin Forests or the Management Plan of the Natura 2000 sites. This will also enhance habitat conditions for species strongly depending on natural forests such as *Tetrao urogallus*, *Ficedula parva*, or *Rosalia alpina*. Expected results: A. At least 2,000 ha of natural forests (with at least	Old-growth and natural forests identified 2,771 ha of natural and managed forest acquired and protected through Land Registry stipulation (1,309 ha of 9410, 1,398 ha of 9110 and 65 ha of 4070*) 1,116 ha included in the NCVF	These achievements **surpass the planned targets** and significantly contribute to the long-term conservation of key species.

	1,000 ha 9410 and at least 600 ha 9110 habitat) have been purchased and fully protected by FCC.		
A.2, A.3, A.4, A.5, A.7, A.10, A.14, C.2, D.1, D.4, D.7	Objectives: B. **To accelerate re-wilding processes** by purchasing and restoring 500 ha clear-felled areas through replanting the original tree species, by purchasing and initiating the conversion of 500 ha spruce monocultures into natural forests, by purchasing and restoring 300 ha alpine habitats, and by reintroducing missing mammal key species (*Bison bonasus, Castor fiber*). Habitat conditions for a variety of bird species (*Strix uralensis, Dendrocopos leucotos*, or *Bonasa bonasia*, will consequently improve. Expected results: B. Two large and at least 5 small natural tree nurseries have been established and grow a minimum of 500,000 saplings. At least 1,300 ha of degraded forest habitats and alpine areas have been purchased and restored: at least 200 ha of clear-cuts have been restored to 9110 habitat, at least 200 ha clearcuts to 9410 habitats, and at least 50 ha clear-cuts to 91E0* habitat. On 500 ha spruce monocultures the process to convert them into natural habitat has been initiated (at least 400 ha toward 9110 habitat; some 91E0*), and on 250 ha (amendment reduced it to 100 ha) alpine	641,000 saplings produced in seven tree nurseries 1,435 ha of degraded forests purchased (clear cut and spruce monocultures) 1,586 ha restored (896 ha clear cut, 271 ha artificial spruce monocultures, 419 alpine habitat) 789 ha of 9410 and 374 ha of 9110 restored in **clear-cuts** and **spruce monocultures.** Also 4 ha of *91E0 have been initiated. **Alpine areas 419 ha** (17 ha of 4060 and 24 ha of 4070* restored in alpine areas and non-intervention – 124 ha of 4060 and 254 of 4070*) 81 bison and 62 beavers released in the wild	We **produced more saplings** than planned, in our tree nurseries. We **acquired more land for restoration** than initially foreseen, while **we exceeded target** with the restoration works. The release of European bison **surpassed the target**, whereas fewer beavers were relocated, yet the planned area was fully covered.

	areas, 4060 or 4070* habitats have been reinstalled with alpine shrub species. A total of 75 bison and 90 beavers have been released into three distinct valleys and have started to reproduce in the wild.		
A.6, A.9, C.4, D.3, D.5,	Objectives: C. **To create a model of human-wildlife coexistence** on ca. 80,000 ha by replacing trophy hunting with a system of damage prevention, rapid intervention for direct conflict mitigation, and innovative compensation measures. This model should restore and secure healthy populations of *Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus*, *Lynx lynx*, and their prey species. Expected results: C. A model wildlife monitoring and management system with a non-hunting policy has been established on 80,000 ha and conflict mitigation measures have decreased wildlife-human conflicts by at least 20%, livestock depredation by large carnivores has decreased at least by 25%, and acceptance level scores toward bison and beavers have increased by 20%.	81,000 ha of no-trophy hunting policy and modern wildlife management 192 domestic animals were distributed to farmers to compensate for livestock lost to predators. We manage wildlife intervention in 7 municipalities based on contracts Installed 93 electric fences for protection 41% decrease of wildlife conflicts 10% decrease in carnivore conflicts Constant livestock depredation whilst no. of carnivore population has increased 23% decline in negative attitudes toward bison and 155% rise in negative views of beavers	We **achieved the area target** for the no-trophy hunting management and developed a functional system for human–wildlife coexistence. Although the number of **conflicts has decreased**, many variables continue to change each year, such as the availability of natural food sources and human activities. The approach remains **highly successful**, as residents now have someone to turn to when problems arise, and the increasing number of contracts with local communities reflects both appreciation and ongoing need. We recorded a **positive attitude** toward the European bison, but in the case of beavers, we had to intensify our communication efforts to address the lack of information.

A.3, C.3, D.2, A.8, C.6, D.5	Objectives: D. **To foster the ecological integrity** of the Fagaras Mts by removing at least 50% of all riparian invasive species from two mountain valleys, and by executing active conservation measures for listed species such as *Aquila chrysaetos* and their prey species *Marmota marmota* and *Tetrao urogallus*. Expected results: D. An analysis of the current ecological status of selected listed species and the presence of ecological corridors has identified conservation and restoration areas on about 200,000 ha and this knowledge is available for conservation friendly land-use planning. At least 50% of the invasive alien plant species have been removed from two mountain valleys. The situation of golden eagles and their prey species (capercaillie and marmot) is understood and conservation measures for them have improved habitat conditions on at least 1,000 ha.	Invasive species intensity assessed along 154 km of rivers Evaluation finalised and conservation measures proposed for *Aquila chrysaetos, Marmota marmota* and *Tetrao urogallus* up to 100% decrease in IAS cover on 152 km (e.g. *Conyza canadensis* – in sample plot Portareasa 3) 3,697 ha of natural forests and alpine pastures acquired for conservation	We successfully assessed the intensity of invasive species along the mountain rivers and implemented targeted removal efforts, **achieving substantial reductions** in their cover (please see D2.D2 IAS Monitoring report for reference). Our **evaluation of golden eagles, marmots, and capercaillie is complete**, and we have proposed conservation measures to improve their habitats. Additionally, we secured natural forests and alpine pastures for conservation, reinforcing ecological integrity and supporting long-term restoration and species management in the Fagaras Mountains.
A.11, A.12, A.13, C.7, D.6, E.6	Objectives: E. **To develop a new economy based on conservation**, which combines local economic development and creation of jobs with the long-term conservation goals of the Fagaras Mts. Expected results: E. A conservation enterprise programme has created a minimum of 10 nature-based enterprises, employing over	16 nature-based enterprises created 31 FT jobs created, if part-time and seasonal jobs included, 59 direct jobs created. €1,675,322 gross revenue generated with an upward trend year-on-year.	The CEP successfully established 16 nature-based enterprises, exceeding the target of 10, and created 59 full-time equivalent jobs, surpassing the expected 50. Conservation enterprises supported under the CEP generated a gross income of €1,675,322 (2023) slightly below the €2 million target but showing a positive upward trend.

	50 people as their primary source of income. Consolidated, these businesses generate more than €2 millions of gross income per annum by 2023 and contribute at least €20,000 in conservation payments per year to pre-determined conservation activities within the programme.	€29,300 in conservation payments. The project employed 65.4 FTE to support the implementation	Conservation payments reached €29,300 over the CEP period, exceeding the €20,000 goal.
A.15, A.16, E.1 – E.7, F.1 – F.4	Objectives: F. **To raise public awareness for conservation and to build positive relationships with local communities to achieve conservation** through the existing Natura 2000 sites and a future national park, by promoting natural and cultural values of the area through events, on social media, through print and video material, and by developing participatory management mechanisms and education programmes. Expected results: F. Local communities are engaged in the process of establishing the Fagaras National Park and at least 50% of the local communities invited to a stakeholder platform have participated in the process of zoning the future national park. Five annual events took place in the villages, and at least 50 decision makers of the local communities participated in study trips to model conservation areas. Appealing communication material, volunteer and	93% of the communities informed about stakeholder platform 3 municipalities representatives were involved in the planning process of national park internal zoning. 29% communes involved in further workshops 5 annual events finalized 90 local stakeholders exchanged knowledge in study trips to learn about national park benefits for the local economy Activities resulted in a close cooperation with the CJ Sibiu and Communication materials produced and distributed. 30 public figures became ambassadors of the national park initiative.	We successfully informed 93% of the communities about the stakeholder platform and **organized all five planned annual events**. Although only 29% of the communes took part in workshops - below the expected 50% - we achieved strong engagement through other means, including close cooperation with the Sibiu County Council and active participation of **90 local stakeholders in study trips** to model conservation areas. We produced and distributed appealing communication materials, implemented a volunteer and education programme, and reached an **audience of over 106 million** through media coverage – with a huge impact as presented in the annual media monitoring reports and summary, uploaded in BUTLER. While the acceptance levels for the future Făgăraș National Park remained stable rather than increasing, our efforts have clearly strengthened awareness, collaboration, and

	education programmes, and information published on social and traditional media has increased public knowledge about conservation in the Fagaras Mountains and has improved acceptance level scores for a wilderness reserve by at least 20%.	Volunteer and education programme developed. 1,700 pupils and 69 teachers have attended our school education programme. We worked with 160 volunteers throughout the project. 106 mil. reached audience through media coverage (net reach of 3.4 mil.) National Park acceptance levels remained stable.	institutional support for future conservation initiatives. New local collaborations arose building on the LIFE project, such as visitor infrastructure (vulture visitor centre in Valea Mare Pravat, planned education centre on the north side), education activities (Junior Ranger, Carpathia Scholarships), strategic meetings with Sibiu and Arges County Councils for the future national park development.

Results and their timeframe

Several project results have been immediately visible. Under **Action B.1**, a large area of natural forests was acquired and secured for conservation, while **Action C.2** restored over 1,000 ha of degraded habitats, including the rehabilitation of the erosion tracks. **Action C.3** removed invasive alien species from the riverbanks, visibly improving riparian habitats in the following year. Social outcomes were also clear, especially to the people involved: the establishment of the conservation enterprises and the new jobs created under **Action C.7**, alongside measurable reductions in wildlife conflicts achieved through the conflict mitigation programme in **Action C.4**. Visitor centres and thematic trails created through **Action E.3** welcomed thousands of visitors, boosting visibility and awareness and high appreciation of the town halls/mayors.

Other results will only become apparent over time. These include the biodiversity recovery of reforested and reconverted spruce stands under **Action C.2**, the long-term ecosystem effects of bison and beaver reintroductions under **Action C.5**, and gradual changes in attitudes towards the proposed national park. The baseline studies under **Action A.10** confirmed that acceptance remained stable, suggesting that deeper attitudinal shifts will require extended engagement.

Project Amendments

A 2023 amendment redirected funds from the project savings to enhance visitor centres under **Action E.3**, substantially improving long-term outreach. Without this adjustment, impact would have been limited, and the visitor experience less effective.

Replication Efforts

Replication was pursued under **Action E.6** through study visits in Poland, Italy and Sweden, demonstrating the transferability of the Carpathia model. The integrated approach to land acquisition, habitat restoration, and non-trophy-hunting wildlife management (**Actions B.1, C.2, C.4**) has generated interest in similar initiatives in other European mountain regions.

Dissemination Activities

Dissemination (**Action E.2**) was highly effective. Fifteen media trips generated over 1,100 news stories with a combined audience of more than 100 million. Five editions of Făgăraș Fest attracted over 18,000 participants and promoted 34 local producers, while 290 social media posts reached 1.4 million users. We estimate he economic impact of the Fagaras Fest into the region at a value of XX Euro. A minor drawback was the limited reach in certain rural communities, highlighting the need for more locally adapted communication tools.

Policy Impact

The project supported legislation at national level by securing the inclusion of 1,116 ha of forests in the Catalogue of Virgin and Semi-Virgin Forests (**Action C.1**). At EU level, IAS management (**Action C.3**) and habitat restoration (**Action C.2**) contributed directly to the EU Biodiversity Strategy. Barriers such as Forestry Code restrictions on alpine planting under **Action C.2** were partly mitigated by adaptive approaches, though restoration outputs were reduced. In the project proposal, we did not aim to bring about any significant changes to public policies, nor did we take any concrete steps in this direction through the project's activities. – **Issue 24**.

In line with the Grant Agreement, LIFE Carpathia demonstrated strong **EU added value** by combining biodiversity protection, climate resilience, and socio-economic innovation. Its dual labelling as biodiversity and climate-related was fully justified: reforestation and soil stabilisation enhanced climate adaptation, while reintroductions and strict forest protection safeguarded key habitats and species.

6.4. Analysis of benefits

Project progress and results

The LIFE Carpathia Project has delivered significant progress in biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and socio-economic development in the Făgăraș Mountains. Many targets were met or exceeded, while some required adaptive strategies due to unforeseen constraints.

Environmental benefits

Direct, quantitative benefits: More than 2,757 ha of natural forests and 1,408 ha of degraded forest habitats were purchased and legally protected (Action B.1, C.1), exceeding initial acquisition targets. Restoration covered 1,208 ha of habitats, with 2.4 million saplings planted, and 152 km of riverbanks cleared of invasive species (Action C.2, C.3). Reintroductions resulted in 81 bison and 62 beavers established in the wild (Action C.5), enhancing ecosystem processes. Direct conservation benefits strengthened Natura 2000 sites and supported EU Biodiversity Strategy objectives.

Qualitative benefits: The outlook for habitats and species has markedly improved, particularly for old-growth forests and reintroduced fauna. While threats such as illegal logging and conflicts with carnivores persist, the project has eliminated pressures linked to trophy hunting and unmanaged livestock depredation through the 81,000-ha no-hunting wildlife management area (Action C.4). Long-term management will be assured by FCC and partners through continued land purchase, restoration funding, and conflict-mitigation mechanisms.

Economic benefits

The project stimulated a conservation-based economy, establishing 24 enterprises and creating 53 full-time equivalent jobs, a mix of qualified (guides, technicians, entrepreneurs) and non-qualified (seasonal workers, support staff). These enterprises provide regional development opportunities through eco-tourism and local gastronomy, contributing to long-term sustainability.

Social benefits

Social gains included conflict mitigation (–41% overall incidents; –10% carnivore-specific), livestock compensation, and provision of 63 Carpathian Shepherd Dogs to farmers. Education

programmes involved over 670 children, while Făgăraș Fest engaged 18,000 visitors, building community pride and identity around conservation.

Replicability and transferability

The project demonstrated high replication potential, both policy-driven and market-driven. Study visits in Poland, Italy, and Sweden confirmed the transferability of the Carpathia model of non-trophy-hunting wildlife management. Its integration of land stewardship, enterprise support, and species reintroduction is suitable for adoption across other Natura 2000 regions, supported by its cost-effectiveness and visibility.

Additional information

Issue 40/FR - Regarding the C2M Initiative, we held a meeting with C2M experts on 24th November 2021; however, it became apparent that our specific requirements for expertise were not covered by the C2M framework. Consequently, we have had no further contact with them since.

Best practice lessons

Best practices included large-scale habitat restoration combined with conflict mitigation and stakeholder engagement. Adjustments, such as shifting to permanent visitor centres, proved more effective than temporary solutions, highlighting the importance of adaptive management.

Innovation and demonstration value

The project pioneered a hunting-free, conflict-resolution-based wildlife management model on a landscape scale, demonstrating alternatives to traditional hunting revenues. EU funding allowed the testing and scaling of innovative approaches, from sapling nurseries to AI-assisted bear deterrents.

Policy implications

At national level, 1,116 ha were included in the Catalogue of Virgin and Semi-Virgin Forests, while rewilding and IAS removal supported EU Biodiversity Strategy targets. Barriers such as restrictions on alpine planting in the revised Forestry Code required adaptive management, with reduced restoration outputs in alpine areas. Overall, the project contributed directly to EU, national, and regional conservation policy, strengthening the case for a future Făgăraș National Park and advancing the integration of biodiversity and climate goals.

7. Key Project-level Indicators

Actions D.1 to D.7 describes the indicators which are being monitored throughout the project, as well as the baselines established, whilst the project's KPIs and baselines have been entered in the **EC LPI Webtool**.

We have been in contact with the monitors to address all their observations and we have updated the information in the LPI webtool.

By 2025, the project has achieved or surpassed most KPI targets, marking strong progress in restoring habitats, supporting key species, and engaging local communities in the Făgăraș Mountains.

Land acquisition advanced significantly, with 4944 ha out of which 2,771 ha of natural mixed forest, 1,105 ha of clear-cuts, 737 ha of alpine pastures and 330 ha of artificial spruce stands, secured for conservation by the clause of contracts, exceeding targets.

We restored 1,167 ha of forest habitats, 896 ha clear cut and 271 ha artificial spruce monocultures, out of which 789 ha were of habitat type 9410 and 374 ha of habitat 9110, and 4 ha *91E0.

Alpine restoration reached 419 ha (17 ha of 4060 and 24 ha of 4070* restored in alpine areas and non-intervention – 124 ha of 4060 and 254 of 4070*) against the 250-ha planned, reduced by

amendment to 100 ha, while works on spruce monocultures continue and are expected to meet objectives by 2030.

We have been successful in reducing the intensity of invasive species (e.g., *Impatiens parviflora*, *Erigeron annuus*) by up to 80% in target sample plots.

We sequestrated 12,169 tons of carbon through improving forest habitats on clear-cuts, increased from a baseline of 23,788 kg/ha/year to 35,957 kg/ha/year due to restoration efforts.

Species monitoring confirms stable or improving trends: the European bison population now counts 93 individuals, 81 reintroduced and 12 born in the wild (target 75), golden eagles maintain 13 active pairs, and beavers and large carnivores show positive ecological impacts. We observed a decrease in lynx population, but there was no significant change in the ecosystem and we increased the frequency of monitoring to every two years in the after-LIFE period to better understand the trends. The bear genetic monitoring showed a slight increase between the two surveys in 2017 and 2022, from 240 individuals to 264 in the sampling area. The population is evaluated as 'stable', while the bear genetic monitoring will continue after the project end.
Wolf population also remains stable as there were no disturbances or favourable events. We recorded an increase in the number of individuals from 31 to 76, but this could be an artifact and we will continue the survey in the after-LIFE years to better understand.
Adaptive management based on ongoing monitoring ensures lasting results.

Based on project research findings, we issued four scientific publications:

1. Eurasian lynx density and habitat use in one of Europe's strongholds, the Romanian Carpathians / published in Journal of Mammalogy / 2022/ Ruben Iosif, Viorel D Popescu, Liviu Ungureanu, Călin Șerban, Marissa A Dyck, Barbara Promberger-Fürpass.
2. Dracula's ménagerie: A multispecies occupancy analysis of lynx, wildcat, and wolf in the Romanian Carpathians / published in Ecology and Evolution / 2022 / Marissa A. Dyck, Ruben Iosif, Barbara Promberger–Fürpass, Viorel D. Popescu.
3. Wolf genetic diversity compared across Europe using the yardstick method / Scientific Report published in nature.com / 2023 / Maja Jan, Astrid Vik Stronen, Barbara Boljte, Rok Černe, Đuro Huber, Ruben Iosif, Franc Kljun, Marjeta Konec, Ivan Kos, Miha Krofel, Josip Kusak, Roman Luštrik, Aleksandra Majić Skrbinšek, Barbara Promberger–Füerpass, Hubert Potočnik, Robin Rigg, Peter Trontelj & Tomaž Skrbinšek.
4. Alien plant species distribution in Romania: a nationwide survey following the implementation of the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species / published in Biodiversity Data Journal / 2024 / Paulina Anastasiu, Iulia V Miu, Athanasios A Gavrilidis, Cristina Preda, Laurentiu Rozylowicz, Culita Sirbu, Adrian Oprea, Mihaela Urziceanu, Petronela Camen-Comanescu, Eugenia Nagoda, Daniyar Memedemin, Marius Barbos, Violeta Boruz, Alina Cislariu, Ioan Don, Marius Fagaras, Jozsef Pal Frink, Ioana Mihaela Georgescu, Ovidiu Ioan Haruta, Bogdan-Iuliu Hurdu, Attila Matis, Sretco Milanovici, Sorana Muncaciu, Alina Georgeta Neacsu, Monica Neblea, Alma Lioara Nicolin, Mariana Niculescu, Silvia Oroian, Oliviu Grigore Pop, Daniel I Radutoiu, Mihaela Samarghitan, Ioana Simion, Liliana Cristina Soare, Corina Steiu, Emilia Stoianov, Daniela Strat, Anna Szabo, Paul Marian Szatmari, Corneliu Tanase, Marian D Mirea, Nicolae Manta, Ioana M Sirbu.

As we are preparing scientific articles on bear (1) and bison (2) we will add three more publications in the following years.

Community engagement and livelihoods improved markedly. The number of nature-based enterprises increased from 3 to 16, creating 31 FTE in 2024, plus 28 part-time and seasonal jobs, and an estimated further 60 indirect jobs in the local economy. The project supported 65.4 FTE positions across all partners.

Education and outreach activities were successful, with 1,700 pupils participating in outdoor educational programs. 147 individuals from interest groups/entrepreneurs have been exposed to project activities whilst 56 experts received professional training. We were supported across various activities by 160 active volunteers.

We have been networking with at least 188 professionals in our various meetings participations but especially mentioning LIFE Platform meeting in Hortobagy, HU 2025 and the Life Platform meeting on forest restoration which we co-organised in Brasov in 2025. We also exchanged information with at least 23 professionals we met in our study tours in other national parks. We organised project visits for 32 policy makers and representatives of relevant NGOs and protected area management and research institutions to showcase the importance of restoration and benefits of a national park management system for the local communities.

Strong networking and communication enhanced cooperation with authorities, universities, and other LIFE projects, improving visibility and knowledge transfer. Public Reach was 3.43 million people were reached via media and dissemination campaigns (peak in 2022). 125,929 unique visits were recorded on the project website and 11,799 residents near the project area are estimated to have improved knowledge/capacity due to actions like *Fagaras Fest*.

Overall, most targets have been met or exceeded, with remaining actions on track for completion by 2026, consolidating the project's role as a model for integrated, community-based conservation in Europe.

8. Comments on the financial report

The financial report covers the entire period from the beginning of the project 15 July 2019 to 14 July 2025. The project benefitted from one-year extension.

a) The Financial Report was uploaded in BUTLER and consists in:
   one zip file with all beneficiary's **financial statements**, filled and signed, and the corresponding Excel files.
b) The **Consolidated Financial Statement** filled in according to the costs provided by each beneficiary and signed by the coordinating beneficiary. It includes five files: the payment request, costs summary, income summary, consolidated financial statement and funds distribution.

The originals of the documents are kept and filed by each individual beneficiary. All documents stored on digital format are available to the coordinating beneficiary.
The types of costs reported are:

- Personnel, justified by time sheets and pay slips, as well as documentation of the actual payment of the salary and contributions.
- Travel, justified by the fuel consumption and travel document, settled according to the internal travel management regulations specific to each beneficiary.
- External assistance, equipment, infrastructure, consumables, other costs, justified by invoice, payment order, bank account statements as proof of payment. Large acquisitions were carried by each beneficiary, using an internal procurement procedure based on principles of

public procurements. Moreover, all documents concerning the procedure for the selection of suppliers are available.

- Land was purchased by FCC, using an agent who identifies the plots of interest and followed by contracts concluded at a notary public, with the clause 'for conservation'. The acquired land is then registered in the national land registry book.
- Overheads.

8.1. Summary of Costs Incurred

PROJECT COSTS INCURRED				
	Cost category	Budget according to the grant agreement in €*	Costs incurred within the reporting period in €	%**
1.	Personnel	€ 6,710,423	€ 7,299,360	9%
2.	Travel and subsistence	€ 541,148	€ 343,341	-37%
3.	External assistance	€ 2,001,160	€ 2,165,678	8%
4.	Durables goods: total non-depreciated cost	€ 2,123,314	€ 2,047,000	-4%
	- *Infrastructure sub-tot.*	€ 913,053	€ 868,065	-5%
	- *Equipment sub-tot.*	€ 1,210,261	€ 1,178,934	-3%
	- *Prototype sub-tot.*	€ -	€ -	0%
5.	Land purchase	€ 14,275,250	€ 14,668,397	3%
6.	Consumables	€ 427,805	€ 419,018	-2%
7.	Other costs	€ 668,757	€ 521,687	-22%
8.	Overheads	€ 872,010	€ 895,705	3%
	TOTAL	**€ 27,619,867**	**€ 28,360,185**	**3%**

*) If the Agency has officially approved a budget modification through an amendment, indicate the breakdown of the revised budget. Otherwise, this should be the budget in the original grant agreement.
**) Calculate the percentages by budget lines: e.g. the % of the budgeted personnel costs that were actually incurred

The most substantial budget adjustment we have required was to reallocate about € 475,000 euro to Infrastructure (explained with amendment request). We covered these costs from savings especially from Travel and Other cost categories. The Travel budget was spent below the proposed total, as an increase in fuel prices had been anticipated at the start of the project, but this did not occur. In the *Other costs* category, the budget was underspent, largely due to the share of partner CC, who did not incur the planned expenditure for the proposed activities. In addition, partner PPK secured funding from other sources, while FCC spent less on bison acquisition than expected, and the costs of the final audit have not yet been added.
Other than that, there were no significant variances, and the total budget was slightly over the target especially due to a higher-than-expected inflation – **Issue 8**.

The reasons for exceeding the Personnel and External assistance budget categories, even after the approved amendment, were primarily the extension of the project implementation period and the experience of a period of accelerated inflation. The project extension was reflected in additional

salary costs. Additionally, between 2020 and 2025, Romania experienced a period of increased inflation, rising from 2.6% in 2020 to 13.8% in 2022, 10.4% in 2023, with a decrease to 5.1% in 2024, which led to higher service rates.
However, it must be noted that the initial budget was exceeded in terms of total eligible costs also because most of the activities **we delivered more than planned**.
Overall, we estimate a delivery of **111%** of the project activities. For example, in the ecological reconstruction of clear-cut areas, we completed 896 hectares instead of 500 hectares; removal of invasive species was carried out along 152 km of river course, instead of 40 km; the educational programme reached 1,769 people instead of 650; we acquired 4,944 hectares of land for conservation instead of 3,300 as initially proposed; the number of European bison reintroduced was 81 instead of 75; communication activities reached record audiences.
All of these contributed to higher costs, but also to a greater project impact.

8.2. Accounting system

The accounting and financial reporting and management of FCC and its affiliated entities are carried out by CAF, using a Business Intelligence system. CAF is also responsible for consolidating all reports, including those received from the project partners. CAF compiled the financial reports summarising all project expenditures.
Financial entries were recorded in SocrateCloud (for expenses) and SocrateSalarii (for working hours) and subsequently imported into the BI platform for analysis and reporting. Each cost entry is assigned a unique code corresponding to the project, action and budget line (e.g LIFE/A.5/11), enabling a clear identification of the costs.

All employees of FCC and affiliated entities, except those covered by a contractual percentage of time arrangement, completed timesheets specifying daily hours worked under each LIFE role (according to the above-mentioned codes) and other non-LIFE activities. Timesheets were reviewed and approved by each employee's line manager. Signed hard copies were archived, while electronic versions are uploaded to SocrateSalarii and form the basis for salary calculations and LIFE budget management.

Procurement activities within Carpathia entities follow procedures established for the project and are aligned with co-financing requirements. Each procurement decision was approved by the relevant department head, the legal director, and one of the executive directors, based on the submitted technical specifications. All invoices were marked with the number of the LIFE project (LIFE18 NAT/RO/001082).

IJJA uses MAICONTAB, an accounting software developed by the Financial Department of the Romanian Ministry for Internal Affairs, ensuring compliance with public institution financial regulations. Procurement of goods was carried out according to public-sector procedures, which involve multiple levels of verification and approval, including a justification report and the signed confirmation of the final recipient. Invoices issued to IJJA included a reference to the project code. IJJA staff completed paper-based timesheets per project, approved by their line managers, with salaries calculated in MAICONTAB.

CC managed its accounting using Xero, an online platform where all project-related expenses are recorded and assigned sub-codes corresponding to budget categories. Each project-related invoice included the project number and is entered into the accounting system using this coding structure. Costs were approved by the Senior Conservation Enterprise Manager, while financial administration was overseen by the Conservation Enterprise Officer with support from an

accountant. Financial reports were generated and reviewed monthly. CC staff submitted electronic timesheets for approval by the Conservation Enterprise Manager and mail signed copies due to the team's distribution across three countries.

PPK used a double-entry accounting system, which ensures reliability and accuracy by keeping the accounts constantly balanced. Project-related costs are recorded under a distinct sub-ledger, using analytical accounts that allow clear identification of expenditures and easy reconciliation between the trial balance and the expenses financed from EU funds. Invoices issued to PPK include the project code when possible, or it is added manually if absent. The Financial Manager prepares regular financial reports, which are submitted quarterly to CAF. The organisation's balance sheet is periodically reviewed by an external auditor. ProPark employees completed electronic timesheets, print, sign, and date them; approved copies were counter-signed by the project manager before being processed by the accounting department.

Financial management within the LIFE Carpathia project follows the procedures established in the partnership agreements and the LIFE Programme financial guidelines. The Coordinating Beneficiary (CB) receives the EU contribution and is responsible for transferring the corresponding payments to each Associated Beneficiary (AB) based on the initial rate of funding. These transfers are made according to the approved budget distribution, upon submission of financial reports and verification of expenditure eligibility. Payments are executed via bank transfer, following a transparent process supported by appropriate documentation.
Each AB manages its own accounting system, ensuring that project-related costs are properly recorded, identifiable, and verifiable. The financial reports are submitted to the CB, including detailed cost statements, and explanations of any budgetary deviations. The CB reviews and validates all financial information to ensure compliance with contractual and regulatory requirements.
After verification, the CB compiles all partners' financial data into a consolidated cost statement. The consolidated statement is then cross-checked against technical progress and used as the basis for financial reporting to CINEA.
This structured and transparent system guarantees accountability, consistency, and full traceability of financial transactions within the consortium.

8.3. Certificate on the financial statement

The project was audited by S.C. Decreso Consult SRL, who had been contracted for this purpose. The company's registration number is 6884704, and their address Bulevardul Griviței 86, Sc. C, Ap. 2, Brașov. They are a member of the Chamber of Financial Auditors of Romania and were certified to carry out financial and statutory audits by the relevant oversight authority.

8.4. Estimation of person-days used per action

Actions	Budgeted person-days	Estimated % of person-days spent
A: Preparatory Actions	**8,419**	**71%**
A.1	273	44%
A.2	336	76%
A.3	221	100%
A.4	305	97%
A.5	4,860	64%
A.7	126	120%

A.8	735	71%
A.9	44	55%
A.10	378	89%
A.13	242	47%
A.14	651	112%
A.15	215	41%
A.16	33	109%
B: Purchase/lease of land and/or compensation payments for use rights	**42**	**88%**
B.1	42	88%
C: Concrete conservation Actions	**46,450**	**63%**
C.1	42	0%
C.2	20,006	33%
C.3	2,856	41%
C.4	8,934	122%
C.5	12,380	66%
C.6	192	7%
C.7	2,040	109%
D: Monitoring and impact assessment	**8,859**	**123%**
D.1	1,497	82%
D.2	237	37%
D.3	221	88%
D.4	4,518	156%
D.5	2,236	103%
D.6	24	0%
D.7	126	0%
E: Communication and Dissemination of results	**5,194**	**110%**
E.1	274	164%
E.2	1,180	96%
E.4	2,365	114%
E.5	518	86%
E.6	110	192%
E.7	747	103%
F: Project management	**10,510**	**95%**
F.1	10,427	94%
F.2	83	108%
Total	**79,474**	**78%**

9. Index of Deliverables/Milestones

The codes introduced at the beginning of the technical section and used throughout the action descriptions are also shown in the tables below and in the names of the annexed files and folders. Deliverables written in Romanian are accompanied by English summaries bearing the same code; these summaries are not listed separately.

DELIVERABLES		
Code	**Name of deliverable/milestone**	**Status**
A.1.D.1	Map of remaining natural forests having natural structures and species compositions in the Fagaras Mts.	Submitted with MTR
A.1.D.2	Complete, verified map of all virgin and semi-virgin forests in the Fagaras Mts. Natura 2000 site	Submitted with MTR
A.2.1.D	Map of all clear-cuts in the Fagaras Mountains with a database about ownership and executed replanting	Submitted with MTR
A.2.2.D	Map of artificial spruce monocultures in the Fagaras Mountains	Submitted with MTR
A.2.3.D	Map and database about all alpine properties in the Fagaras Mountains with information about ownership, shrubland coverage, existing shepherd huts in operation, number of livestock owners	Submitted with MTR
A.2.4.D	Restoration plan for 500 ha of purchased spruce monocultures and 300 ha of alpine grassland	Submitted with MTR
A.3.D.1	Report on species, intensity, and distribution of invasive alien plant species including maps	Submitted with MTR
A.3.D.2	Action plan for removal of invasive alien plant species	Submitted with MTR
A.4.1.D	Report on forest regeneration on clear-cuts including maps and diagrams of results	Submitted with MTR
A.4.2.D	Report and maps: Situation of soil erosion	Submitted with MTR
A.4.3.D.1	Report and maps: Situation of alluvial forests	Submitted with MTR
A.4.3.D.2	Restoration plan for selected alluvial forests	Submitted with MTR
A.6.D	Final report "Analysis of potential anthropogenic impact on the integrity of ecosystems and on key ecological corridors from Fagaras Mts.	Submitted with MTR
A.7.1.D	Documentation for submitting request to reintroduce bison into the Fagaras Mts on 2 locations to the Romanian Academy of Science	Submitted with MTR
A.7.2.D	Feasibility study for beaver reintroduction into three river systems of the south-eastern Fagaras Mts	Submitted with MTR
A.7.2.D.1-4	Documentation for submitting request to reintroduce beavers into three rivers of the Fagaras Mts to the Romanian Academy of Science	Submitted with MTR
A.8.D.1	Annual reports on food analysis, eagle movements and nest monitoring I	Uploaded in BUTLER
A.8.D.2	Report on distribution and abundance of territorial pairs of Golden Eagles in the Fagaras Mountains	Uploaded in BUTLER
A.8.D.3	Annual reports on food analysis, eagle movements and nest monitoring II	Uploaded in BUTLER
A.8.D.4	Report on distribution and abundance of marmots and capercaillie	Uploaded in BUTLER
A.8.D.5	Annual reports on food analysis, eagle movements and nest monitoring III	Uploaded in BUTLER
A.8.D.6	Conservation plan for Golden Eagles final version	Uploaded in BUTLER
A.9.D	Short report on wildlife damage and conflict situation in the Fagaras Mountains for training purposes	Submitted with MTR
A.10.D.1	Common Ground Analysis (CGA) illustrating common issues relevant to all key interest groups and key informants	Uploaded in BUTLER
A.10.D.2	Report on attitudes, beliefs, and acceptance of bison and beavers of local residents and relevant interest groups in the south-eastern Fagaras Mountains	Submitted with MTR
A.11.D.1	Household questionnaires and list of requested information	Submitted with MTR
A.11.D.2	Final report about the socio-economic situation of local communities in the project area	Submitted with MTR

A.12.D	Report on the current status of tourism and recreation	Submitted with MTR
A.13.2.D.1	Conservation Enterprise Strategy with 10 updated business plans	Submitted with MTR
A.13.2.D.2	Additional (5) business plans	Submitted with MTR
A.13.3.D	Fundraising Strategy for the Carpathia Fund	Submitted with MTR
A.14.D.1	Technical report: The conceptual, logical and physical data model of the GIS and Remote Sensing Database	Submitted with MTR
A.14.D.2	Technical report: Acquiring and post-processing multispectral imagery to support biodiversity conservation activities in mountainous areas	Submitted with MTR
A.14.D.3	Technical report: Using drones to support conservation monitoring in the Fagaras Mountains	Uploaded in BUTLER
A.15.D	Report on stakeholder analysis	Submitted with MTR
A.16.D	Reports (4) on training events	Submitted with MTR
B.1.D	List of purchased land plots	Uploaded in BUTLER
C.1.D.1	Conservation entry in purchase contract and in land registry	Uploaded in LPD
C.1.D.2	Proof of introduction of virgin forests into the National Catalogue of Virgin Forests	Uploaded in BUTLER
C.3.D	Map with the distribution of the cleared areas of invasive species	Uploaded in BUTLER
C.4.D.1	Signed contract with a livestock owner for a joint livestock operation on 200 ha	Submitted with MTR
C.4.D.2	Final report on all interventions undertaken by the RIT - lessons learned	Uploaded in BUTLER
C.6.D.1	Map of areas targeted for conservation for Golden eagle	Uploaded in BUTLER
C.6.D.2	Map of areas targeted for conservation for Marmot	Uploaded in BUTLER
C.6.D.3	Map of areas targeted for conservation for Capercaillie	Uploaded in BUTLER
C.6.D.4	Report on the nest reinforcements	Uploaded in BUTLER
C.7.2.D	Co-funding plan	Submitted with MTR
C.7.3.D	Analyses for infrastructure needs	Submitted with MTR
C.7.D.3	Branding plan	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.1.D.1	Scientific report on changes in diversity and abundance of terrestrial arthropods	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.1.D.2	Scientific report on changes in abundance of specialist bird populations	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.1.D.3	Scientific report on changes in understory vegetation	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.2.D.1	Final presentation of FPP images and their interpretation	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.2.D.2	Report on monitoring of succession progress and re-appearance of invasive alien plant species	Uploaded in BUTLER
D2.D2	IAS Monitoring report_updated-2026	Attached to the revised Final Report
D.3.D.1	Final report on the development of human-wildlife conflicts in the Carpathia GMUs and the effectiveness of conflict mitigation measures	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.4.D.1	Scientific report on the impact of bison on vegetation structure	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.4.D.2	Scientific report on the impact of beavers on the aquatic eco-system (macro-invertebrates and physical-chemical parameters)	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.4.D.3	Report on the success of beaver re-introduction in two basins	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.4.D.4	Scientific report on home range, habitat use and migration of re-introduced bison	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.5.D.1	Scientific report on population size and density of wolves, bears, lynx and red deer	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.5.D.2	Report on the monitoring (repeated survey) of the Golden Eagle population + capercaillie (baseline)	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.6.D.1 **D.6.D.1.1 – D.6.D.1.5**	Final report on the development of conservation enterprises (plus 5 annual reports)	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.6.D.2	Report on the development of the socio-economic impact	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.7.D.1	Final report on changes in attitudes and beliefs toward reintroduced wildlife	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.7.D.2	Final report on changes in conservation awareness and acceptance levels of community residents in the south-eastern Fagaras Mountains	Uploaded in BUTLER

D.8.D.1	A baseline for project indicators	Uploaded in BUTLER
D.8.D.2	Report on Key Level Indicators	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.1.D.1	Report on the site visit impact	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.1.D.2	Final Stakeholder Platform impact report	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.1.D.3	Final Expert Group impact report	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.2.D.1	Communication strategy	Submitted with MTR
E.2.D.2	Printed A1 Posters (4,000)	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.2.D.3	Thematic brochures (9,000)	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.2.D.4	Coffee Table Book	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.2.D.5	Printed project newsletters (9)	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.2.D.6	Layman's Report	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.2.D.7	Media monitoring report	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.3.2.D	Architect plans for small visitor centres	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.3.D.2	Visitor management plan	Uploaded in BUTLER
E4.D.1	Report about photo workshops	Uploaded in BUTLER
E4.D.2	Report about local and national events	Uploaded in BUTLER
E4.D.3	Report on ambassador programme impact	Uploaded in BUTLER
E4.D.4	Summary report of volunteer campaign	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.5.D.1	Concept for Educational Programme	Submitted with MTR
E.5.D.2	Report about Training sessions for teachers	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.6.D.1	Report with conclusions from the study tours	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.7.D.1	Annual media monitoring report I	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.7.D.2	Annual media monitoring report II	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.7.D.3	Annual media monitoring report III	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.7.D.4	Annual media monitoring report IV	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.7.D.5	Annual media monitoring report V	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.7.D.6	Final media monitoring report	Uploaded in BUTLER
E.7.D.7	Articles published	Uploaded in BUTLER
F.2.D.1	Report of the excursion to Ay/Champagne	Uploaded in BUTLER
F.2.D.2	Report of the visit to Bieszczady	
F.2.D.3	Report of the visit to NP in Sweden	Uploaded in BUTLER
F.2.D.4	Raport of the visit to P. delle Madonie IT	Uploaded in BUTLER
F.3.D.1	After-LIFE Conservation Plan	Uploaded in BUTLER
F.4	Final audit report	To be uploaded in BUTLER
MILESTONES AND OTHER DOCUMENTS		

Code	Name of deliverable/milestone	Status
A.1.O	Virgin forest workshop minutes	Submitted with MTR
A.10.M	Questionnaire for HD study about attitudes, beliefs, and acceptance of bison and beavers is designed	Submitted with MTR
A.10.O	Human dimensions research methodology and field report	Submitted with MTR
A.11.M.1	Hire a pollster firm to collect relevant data	Submitted with MTR
A.11.M.2	Have collected data available from the pollster firm	Submitted with MTR
A.13.1.M	Training plans for the conservation enterprise programme developed	Submitted with MTR
A.13.1.O.1	CEP Training programme	Submitted with MTR
A.13.1.O.2	Training plans for conservation enterprise assessment tool	Submitted with MTR
A.13.2.M.1-4	Preparatory plans for the Conservation enterprise programme developed including overall strategy, sectoral analysis, stakeholder analysis and spatial plan	Submitted with MTR
A.14.M.1	Acquisitions of hardware and software for the GIS data management finished	Submitted with MTR
A.14.M.2	Acquisition of aerial imagery and post-processing finished	Submitted with MTR
A.14.O.1	Data collection apps developed	Submitted with MTR
A.14.O.2	Digital mapping	Submitted with MTR
A.15.O	Database on livestock and land use prioritisation	Submitted with MTR
A.16.M.1	Contents and design of the training sessions developed	Submitted with MTR
A.16.M.2	Training topics finalised and target groups for training sessions selected	Submitted with MTR
A.16.O	List of participants, Sibiu training	Submitted with MTR
A.2.4.O.1	Map of clear-cut restoration plan	Submitted with MTR
A.2.4.O.2	Map of alpine restoration plan	Submitted with MTR
A.4.3.O	Alluvial restoration meeting agenda and invitation	Submitted with MTR
A.5.O.1	Report on production of saplings (tree nurseries)	Submitted with MTR
A.5.O.2	Tree nurseries centralised data table	Submitted with MTR
A.5.O.3	Seeds centralised data table	Submitted with MTR
A.5.O.4	Greenhouse situation	Submitted with MTR
A.6.M.1	Archive of all biotic and abiotic data available on the Fagaras Mountains ecosystems is established	Submitted with MTR
A.6.M.2	Analysis of ecosystems and mapping of key corridors finished	Submitted with MTR
A.7.1.M	Permit for bison reintroduction received	Submitted with MTR
A.7.1.O.1	Map of Bunea bison enclosure	Submitted with MTR
A.7.1.O.2	Map of Leresti bison enclosure	Submitted with MTR
A.7.2.O	Maps of locations of interest for beaver reintroduction	Submitted with MTR
A.8.O	Activity report Golden Eagle, Marmot, Capercaillie, 2020	Submitted with MTR
A.9.M	Completion of two training sessions for the rapid intervention team	Submitted with MTR
A.9.O.1	Human wildlife conflict training agenda, Rucar	Submitted with MTR
A.9.O.2	Human wildlife conflict training agenda, Focsani	Submitted with MTR
C.3.O	Training for IAS removal	Submitted with MTR
C.4.M.1	A joint livestock operation is set up and 20 cows and 100 sheep have been purchased	Submitted with MTR
C.4.M.2	First 20 Carpatin pups have been given to livestock camps in FCC's GMUs	Submitted with MTR
C.5.O.1	Map of Bunea bison enclosure	Submitted with MTR
C.5.O.2	Map of Leresti bison enclosure	Submitted with MTR
C.7.2.M	Carpathia Fund website developed	Submitted with MTR
C.7.O.1	Carpathia Fund presentation for investors	Submitted with MTR
C.7.O.2	Carpathia Fund information for investors	Submitted with MTR

D.1.1.M	Completion of understory vegetation baseline survey	Submitted with MTR
D.2.O	Methodology template for FPP monitoring	Submitted with MTR
D.3.M	Conflict evaluation and monitoring sheet is developed	Submitted with MTR
D.3.O	Human-wildlife conflict baseline report	Submitted with MTR
D.4.1.M.1 -2	Completion of understory vegetation baseline survey	Submitted with MTR
D.4.1.O	Monitoring the impact of European bison on vegetation (Lerești) - baseline survey	Submitted with MTR
D.4.1.O	Monitoring the impact of European bison on vegetation (Bunea) - baseline survey	Submitted with MTR
D.4.2.M.1	Completion of baseline survey on aquatic macro-invertebrates	Submitted with MTR
D.4.2.M.2	Establishment of exact beaver monitoring sites (direct observation sites, camera trap sites)	Submitted with MTR
D.4.2.O	Beaver habitat monitoring with FPP Methodology	Submitted with MTR
D.4.2.O	Beaver habitat monitoring with FPP Point sheet	Submitted with MTR
D.6.O.1	Conservation enterprise programme monitoring sheet	Submitted with MTR
D.6.O.2	Conservation enterprise programme baseline indicators	Submitted with MTR
D.8.O	List of project KPIs	Submitted with MTR
E.1.1.M	Internal rule for the functioning of the expert group established	Submitted with MTR
E.1.3.O.1	Site visits 18-19 August 2020 - Concept	Submitted with MTR
E.1.3.O.2	List of participants (politicians) May 2021	Submitted with MTR
E.1.3.O.3	Site visits 18-19 August 2020 - Conclusions	Submitted with MTR
E.1.3.O.4	Politicians visit May 2021- Conclusions	Submitted with MTR
E.2.1.M	Cooperation with local newspapers to produce a bi-annual project newsletter developed	Submitted with MTR
E.2.1.O	Design of restoration infoboards	Submitted with MTR
E.2.2.O	Articles published (archive)	Submitted with MTR
E.4.2.M	First volunteer programme successfully organised	Submitted with MTR
E.4.3.M	First local and national events successfully organised	Submitted with MTR
E.5.M	Local schools and teachers that want to participate in the EEP identified	Submitted with MTR
E.6.1.M.1	Topics for the study tours programme agreed with project partners	Submitted with MTR
E.6.1.M.2	Agenda of the study tours exists	Submitted with MTR
E.7.M.1	Network of at least 20 journalists and influencers/KOLs that support the project established	Submitted with MTR
E.7.M.2	>1.000.000 people reached every year through journalist visits	Submitted with MTR
E.7.O	Media visits plan	Submitted with MTR
F.1.M	Establishment of the steering committee with representatives of all beneficiaries	Submitted with MTR
F.1.O.1 - O.5	Project organisational chart and minutes of progress meetings	Submitted with MTR
F.2.O	List of events at which project presented	Submitted with MTR

10. Index of Annexes

Code	Name of annex	Status
A.5.O.1	Map of tree nurseries	Attached to the FR
A8.O1	Golden eagle action plan	Attached to the revised FR
B.1.O	Map of land purchased	Attached to the FR

C.1.O.1	Ministry of Environment's approval for introduction of 300 hectares of quasi-virgin forests in the National Catalogue of Virgin Forests	Attached to the FR
C.1.O.2	Letter to external expert for proposed strictly protected areas	Attached to the FR
C.1.O.3	Info about conservation status of purchased land	Attached to the revised FR
C.2.O.1	Clear cut restoration areas - map	Attached to the FR
C.2.O.2	Spruce monoculture restoration areas - map	Attached to the FR
C.2.O.3	Alpine grasslands restoration areas - map	Attached to the FR
C.2.O.4	Erosion control areas - map	Attached to the FR
C2.O5	Alpine non-intervention areas owned and managed by FCC – map	Attached to the revised FR
C2.O6	Map of restored *91E0 habitat	Attached to the 2nd update of the FR
C.3.O.1	Social media campaign on invasive alien species	Attached to the FR
C.5.O.1	Map of released bison range in the Fagaras Mountains	Attached to the FR
C.5.O.2	Map of released beaver range in the Fagaras Mountains	Attached to the FR
C5.O3	Letter to update SDF for bison and beaver	Attached to the revised FR
C.7.O.1	Conservation Enterprise Training materials	Attached to the FR
C.7.O.2	Project Team Training Programme	Attached to the FR
D3.O1	Human wildlife conflict mitigation programme location - map	Attached to the revised FR
D.5.O.1	Report on monitoring brown bears using non-invasive DNA sampling in the Romanian Carpathians	Attached to the FR
E.1.O.1	Report on community informative visits	Attached to the FR
E.2.O1	Report on the dissemination materials distribution	Attached to the revised FR
F.2.O.1	Presentation of the project to various events	Attached to the FR
D.1.M.2	Completion of baseline bird survey	Attached to the FR
D.1.M.3	Completion of baseline survey on terrestrial arthropods	Attached to the FR

End of document.