



PARTNERSHIP WITHOUT BORDERS



OPEN BORDERS FOR WILDLIFE IN THE CARPATHIANS

Securing ecological connectivity for large carnivores
in the Carpathians

07.12.2022 VienNa



THE *OBWIC* PROJECT



- **HUSKROUA cross-border project**
 - maintaining and improving ecological connectivity between habitats
- **Beneficiaries:**
 - WWF-Romania - Maramures Branch
 - Slovak Ornithological Society
 - RachivEcoTour in Ukraine
 - Aggtelek National Park Directorate in Hungary
- **Funded by the Hungary-Slovakia-Romania - Ukraine ENI Cross-Border Cooperation Program 2014-2020**
- **Implementation period: 2019-2022**





WHY ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS?



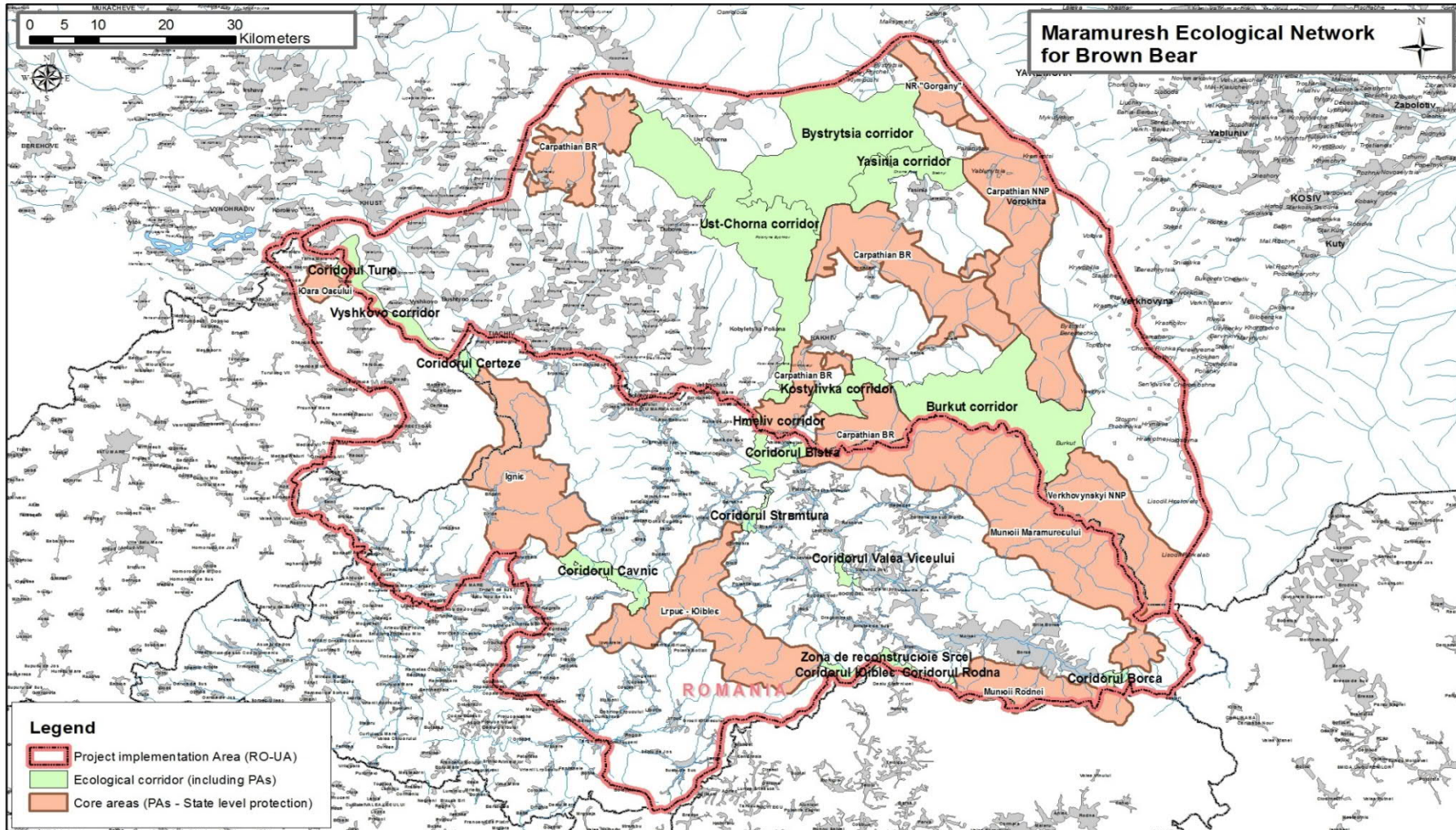
- They ensure connectivity between the habitats;
- Given the increased fragmentation of habitats, the identification and preservation of the functionality of ecological corridors is mandatory in order to maintain a healthy population of large carnivores along the Carpathian chain;
- A strong ecological network with a high biological diversity ensures the **OPTIMAL FUNCTIONING OF THE ENTIRE NATURAL SYSTEM** (on which we humans depend).



WHAT WE DO? 2012-2019



First functional network of ecological corridors in Romania and from a RO-UA transboundary area; umbrella species: brown bear



WHAT WE DONE? 2019-2022



- **HARMONIZED METHODOLOGY** for identification of ecological corridors and LC action plan;
- **IDENTIFYING a network of cross-border ecological corridors;**
- **MEASURES** for the conservation of large carnivores and measures for the sustainable development of communities;
- **INCREASING THE FUNCTIONALITY OF ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS**, by improving the quality of ecotone areas and the quality of grassy vegetation in forest enclaves;
- **IMPROVING THE CAPACITY** for management and protection of ecological corridors through advocacy;
- **AWARENESS AND EDUCATION** activities.



HARMONIZED METHODOLOGY



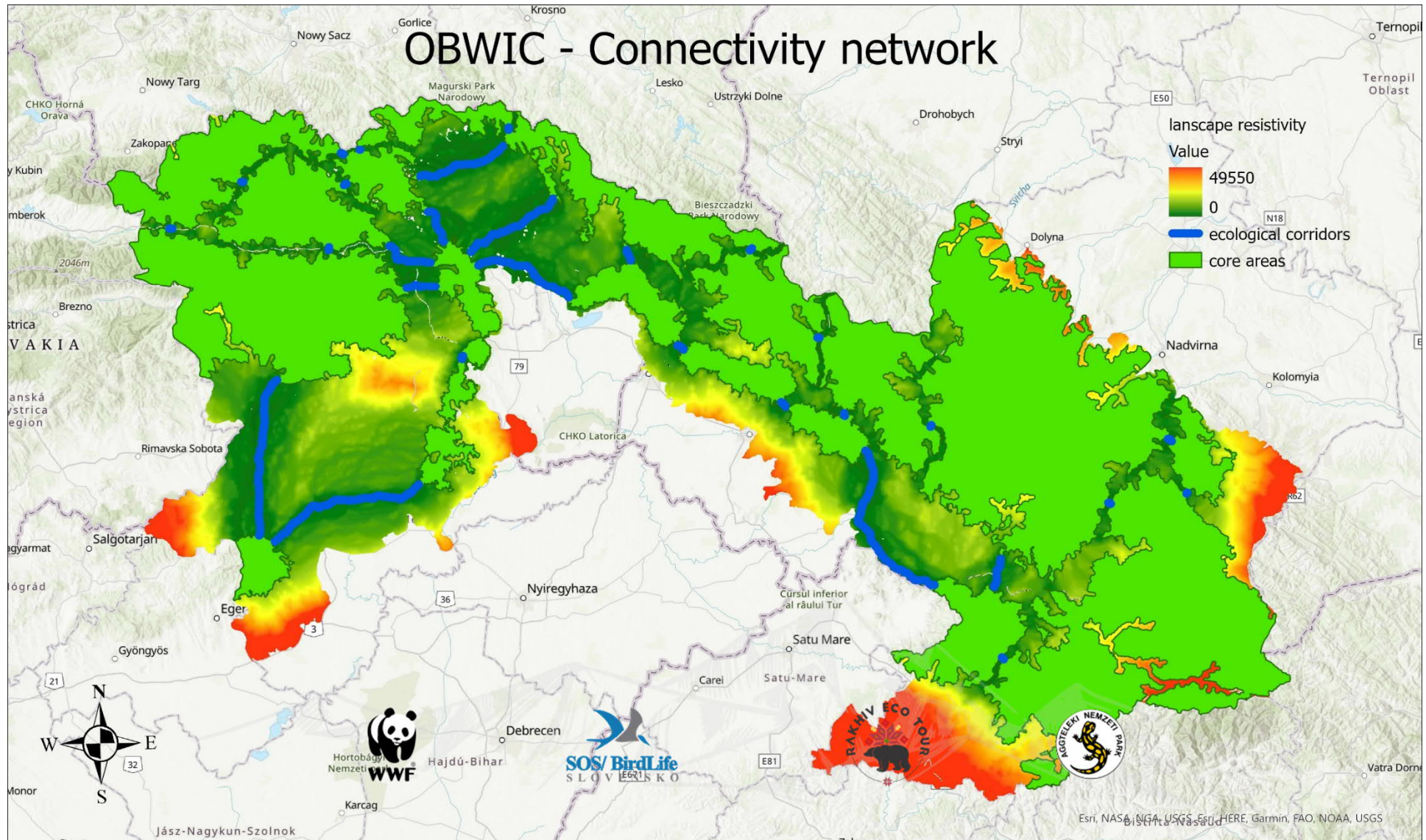
- Data driven methodology
- Criteria:
 - 300 sqkm core areas – continuous favorable habitats
 - Protected areas not core areas by default
 - EC - favourable end less favourable habitats
 - EC – as short as possible
 - EC - recommended maximum width 2 km
- Modelling data inputs:

Favourable habitats, species occurrence

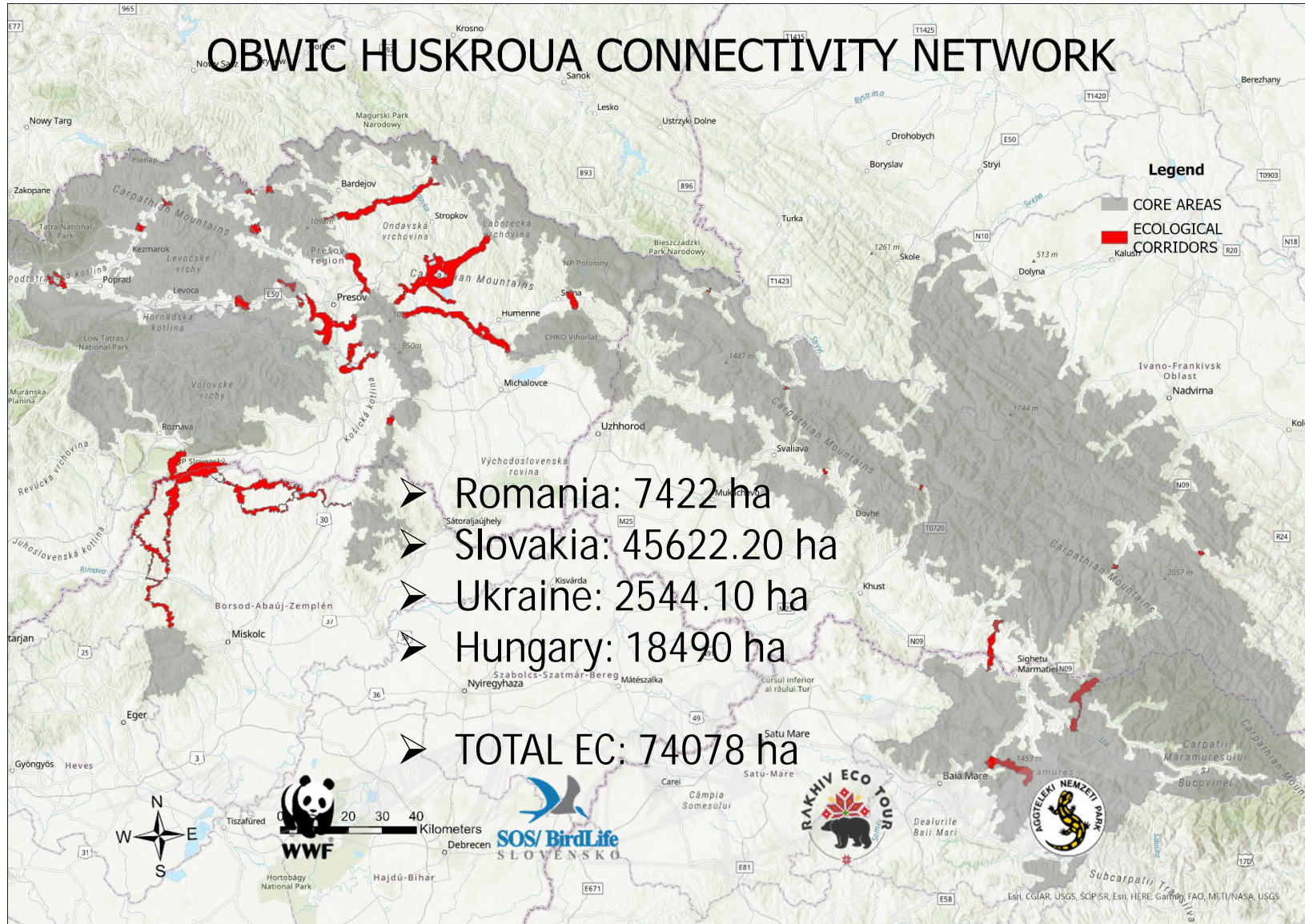
Barriers



HUSKROUA ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS OF TRANSBOUNDARY INTEREST



HUSKROUA ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS OF TRANSBOUNDARY INTEREST



MANAGEMENT MEASURES RO-UA



MANAGEMENT MEASURES RO-UA



MANAGEMENT MEASURES IN MARAMURES (RO)

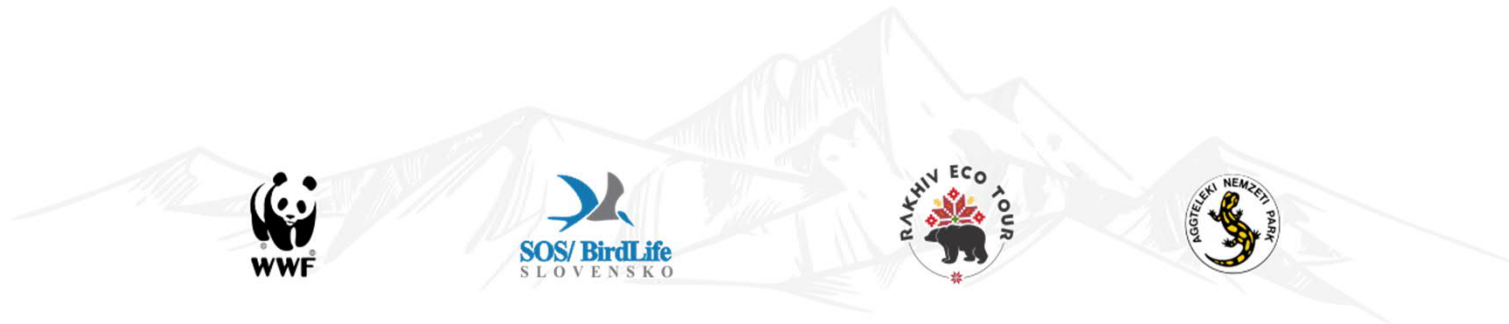


1. Over 10 ha of wildlife feeding grounds improved
2. Over 2 km of forest edge planted with wild species of fruit trees and shrubs (4000 strands of trees and shrubs)
3. 10 pieces of barriers to prevent illegal entry in forest for logging and off-road

OBJECTIVES OF MANAGEMENT MEASURES



- Preserve mosaic landscape
- Improving food quality and availability inside forest for bear and prey species of wolf and lynx
- Prevent crimes related to illegal logging and off-road activities inside of the forest in connectivity areas



IMPROVING WILDLIFE FEEDING GROUNDS



PROPOSED MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR CONNECTIVITY - summary



- No constructions should be made in Ecological Corridors (building, fences etc.) – STRUCTURAL
- SEA for plans/programs and EIA for projects inside EC – STRUCTURAL
- Preserve naturalness of river banks and streams - STRUCTURAL
- Improved waste management in EC – FUNCTIONAL
- Limitation of hunting activities inside EC - FUNCTIONAL
- Regulation for seasonal activities in EC – FUNCTIONAL
- **Governance of ecological corridors - authority with accountability that also has financial instruments.**



LC ACTION PLAN - summary



- Standardized and science base data collecting LCs **inventory**
- **Spatial development plans** based on principles concerning natural landscape protection, biodiversity conservation and ecological connectivity.
- Designation of ECs, apply management measures
- Management measures for LC **throughout the species' distribution range** (PAs, ECs and territories outside protected areas also)
- Avoid, reduce and manage human-wildlife conflicts and damages (professional intervention teams, damage prevention/efficient compensations)
- Long term and systematic **monitoring** of LCs (population trends, habitat conditions, connectivity, conflicts and damages)
- Building **tolerance** for LCs, attaching **multiple values** to the presence of LCs



COMMS&EDUCATION



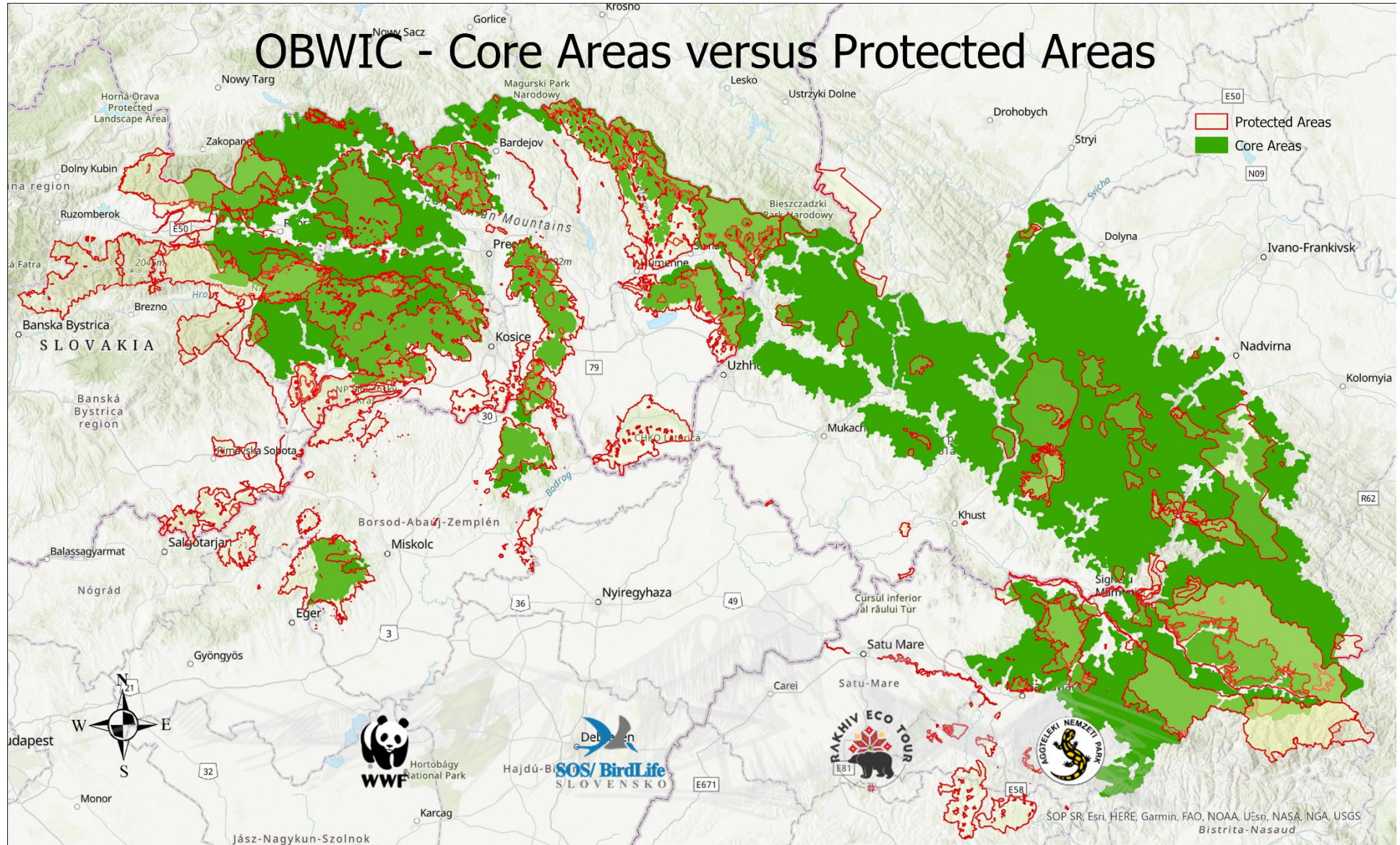
- **Knowledge has no boundaries – increased awareness & capacity - 500 000 people, social media posts**
- **Local support network** -active partnership RO, UA (schools, clubs, school inspectorates)
- **Develop manual with pilot school testing**
 - Youth-led projects empower them to feel and to take an active part in biodiversity conservation
- **Pilot schools capacity building**
- **International summer camp**



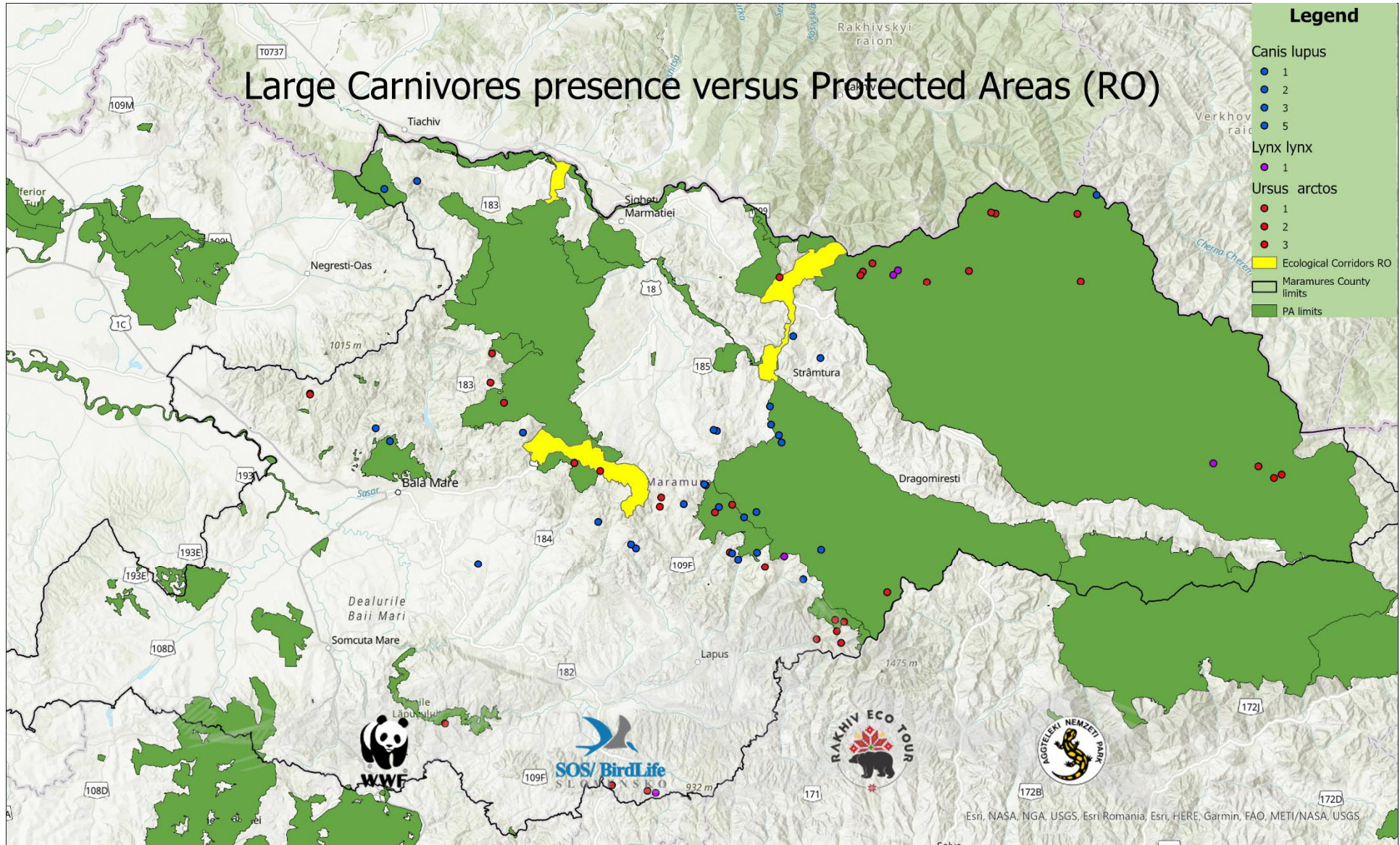
LESSONS LEARNED



OBWIC - Core Areas versus Protected Areas



LCs inhabits habitats regardless PAs boundaries



KEY POINTS



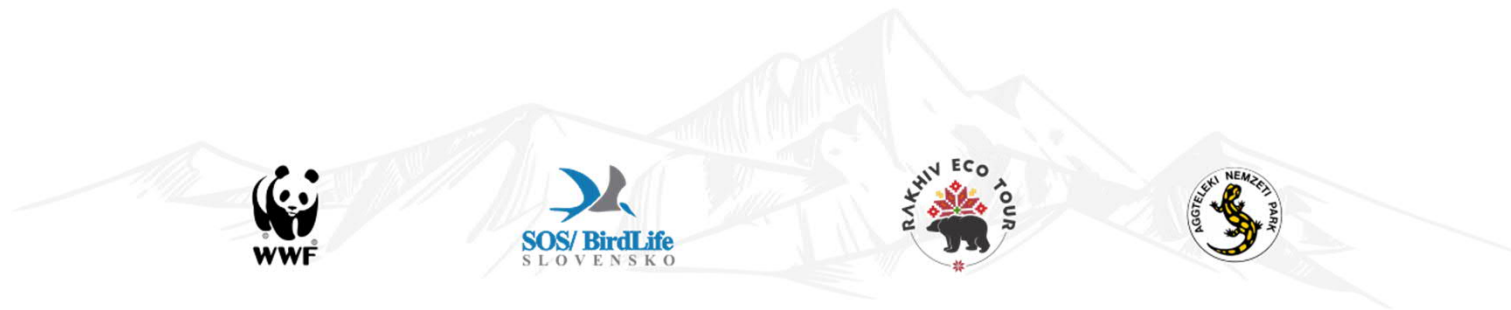
- For Large Carnivores, an Ecological Network cannot be built only based on Protected Areas and Ecological corridors in-between (EC NOT CONNECTING ONLY PAs)
- Connectivity shall address all areas with favorable or less favorable existing habitats (LANDSCAPE APPROACH)
- PAs do not provide enough space for large carnivores (e.g. AVERAGE HOME RANGE FOR A BEAR IN CARPATHIANS IS 600 sqkm)
- Management of large carnivore should be consistent in and outside of protected areas (IF NOT, MAY AFFECT DISTRIBUTION RANGE)
- That will promote the coexistence model unlike de separation model that may induce the idea that LC are allowed to stay only in PAs (COEXISTENCE MODEL)



KEY POINTS



- All Wildlife Managers – including Hunting Management Units administrators play a key role for Large Carnivores management
- Hunters may play an important role in maintaining connectivity, but sound ecologic management objective should be assumed.
- Species inventory/monitoring is a very important basic element for species management and connectivity. Therefore, the monitoring and inventory of species must be performed systematically and on an ecosystem scale in order to assess the evolution of trends and make management decisions.



SOME GENERAL CONCLUSIONS



- Connectivity for large carnivores makes more sense as it relates to their actual distribution range.
- Identification of policy instruments and actors accountability should be clearly defined at national level in order to ensure implementation of any conservation and protection measures.
- Financial instruments should be coherent and predictable in order to maintain connectivity on a long term (FINANCING IS CORELATED WITH ACCOUNTABILITY)
- Adaptative management is informed by sound inventory and monitoring of LCs



NEXT STEPS



- **Continue systematic data collection and scientific analysis on large carnivores;**
- **Advocate for improvement of legislation on protection of EC**
- **Advocate for inclusion of EC within spatial planning**
- **Secure financing for ecological connectivity in HUSKROUA transboundary area (transboundary component, CBC Programmes)**
- **Scale up measures on improvement of mosaic habitats for benefit of wildlife and communities (natural pasture and forest edge restoration);**
- **Build up capacity for management of ecological corridors;**





Thank you!

www.wwf.ro

www.openbordersforbears.com