

Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos Large Carnivore Platform



Progress report:

**Large Carnivores in the Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos region:
Management, Monitoring, Threats and Conflicts**

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Large Carnivores in the Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos region:
Management, Monitoring,
Threats and Conflicts

Establishing a transnational exchange platform
for the management of large carnivores
in the Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos Region
– Progress Report 2025 –



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Progress report purpose

- Provide a snapshot of the current situation in 10 countries
- Highlight changes since 2022
- Add Bulgaria and Greece
- Add new population figures from latest LCIE population and distribution update (2024)
- Highlight links to the Bern Convention recommendations on LCs

Population figures and distribution

- Collaborated with LCIE to support their latest update: Kaczensky et al. (2024) Large carnivore distribution maps and population updates 2017 – 2022/23
- Small changes but not significant or reliable since monitoring methods have not been significantly improved
 - Dinaric-Balkan wolf: population increased from 4000 to 4700 individuals, distribution slight decrease
 - Dinaric-Pindos bear population remained stable at around 4000 bears, distribution slight increase
 - Dinaric lynx population increased from 130 lynx to 193 individuals, distribution no change
 - Balkan lynx population roughly stable at 34 individuals, distribution no change
 - Golden jackal thought to be widespread and breeding across the region (no real monitoring), fast occupy new territories

Population figures and distribution

- LCIE gives best available figures for each species and each country
- Information comes from individual LCIE expert
- Wide diversity of methods in use, and massive variation in the accuracy and precision figures
- Double counting across borders
- Changes in methods over time making comparison between years difficult
- In the region, no reliable estimates were submitted for Albania (wolf), Montenegro and Kosovo* (wolf and bear). Data from Kosovo* and Montenegro was submitted by the Ministries. They highlight that the figures provided are largely based on hunting ground users / the federation of hunting and must be treated with caution.

Hunting

- Little change
- MK: bounty for wolf hunting removed
- SI: wolf-dog hybrids legal to remove from population

Platform member	Bear	Wolf
Albania	N	N
Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Y	Y
Republic of Srpska	Y	Y
Bulgaria	N	Y
Croatia	(N)	N
Greece	N	N
Kosovo*	N	N
Montenegro	N	Y
North Macedonia	N	Y
Serbia	N	Y
Slovenia	(N)	N

Monitoring

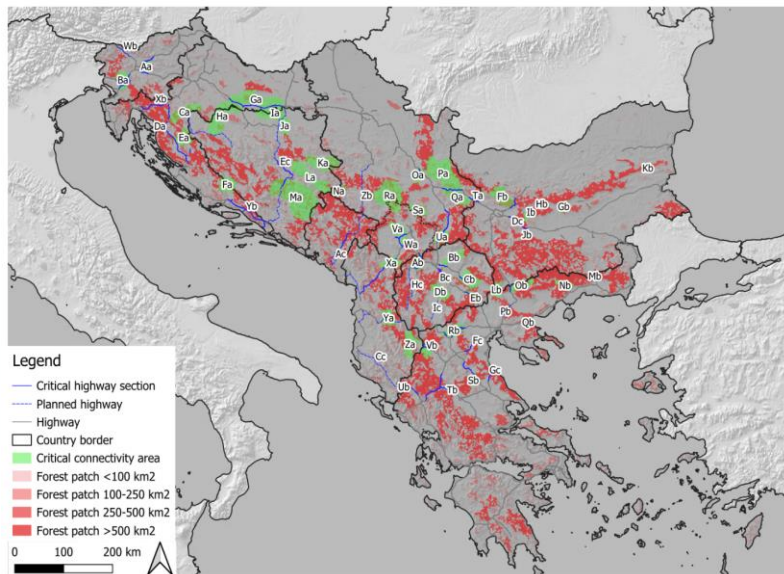
- Handbook for monitoring of large carnivores in the Dinaric- Balkan-Pindos region (Skrbinšek et al (2024) funded by WWF Adria).
- Produced based on expert knowledge of best practice across a range of countries and supplemented with expert input during the Platform meetings.
- Little change yet but handbook has been used to update management plans in North Macedonia and Serbia?

Platform member	Bear	Wolf	Lynx
Albania	N	N	N
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: N (cantonal for bear?) Republic of Srpska: Y (2023)	N	N
Bulgaria	Action plan (2023- 2033)	Action plan (2022-2031)	N
Croatia	Y	Draft (2025)	Y (2024)
Greece	N	N	N
Kosovo*	N	N	N
Montenegro	Y (2024)	N	N
North Macedonia	Draft (2024)	N	Partial (Mavrovo)
Serbia	Y (2025)	Draft (2025)	Draft (2025)
Slovenia	Y and new draft	Y (2025)	Y (2024)

Management plans

- North Macedonia has a new action plan for bear ready for government adoption and invited input through DiBaPi
- Serbia finalised their first Bear Management Plan in March 2025. This puts in place a clear political procedure for adoption of such plans and lynx and wolf plans will be addressed next.
- Montenegro bear management plan was adopted in June 2024. It obliges the government to put in place a one-year action plan with implementation measures.

Threats



- Remain similar
- Wolf downlisting and increased expectations lead to high conflict
- Increased reporting of problematic bears
- Illegal killing (poaching and poisoning)
- Habitat destruction and connectivity remain important issue
 - WWF Adria and Slovenian Forest Service gathered information on key connectivity areas through GIS analysis and in consultation with platform members to show important ecological corridors which should be protected

Conflicts



- Livestock and beehive depredation
- Hunting and livestock guarding dog depredation (LIFE Wild Wolf and EU Regional Platform in Croatia)
- Land user conflicts (hunters, farmers, protected areas, foresters)

Intervention teams

Platform member	Intervention team	Trainings carried out as part of DiBaPi
Albania	N	N
Bosnia and Herzegovina	FBiH: Y (bear, wolves, lynx) RS: Y (bears)	20.-21. December 2021 in Mostar - LC co-ordination/platform. 26.-28. February 2022 in Kulen Vakuf - Bear IT, some equipment ensured. 20.-22. September 2022 in Kupres – Wolf & Lynx IT, basic equipment ensured.
Bulgaria	N	N
Croatia	Y	16-17 April 2024, Kuterevo, training with Serbia
Greece	Y (bears – run by NGOs)	N
Kosovo*	Y	29.-30. April 2024 in Pristina - LC co-ordination/platform on management of LC. Workshop by Ecopana / WWF Adria was organized in Pristina on April 23, 2024. 07.-08. June 2024 in Pristina - LC IT on LC. 17. December 2024, Gračanica, FourPaws Bear Sanctuary Criminalistics educational module for IT members.
Montenegro	N	23.-24. September 2023 in Durmitor National park – exchange of veterinarians from ITs in Montenegro and North Macedonia. Equipment provided
North Macedonia	In progress	30.-31. March 2022 in Mavrovo National park - LC co-ordination/platform on bear. 6-7 December 2023 in Skopje – LC co-ordination /platform , future members of IT – focus on bear. 14. June 2024, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (FVM) in Skopje, future members of IT – focus on wolf. 18. December 2024, at FVM in Skopje, Criminalistics educational module for future IT members.
Serbia	N	16-17 April 2024, Kuterevo, Exchange with Croatia
Slovenia	(Y), functionality reduced	N

Livestock protection



- In practice, functioning compensation schemes in Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria (bear only) and Greece.
- Livestock protection measures, in particular, livestock guarding dogs (LGDs) and shepherding, are common in the region where LCs have often been present continuously.
- All EU countries in the region use Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) financing to support protection measures. Slovenia has been particularly active in putting in place livestock protection measures through a combination of LIFE funding, national funding and the CAP measures. This has shown impacts and damages by wolf are decreasing.
- No non-EU countries funds protection measures (beyond project funding).

Recommendations

Topic	Situation	Progress	Recommendations
Accurate monitoring	Outside the EU countries, monitoring schemes are still lacking. Coordination across borders is rare.	Increased awareness. New Handbook for Monitoring for region was produced and referenced in management plans	Put Handbook for Monitoring into use! Apply transboundary monitoring.
Management planning	Management planning is still lacking, including for some EU members.	Slovenia and Croatia (except wolf) updating management plans. New Bear management plans – Montenegro (2024), Serbia (2025) North Macedonia final document on Bear Action Plan (not adopted by Gov)	This topic remains high priority for the platform. Exchange on recent experience e.g. North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia Move towards population-level management. Consider what the change in conservation status of the wolf means for planning.

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Topic	Situation	Progress	Recommendations
Connectivity	Intense anthropogenic landscape changes due to large scale energy, tourism and transport infrastructure development.	Information available on the most sensitive connectivity areas identifying 60 key connectivity areas.	Target and protect key connectivity areas. Include in physical planning to implement infrastructure projects in a sensitive manner building e.g. on experiences in Greece and Croatia. Consider during Natura 2000 designation and management.
Compensation and protection schemes	General acceptance that this is needed but problems implementing beyond EU countries.	Changes in EU countries due to update of CAP. Session comparing approaches at DiBaPi Sofia meeting.	Better use of the EU RD programme and potential use of the EU pre-accession assistance for rural development (IPARD). Build on experiences in Slovenia of implementing protection through multiple funds and with clear results. Build on experiences of EU Platform in other EU countries (e.g. Fr)

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Topic	Situation	Progress	Recommendations
Interactions with problem bears and confident wolves	Problem bears and urban wolves are increasingly reported	Teams supported by DiBaPi. Both entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have functioning teams. Kosovo*, just established by government order. North Macedonia and Serbia, in the process of being established. Slovenia scaling down government support.	Continued support and exchange is needed between the DiBaPi members. Continue work establishing ITs across the region building on experiences so far (e.g. Montenegro). Establish teams and operational protocols in all countries.
Consultation and engagement of stakeholders	Stakeholders are often not engaged in planning or management processes	Improved exchange on the higher level through the DiBaPi meetings. Exchange with EU Platforms through integration as EU regional platform. National LC councils in Slovenia, established FBiH and Croatia (re-launched), proposed North Macedonia and Kosovo*.	Further linking the DiBaPi to lower-level exchange fora could support broader use of stakeholder platforms e.g. platforms established in Greece, Slovenia and Croatia. Establish national LC councils and regional to local exchange fora Communication and outreach processes should be improved to ensure information is better shared including with the wider public.

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Topic	Situation	Progress	Recommendations
Broad-scale coordination and exchange on transnational management	Examples of bilateral or trilateral coordination exists. No framework encompassing all the region and approaches to LC management vary significantly.	Greater knowledge exchange and comparison between participants. DiBaPi Platform as mechanism to inform and exchange on national action and management plans, monitoring, etc. Transboundary coop needed to meet Bern Conv and HD requirements for protected species and hunted / used.	Assess potential to integrate into existing mechanisms such as the Bern Convention LC expert WG or Green Deal for the Western Balkans (Biodiversity Task Force led by IUCN including their update of the Western Balkan Biodiversity Strategy) Assess relevance to members and prioritise actions and potential inputs.

Next steps

- Input from the report provides ideas for actions points to develop during the group work
- Feedback from parties on their activities and these ideas (group leads, start noting relevant activities for their topic area)
- Group work:
 - Define topic and identify challenges and emerging issues
 - Identify ongoing activities based on experiences e.g. from new projects
 - Think about where you can offer experiences and where you need input from others
 - Identifying needs, capacity and knowledge amongst members (knowledge exchange forum)
 - Identify actions and prioritise actions and define who will carry them out

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Food and Agriculture
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