

# Stakeholder Engagement in Connectivity Conservation

Stakeholder Engagement Webinar, 7 May 2024

Hildegard Meyer, WWF-CEE



# Content

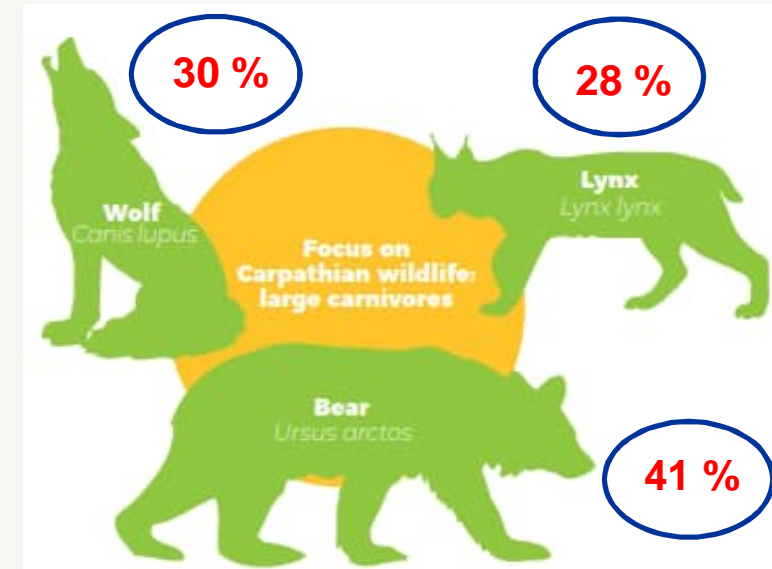
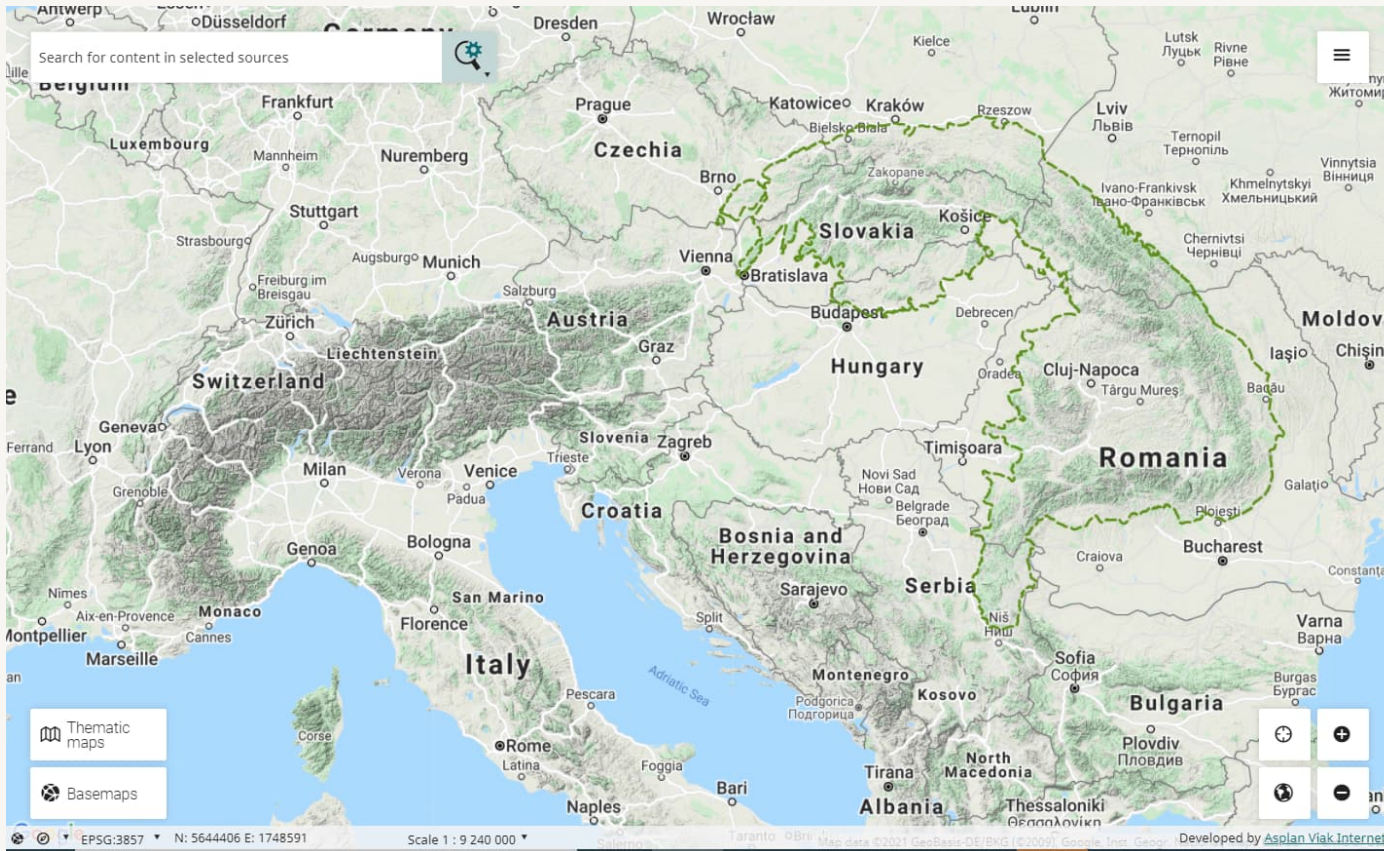
- Ecological connectivity – why do we need it?
- Arguments for engaging with stakeholders from an NGO perspective
- Stakeholder engagement approaches and results at different levels
  - Local & cross-boarder
  - International
- Lessons learned



©Romana Uhrinova, WWF-SK



# Carpathian ecoregion



The Carpathian mountains are home to significant parts of **Europe's wildlife**:

41% of brown bears,  
30% of grey wolves,  
28% of Eurasian lynx.

# What is ecological connectivity?

- The unimpeded movement of species and the flow of natural processes that sustain life on Earth (CMS, 2020)
- Ecological network (for conservation): A system of core habitats connected by ecological corridors, which is established, restored as needed and maintained to conserve biological diversity in systems that have been fragmented.





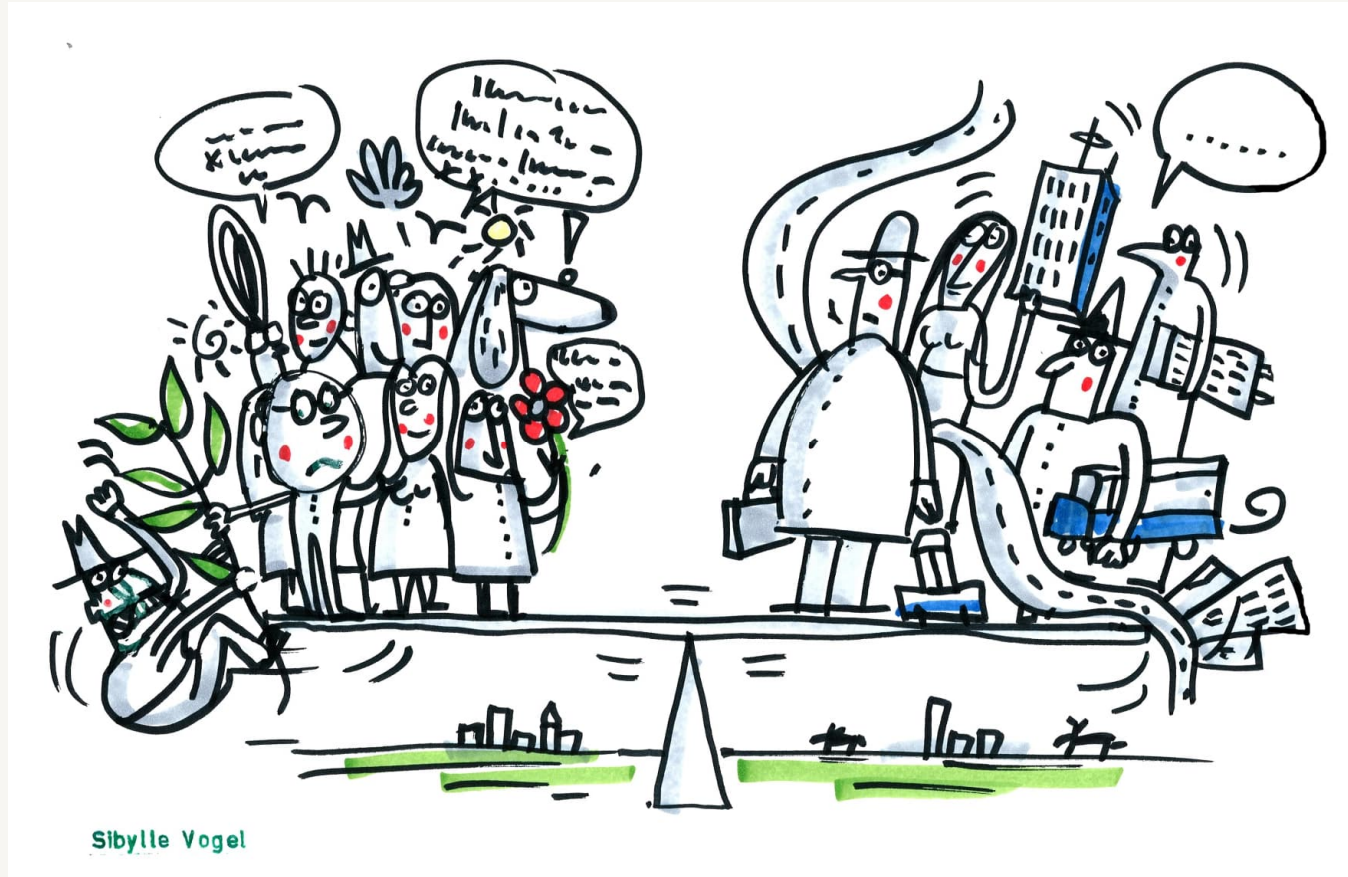
# Why do we need ecological connectivity?

- Biodiversity
- Movement of animals
  - for mating, food and shelter
- Resilience and stability of ecosystems
  - related to natural fluctuations and climate change
- Provision of ecosystem services we all depend on



© Rastislav Staník

# The role of NGOs in stakeholder engagement



# Arguments for engaging with stakeholders

- Informing
- Consulting
- Decision-making
- Process responsibility



© Christophe Janz



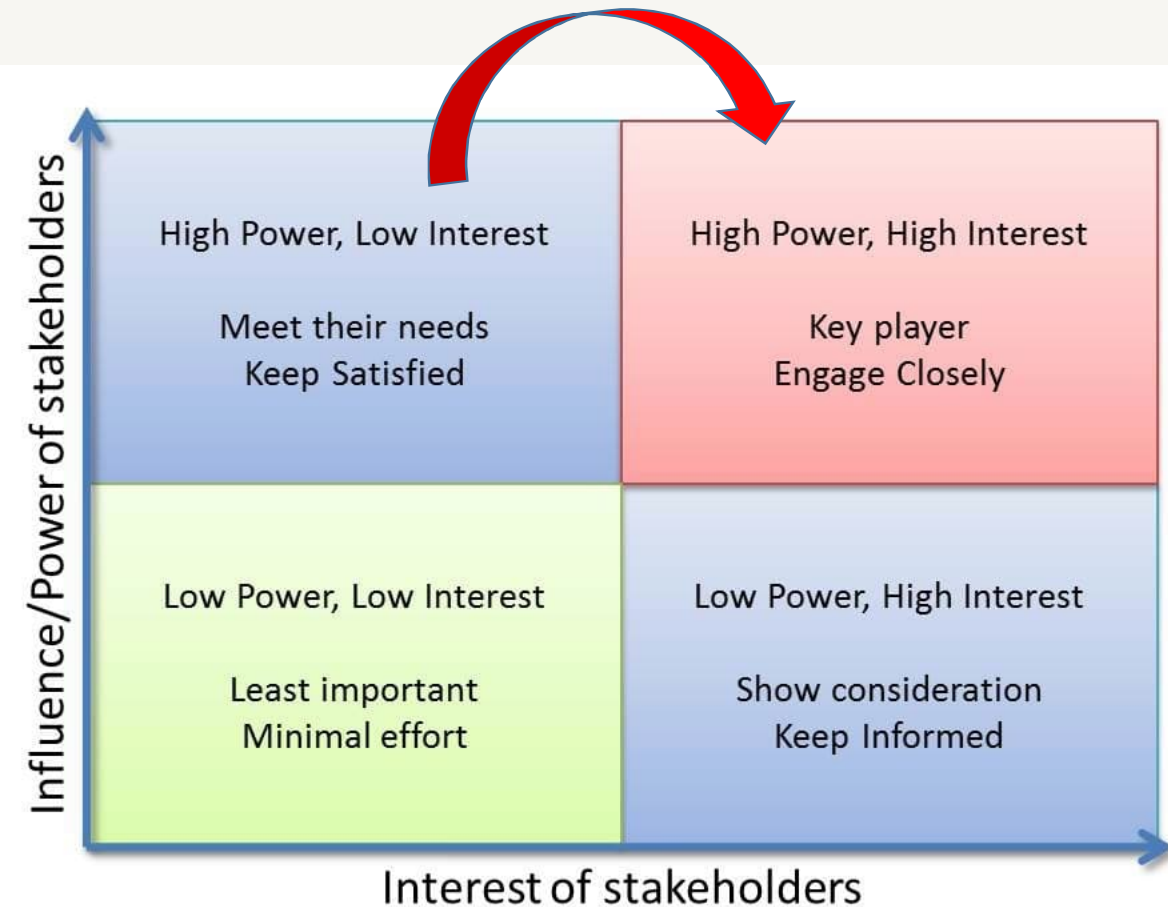
# Stakeholder engagement process

- Settle the purpose of your engagement with stakeholders
- Get to know your SHs – attitudes, desires, knowledge, social rules, leadership
- Mitigate potential risks





# Who are our stakeholders?



## Stakeholder analysis

- Transnational level
- National level
- Local level

Many interests in land use!



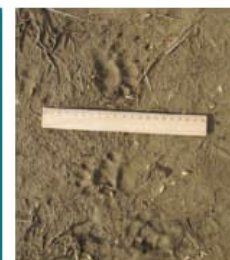
## Example – local level



# Purpose of the engagement

Plan together for safeguarding ecological corridors in the pilot area

- Identify and verify ecological corridors
- Identify critical areas
- Plan measures to safeguard ecological corridors
- Develop an action plan/catalogue of measures



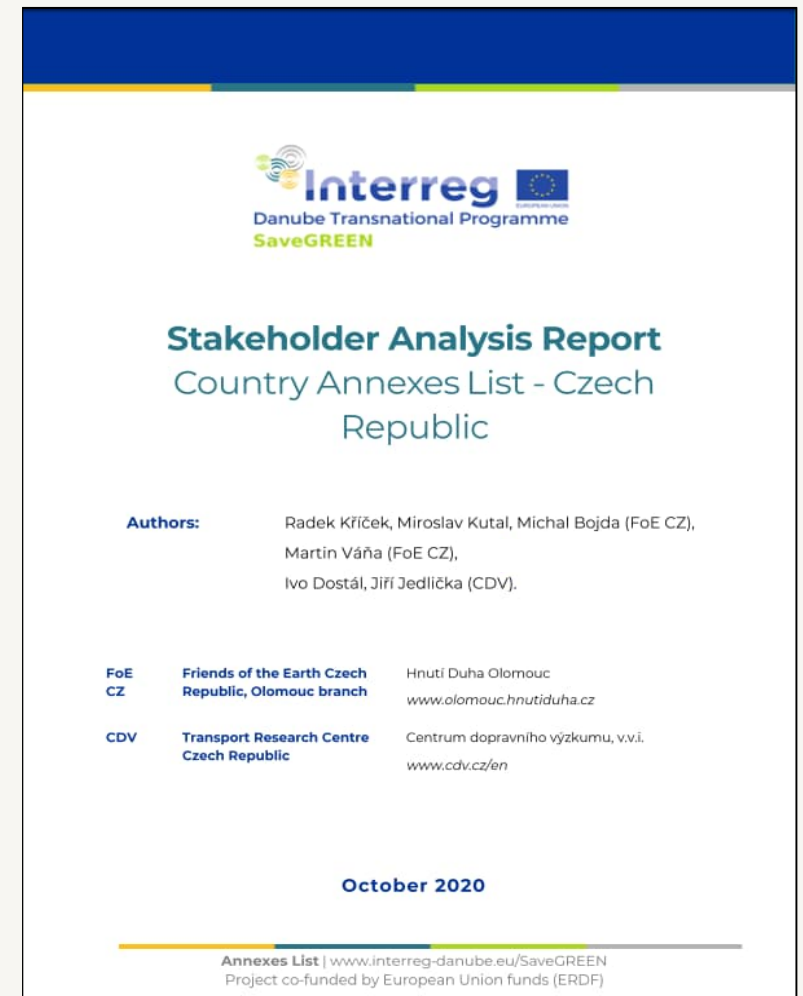
Catalogue of Measures  
**Miskolc-Košice-Uzhgorod**  
**Trilateral Pilot Area**  
(Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine)



# Process I

## Get to know your stakeholders

- Who is important, who is an opinion leader?
- Who are the opponents, what are their arguments?
- Socio-cultural aspects, like how hierarchy is embedded etc.



# Process II

Prepare content and messages to inform your stakeholders

Create a local working group

Organise meetings/workshops

- Face-to-face meetings
- Kick-off meeting incl. survey
- Consultation meetings
- Final meeting

Organise practical work – data collection, monitoring & analysis



# Results

- Catalogue of measures agreed within the local working group
  - Local knowledge
  - Critical areas
  - Mitigation measures
- Implementation of measures
- Better collaboration between local & national players
- Transparency about the project
- Awareness raised on the topic



© Hildegard Meyer





# Example – Regional level Carpathian Convention

# Purpose of the engagement

Develop the Draft Joint Strategic Action Plan – involvement of two Carpathian Convention Working Groups

- Integrate biodiversity/ecological connectivity into sustainable transport infrastructure development in the Carpathian region



## Draft Joint Strategic Action Plan 2021 – 2023

For the Implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Transport (Mikulov, 2014) to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Kyiv, 2003)

[www.interreg-danube.eu/transgreen](http://www.interreg-danube.eu/transgreen)

# Process I

- Structure and content of the Action Plan prepared by experts
- Conference organized
  - To prepare the basic background for elaborating the Carpathian Convention Strategic Action Plan on Sustainable Transportation in the Carpathians
  - Invited guests were from different sectors (nature conservation, transport, spatial planning) and levels
  - World café sessions on policy, planning, tools and monitoring
  - Cross-sectoral discussions on concrete action points for the AP





# Results

Joint Strategic Action Plan 2021-2026  
adopted at COP6 in autumn 2020

Action points realized

- Identification of ecological corridors and critical sections in the Carpathians - ConnectGREEN
- Approval and implementation of policies and tools – many
- Cooperation between sectors enhanced – N2000 Award



Natura 2000 Award 2020  
For cross-border cooperation and  
networking

# Lessons learned

- Never underestimate the time needed for stakeholder engagement
- Personal meetings are more effective
- Mistrust towards national authorities
- National laws/regulations do not necessarily reach local players
- Landowners and users fear restrictions
- Bring fair offers to local players



Sibylle Vogel



## Lessons learned – ctd.

- Discrepancy between law/regulations and their implementation
- Bring in international experience & knowledge from outside the region
- Form alliances with other partners
- Need for established cross-sectoral collaboration at all levels
- Need for long-term programs



© WWF-Romania

## Changes in human behaviour take time

©Hildegard Meyer, WWF-CEE

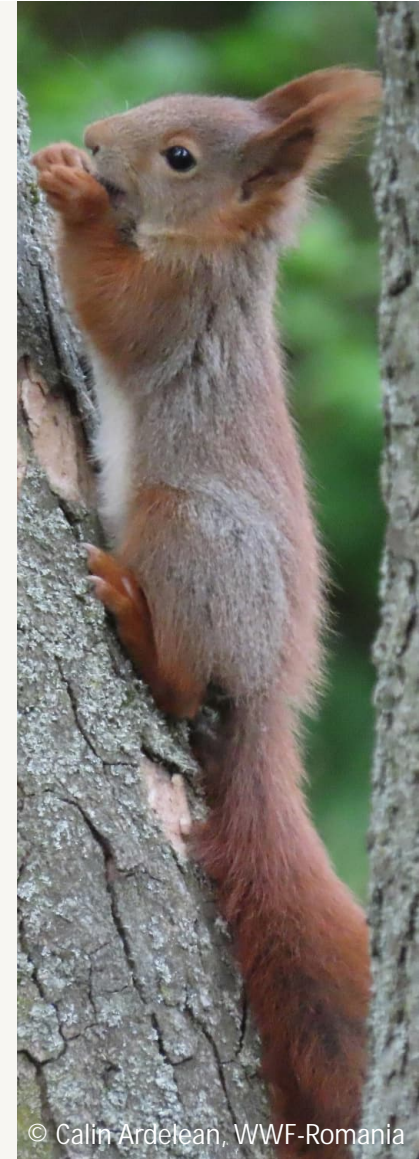
# Thank you for your attention!

Hildegard Meyer

Regional Project Manager, WWF Central and Eastern Europe  
(WWF-CEE)

Email: [hmeyer@wwfcee.org](mailto:hmeyer@wwfcee.org)

Website: <https://wwfcee.org/>



© Calin Ardelean, WWF-Romania