



Transnational Experience Exchange Workshop Report

Austria – Czech Republic

WWF-CEE | Friends of the Earth Czech Republic

31. May – 2. June 2022

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Workshop participants on the fieldtrip in the Beskydy-Kysuce area © Petko Tsvetkov, BBF

1. Introduction

From 31 May to 2 June, the SaveGREEN consortium organised the third event in its series of Transnational Experience Exchange Workshops. The two-part workshop began in Austria, where the attendees visited the Pötsching pilot area situated in the Alpine-Carpathian Corridor, before moving to the Czech Republic, where the Czech project partners introduced their activities in the Beskydy-Kysuce pilot area. The event was co-organized by WWF Central and Eastern Europe, the Environment Agency Austria, Friends of the Earth CZ and the Czech Transport Research Center.

The workshop, which took place both online and on-site in Hainburg an der Donau, Austria, and in Lidečko, Czech Republic, brought together SaveGREEN experts from Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Austria and Czechia. Members of the Ukrainian team were able to join virtually. The project partners were joined by other experts on ecological connectivity, among them international institutions like the Board of the Infrastructure and Ecology Network Europe (IENE), national authorities, the Austrian Ministry of Climate Action, research institutions, such as the University of Natural Resources and Life Science Vienna (BOKU) or the Technical University of Liberec, sectoral agencies, including the Austrian motorway company ASFINAG and the Bulgarian Southwestern State Forestry Enterprise, protected landscape area representatives and environmental consultancy firms.

The aim of the transnational event was to present the state of ecological connectivity in Austria and Czechia to a team of experts working on the topic in their own respective countries. The presentations and ensuing discussions served to present the specific challenges facing Czech and Austrian proponents of ecological connectivity today, to exchange experiences and ideas with the visiting experts, and to discuss possible mitigation measures and solutions.

2. Workshop Summary

2.1. Part I: Austria

On the morning of the first day, representatives of the Environment Agency Austria (EAA), the BOKU and ASFINAG introduced the workshop participants to the legal history of ecological corridors in Austria, the importance of the Alpine-Carpathian Corridor, the details of the monitoring system devised during SaveGREEN, and guidelines in Austria for the construction of green bridges.



Workshop participants in Hainburg © Christophe Janz, WWF-CEE

Presentation: [Ecological Connectivity in Austria – activities, legal status and future trends](#)

Roland Grillmayer, Environment Agency Austria

- Current status of ecological corridors in Austria
- History of work in Austria on ecological connectivity
- Austrian legal framework governing ecological connectivity

Presentation: [The Alpine-Carpathian Corridor – Intro to the Region and](#)

- Overview of the region
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[Former Activities with Regard to Ecological Connectivity](#)

Franz Suppan, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna

- Methodology used in AKK Project
- Cumulative impact of migration barriers

Presentation: [Embedding Green Bridges into the Surroundings – Attempts by the Austrian National Motorway Company](#)

Alexandra Medl, ASFINAG

- Overview of the Austrian road network
- Guidelines for green bridge construction in Austria
- Results of green bridge monitoring study

Presentation: [The SaveGREEN Approach – Preliminary Solutions for the Region : Part 1](#)

Roland Grillmayer, Environment Agency Austria

- Structural vs. functional connectivity
- Monitoring methodology
- Introduction and demonstration of the data model

Presentation: [The SaveGREEN Approach – Preliminary Solutions for the Region : Part 2](#)

Mořic Jurečka, Field Biologist

- Preliminary camera trap results from Austrian pilot areas
- Use of light and noise sensors

Presentation: [SaveGREEN Stakeholder Engagement in Austria](#)

Hildegard Meyer, WWF-CEE

- Who are the Austrian stakeholders?
 - Experiences made during stakeholder engagement efforts in Austria
-

The attendees were particularly struck by the high degree of fragmentation of landscapes in Austria when compared to the eastern project countries as well as the strict division of jurisdictional authority in matters of spatial planning and environmental protection between the federal government and the *Länder*.

The first field visit of the Transnational Workshop led to the pilot area Pöttsching, where the workshop participants visited two green bridges. The first, the Pöttsching green bridge, represented a very promising example of an ecoduct that is accepted by wildlife as a viable crossing structure. The reasons for the bridge's success are clear: it is covered by a heterogenous plant cover (grassland, shrubs and small trees) and is well-integrated into the surrounding landscape, giving onto a forest on both sides.



Visit to the green bridge in Müllendorf © Hildegard Meyer, WWF-CEE

The second green bridge, situated close to Müllendorf, illustrates the challenges facing proponents of ecological connectivity in Austria. The landscape on both sides of the ecoduct is strongly fragmented, dominated by intensively used agricultural fields, numerous settlements, a highway, and a railway, all of which cumulate to render an attempted migration of wildlife through the Alpine-Carpathian corridor very difficult indeed.

The SaveGREEN and visiting experts exchanged about possible steps to improve the situation, suggesting for instance to create non-cultivated islands in the corners of the farmers' fields that could act as stepping stones, aiding migrating wildlife on their crossing.

2.2. Part II: Czech Republic

On the morning of the following day the participants travelled to Lidečko in the Beskydy-Kysuce pilot area, where they familiarised themselves with the status quo of ecological connectivity in Czechia. Despite their geographic proximity and numerous similarities, several marked differences to the Austrian case quickly became apparent. As the Czech landscape is generally much flatter than its Austrian Alpine counterparts, the need for crossing structures across linear infrastructure is far greater (in much of Austria, the mountains and tunnels provide natural crossing possibilities).

Presentation: [Overview of the Beskydy-Kysuce Pilot Area](#)

Miroslav Kutal, Friends of the Earth CZ

- Specifics of the PA (land use, return of large carnivores)
- Overview of and needs for long-term research
- Mitigation measures

Presentation: [Methodology for Environmental Assessment of Existing Transport Infrastructure](#)

Petr Anděl, Technical University of Liberec

- Introduction of EADI methodology for defragmentation measures on existing linear infrastructure
- Description of challenges related to old infrastructure

Presentation: [New Methodology “Traffic and Fauna in CZ” – Recommendations for Design of Migration Objects](#)

Václav Hlaváč, Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic

- Methodology for defragmentation measures based on TRANSGREEN outputs
 - Acceptance process by transport authorities
 - Handbook for spatial planning in preparation
-

Presentation: [Connectivity & Development of Linear Infrastructure in Slovakia](#)

Michal Králik, HBH Projekt

- Overview of planning of linear infrastructure in Slovakia
- Focus on the process' bottlenecks
- Need for evidence-based decisions

Presentation: [Mitigation of Habitat Fragmentation in the Protected Landscape Area of Beskydy](#)

Veronika Kornová, Nature Conservation Agency

- Rapid progress of infrastructure build-up in the PA in the last decades
- Impacts of fragmentation on protected species and tools for conservation

Presentation: [Introduction to Telemetry of the Eurasian Lynx](#)

Martin Dul'a, Mendel University Brno

- Achievements in lynx telemetry during SaveGREEN
- Identification of crossings of infrastructure
- Future analyses and applications

Another significant difference was made clear by Václav Hlaváč from the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic, who noted in his presentation that, as of 2020, the habitats of some specifically protected large mammals have to be considered in spatial planning and constructions plans across the country. Crucially, this legally binding document also includes the existing network of ecological corridors in Czechia. Any plan or project threatening to interfere with this network needs to be evaluated by the relevant nature conservation body.

Following presentations on the official Czech methodology of environmental assessment of existing transport infrastructure by Petr Anděl, Technical University of Liberec, the attendees were presented with the specificities of the Beskydy-Kysuce pilot area, and within it, the important ecological corridor connecting the

Javorníky mountain range and Bílé Karpaty, an outer part of Western Carpathians. „We monitor this corridor using camera traps and in this way have proven that several protected species such as wild cat, grey wolf, eurasian lynx and golden jackal actively use it. However the corridor is crossed by the first-class road I/49 leading through Lyský pass to Slovakia. A railway runs parallel to the road and in the future, the two mountain ranges may be separated by the planned motorway D49,” explained Radek Kříček, the SaveGREEN project manager for FoE CZ.



Fieldtrip to the Lyský pass on day 3 of the workshop © Hildegard Meyer, WWF-CEE

The workshop concluded with an excursion to the Lyský pass, where the visiting experts were able to view the Czech monitoring activities of a migration corridor first hand. The field expert, Michal Bojda, FoE CZ, led the participants to a camera trap site, which over the course of the last weeks, recorded numerous migrating animals, among them red and roe deer, badgers, foxes, wild boar and martens.

The 3-day workshop allowed the SaveGREEN and visiting experts to learn more about the current state of ecological connectivity in Austria and Czechia, as well as the countries' most pressing challenges in this respect, and gave them the opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas for possible solutions from their home countries. The exchanges and lessons learnt in the course of this event proved a renewed reminder of the incalculable value of international cooperation. It is a crucial step for the joint efforts to preserve and improve ecological connectivity in Austria, Czechia, the Carpathians, and beyond.

3. Appendix

3.1. Agenda of AT/CZ Transnational Workshop

Workshop part I: Austria

Date	What	Comments
30 May 2022		
18.00	Arrival of participants at Hotel Altes Kloster, Austria	Easy to reach from the East and by public transport, even from the airport
19.00	Casual dinner, get together	Hotel Altes Kloster
31 May 2022		
9.00	Arrival of participants, registration	Hotel Altes Kloster Hainburg
9.30 – 9.45	Welcome & intro to SaveGREEN and the workshop	Moderation: Hildegard Meyer, WWF-CEE
9.45 – 10.05	Ecological connectivity in Austria – activities, legal status and future trends Presentation including Q&A	Florian Danzinger, Environment Agency Austria
10.05 – 10.25	The Alpine-Carpathian corridor – intro to the region & former activities with regard to ecological connectivity Presentation including Q&A	Franz Suppan BOKU

Date	What	Comments
10.25 – 10.45	<p>Embedding green bridges into the surroundings – attempts of the Austrian National Motorway Company</p> <p>Presentation including Q&A</p>	Alexandra Medl, ASFINAG
10.45 – 11.10	<p>Coffee break</p>	
11.10 – 11.40	<p>The SaveGREEN approach – preliminary solutions for the region</p> <p>Presentation of monitoring plans, results and possible solutions</p>	<p>Roland Grillmayer, Environment Agency Austria</p> <p>Mořic Jurečka, Project field biologist</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is our aim in the region: expected results of the project • Tools developed – standardized methodology for monitoring structural and functional connectivity • Presentation of monitoring set-up and preliminary results, also from former projects <p>Discussion</p>	
11.40 – 12.00	<p>Stakeholder engagement in the region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders are key! Who are our stakeholders? How do we approach them? Exchange of experience & lessons learnt 	<p>Hildegard Meyer & Christophe Janz, WWF Central and Eastern Europe</p>
12.00 – 12.30	<p>Moderated discussion, exchange of experience & conclusions</p>	<p>Christophe Janz & Hildegard Meyer, WWF-CEE</p>

Date	What	Comments
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch break	Hotel Altes Kloster Hainburg
13.45 – 15.00	<u>Field trip</u> Trip to Hainburg – Green bridge Pöttsching (~ 80km) 1h 15'	All together by bus
15:00 – 15.45	<u>Visit Green bridge Pöttsching</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Info about green bridges in Austria, their development, construction and monitoring • Monitoring including light and noise sensors, set up, planned activities 	Thomas Lang, ASFINAG Mořic Jurečka, Project field biologist
15:45 – 16:00	Trip Green bridge Pöttsching – Green bridge Müllendorf (~ 10km) 15'	
16:00 – 16:30	<u>Visit Green bridge Müllendorf</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Info about the specifics of this green bridge • Wildlife and corridors in the area 	Thomas Lang, ASFINAG Mag. Michael Paller, Local hunting leader
16:30	Return trip to Hainburg	
19:00-21.00	Dinner – “Zum goldenen Anker”	Address: Donaulände 27 2410 Hainburg an der Donau

Workshop part II: Czech Republic

1 June 2022		
9.00 – 12.30	Travel to Lidečko (Penzion Čertovy skály), Czech Republic, check in	
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch	
13.30 – 13.35	Welcome & introduction	Moderation: Radek Kříček, Friends of the Earth Czech Republic
13.35 – 14.00	Pilot area overview Presentation including Q&A	Miroslav Kutal, Friends of the Earth Czech Republic, Mendel University in Brno
14.00 – 14.30	Methodology for environmental assessment of existing transport infrastructure Presentation including Q&A	Petr Anděl, Technical University of Liberec, Evernia
14.30 – 15.00	New methodology "Traffic and Fauna in CZ" - recommendations for design of migration objects Presentation including Q&A	Václav Hlaváč, Nature Conservation Agency
15.00 – 15.15	Coffee break	
15.15 – 15.45	Connectivity & development of linear infrastructure in Slovakia Presentation including Q&A	Michal Králík, HBH Projekt
15.45 – 16.15	Mitigation of habitat fragmentation in protected Landscape Area of Beskydy Presentation including Q&A	Veronika Kornová, Nature Conservation Agency, CHKO Beskydy
16.15 – 16.35	Introduction to telemetry of Eurasian lynx Presentation including Q&A	Martin Duľa, Mendel University in Brno

18:00-19:00	Time reserve / short walk into the surroundings	
19.00-20:00	Dinner	
20.00-21.00	CSOP discussion	
2 June 2022		
9.00 – 12.30	Field trip focused on local connectivity issues & monitoring connectivity by telemetry	Michal Bojda, Friends of the Earth Czech Republic, Mendel University in Brno M. Duřa, Mendel University in Brno
12.30	Packed lunch	
14.00	Departure	