

Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos Initiative on Large Carnivores



Andrea Solić and Katrina Marsden

The region

The following countries are involved in the initiative and have actively taken part in platform meetings: Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo¹, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia.



Shared wolf population and bear populations across the region as well as small lynx and Balkan lynx populations – strong need for cross border collaboration

Lack of framework agreement on biodiversity across the region (c.f. Carpathian or Alpine conventions)

Attempts to set up platform since the early 1990s

Dinaric Platform initiative launched in 2020, continued as Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos Platform from 2022 onward.

Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos LC Initiative

The platform members include



Managing authorities

The ministries, departments and agencies dealing with nature, agriculture, forestry, hunting



Regional authorities



Stakeholders

Nature NGOs, hunters, farmers, tourism operators



Scientists

The scientific advisory board & The platform secretariat

Platform meetings with Work streams

Thematic meetings and Capacity building

Collaborations: WWF Adria, IUCN, Euronatur, CIC, FACE, FAO, Bern Convention, Alpine and Carpathian Convention

Our Vision

The Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos Large Carnivore Initiative aims to provide a long-term basis for collaboration between the countries involved by establishing an exchange platform; a co-ordinational agreement; a means to exchange information on initiatives and projects in the region; and good practice examples on large carnivore management.

Better understanding of LC populations - situation analysis

Katrina Marsden, Andrea Solić, Djuro Huber,
Christiane Röttger, Iven Froese and Julia Schmidt

Large Carnivores in the Dinarides: Management, Monitoring, Threats and Conflicts

Establishing a transnational exchange platform for the
management of large carnivores in the Dinaric region
– Background Report –



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 –



Katrina Marsden
Andrea Solić
Djuro Huber
Johanna Eul
Julia Schmidt

Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos Large Carnivore Platform



**Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos Initiative on Large Carnivores in
the
Management, Monitoring, Threats and Conflicts
- update 2024-2025 -**

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
- Changes in methods over time making comparison between years difficult
- Double counting across borders
- No reliable estimates submitted for Albania (wolf), Montenegro and Kosovo* (wolf and bear). Data from Kosovo* and Montenegro was submitted by the ministries, not LCIE expert (figures provided are based on hunting ground users).

Platform member	Bear	Wolf
Albania	N	N
Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, BIH	Y	Y
Republic of Srpska, BIH	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

Status Protection/Hunting

- Little change
- North Macedonia: bounty for wolf hunting removed
- Slovenia: wolf-dog hybrids legal to remove form population

Platform member	Bear	Wolf	Lynx
Albania	N	N	N
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Federation of Bosnia & Herzegovina: N (cantonal for bear?) Republic of Srpska: Y (2023)	N	N
Bulgaria	Action plan (2023-2033)	Action plan (2022-2031)	N
Croatia	Y	N, 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

NEW

North Macedonia drafted action plan for bear (2024)

Serbia adopted Bear Management Plan (2025)

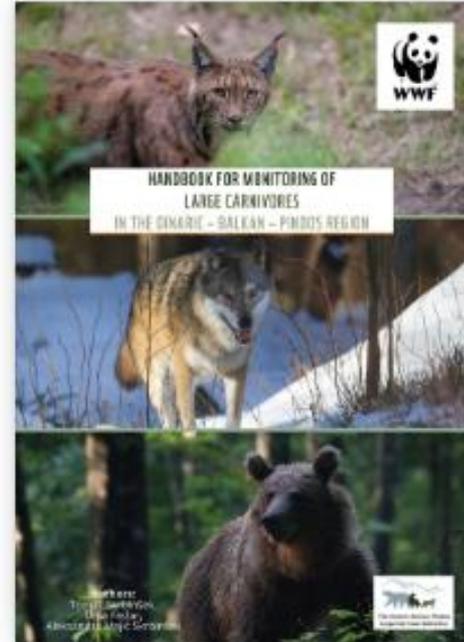
Montenegro adopted Bear Management Plan (2024), annual action plan with implementation measures adopted (2025)

DRAFTING

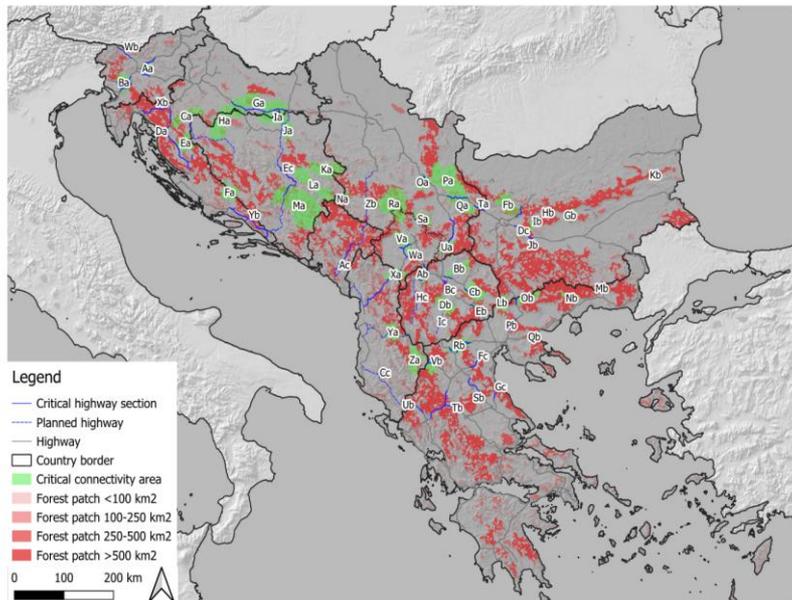
AL-EL-MK: AP for Bears in the Transboundary Prespa Basin

Monitoring

- Handbook for monitoring of large carnivores in the Dinaric- Balkan-Pindos region (Skrbinšek et al (2024)
- 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
- Monitoring at national level, **no or few transboundary** monitoring



Threats



- Remain similar
- Wolf downlisting and increased expectations lead to high conflict
- Increased reporting of problematic bears, bear cub trade
- Illegal killing (poaching and poisoning)
- Habitat destruction and connectivity remain important issue - key connectivity areas assessed and in consultation with platform members protitised an 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, outdoor tourism)

Assessing diet composition in Croatian wolf population:
[Insights from DNA metabarcoding analysis](#)

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 and project funds to support protection measures.
- No non-EU countries funds protection measures (beyond project funding).

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

Recommendations

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

Recommendations

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.	<p>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.</p> <p>Consider during Natura 2000 designation and management.</p>
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.	<p>Better use of the EU RD programme and potential use of the EU pre-accession assistance for rural development (IPARD).</p> <p>Build on experiences in Slovenia of implementing protection through multiple funds and with clear results.</p> <p>Build on experiences of EU Platform in other EU countries (e.g. FR)</p>

Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos Large Carnivore Platform

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

Recommendations

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

Projects

- Strengthening cooperation to address socioenvironmental challenges of EUSAIR flagship PETHAB ECO (4PETHABECO); AL, EL, HR, IT, ME, MK, RS, SI (IPA ADRION Interreg)
- Towards a Climate-smart Forest Connectivity for Large Carnivores in the Balkan-Carpathian-Dinaric Region (ForestConnect), BG, ME (Interegeg Danube Region)
- Concrete actions for maintaining wolves wild in anthropogenic landscapes of Europe (LIFE WILD WOLF), EL, HR, SI, et al. (LIFE Programme)
- Transnational Brown Bear Conservation in the SW Balkans (TBBC); AL-EL-MK (Euronatur)
- Large Carnivores in SEE– Connectivity and Coexistence with Humans, WWF Adria
- Fostering Coexistence: Mitigation and Education for Sustainable Brown Bear Conservation in the Balkans, AL
- Inventory of Mammals (LC), FBIH, Inventory and Health Status of the Brown Bear, Sarajevo Canton
- Population Estimation and Identification of Selected Wildlife Species in MK Using Molecular Methods, MK
- Regional Conservation Strategy for the Balkan lynx; AL, BG, XE, BIH RS, ME, MK, GR (CMS)
- Life DinPin Bear - resubmission

Questions & Answers

dinaric.carnivores@adelphi.de

andrea4nature@gmail.com

*Managed by adelphi research and Carnivora Magna
For more information on the project please contact:
dinaric.carnivores@adelphi.de
Or see: <https://dinaric-carnivores.org/en/>*

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Further support for the Secretariat's work is given by the German Federal Environment Ministry's Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP) for environmental protection in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and other countries neighbouring the European Union. It is supervised by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and the German Environment Agency (UBA).