

# Public Tender Announcement

September 2024

## Project: ForestConnect - Enhancing Ecological Corridors for Large Carnivores in the Balkan-Carpathian-Dinaric Region

The Forest Connect project invites tenders for the provision of expert services aimed at protecting and preserving ecological corridors for large carnivores (LC) across the Carpathians, Balkans, and Dinarides. The project focuses on securing climate-resilient forest corridors that enable the safe movement of large carnivores across borders in this region

### Project description

Forest Connect is designed to address common challenges and needs on protecting and preserving ecological corridors of large carnivores (LC) in the target area of the project - the Carpathians, Balkans and Dinarides. Specifically, it will focus on: the Western Balkan Mountain on the territory of the Bulgarian North-Western State Forestry Enterprise and the Serbian nature park Stara planina (BG-RS border), the Romanian larger Apuseni-Maramures Carpathian region and the Ukrainian Carpathian Biosphere Reserve (RO-UA border); the Slovak Paradise National Park in SK as part of the Western Carpathians and the National parks Durmitor, Biogradska gora, and Prokletije in MN. The project involves 15 PPs and 8 ASPs from 7 countries. The functionality of the ecological corridors of LCs in the target area is endangered by unsustainable management practices and infrastructure developments in forest habitats and their surroundings, which harms their structure. Climate change (CC) poses additional pressure on the ecosystems. Due to the prevalence of LCs cross-border distribution and the complex effects of CC, a multinational conservation planning accompanied by a holistic governance framework for biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction is required. Forest Connect aims to secure climate-resilient forest corridors for LCs to move across borders in the Balkan-Carpathian-Dinaric region.

The project is structured around three specific objectives. The first objective focuses on integrating new tools and technologies into the transnational monitoring of large carnivores' (LCs) forests. This involves filling knowledge gaps to support the development of a joint Balkan-Carpathian-Dinaric technological application for forest ecosystem resilience and LCs monitoring and management. Additionally, it includes mapping safe corridors for LCs in transboundary forest areas under various climate change scenarios and promoting capacity building and experience-sharing across the region to engage stakeholders with the developed tools.

The second objective aims to enhance the heterogeneity, connectivity, and climate resilience of LCs' forests. This will be achieved by engaging local community members in piloting measures designed to achieve positive biodiversity outcomes and reduce conflicts with LCs. It also involves piloting key measures to demonstrate the positive effects of creating climate-resilient forest microrefugia along transnational LCs' corridors. Furthermore, the project will develop guidelines on preserving ecosystems and related services in crucial ecological connectivity areas, assess the role of ecological corridors in local economies, and create guidelines for managing transnational mosaic habitats that are beneficial to LCs in the context of climate change.

The third objective seeks to promote capacity and cooperation for integrated LC climate-forest connectivity across eco-regions. This includes the development of strategic guidelines to address climate change challenges faced by protected areas in the pan-Carpathian, Dinaric, and Balkans regions. Additionally, it encompasses capacity building, exchanges, and capitalization activities to ensure the durability, cross-fertilization, and uptake of project results.

## Scope of Services

The services required include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1. Development and Alignment of Biodiversity Information Systems**
  - Provide expert guidance on enhancing the Carpathian Countries Integrated Biodiversity Information System (CCIBIS).
  - Incorporate additional datasets and align CCIBIS more closely with the Biodiversity Information System for Europe.
- 2. Climate Change Impact Analysis and Forest Corridor Mapping**
  - Analyze climate change risks and impacts on Carpathian forest ecosystems and share lessons learned.
  - Actively seek feedback from member countries of the Danube Region to inform the development of climate-smart forest connectivity models.
  - Participate and support to the development of methodologies for climate-smart forest corridors, including adjustments to existing approaches, integration of climate data, ecological modeling, and conservation objectives.
- 3. Development and Implementation of Training Programs**
  - Contribute to the creation of a generic framework for a distance training course, including course introduction, structure, learning materials, assessment criteria, and evaluation methods.
  - Participate and support the regional conference focused on transnational methodologies, guidelines, and upscaling of CCIBIS.
- 4. Engagement with Local Communities**
  - Ensure the presentation of the study "Enhancing Habitat Heterogeneity and Climate Resilience in Transnational Forest Ecosystems" at relevant working groups in the Danube Region.
  - Provide input and feedback on the development of guidelines for the management of transnational mosaic habitats, focusing on their benefits to large carnivores in the context of climate change.
- 5. Development of Strategic Guidelines for Protected Areas**
  - Support the development of strategic guidelines to address climate change challenges in protected areas across the Carpathian, Dinaric, and Balkan regions.
  - Assist CUAS with the guideline development process.
  - Organize and facilitate expert meeting involving protected area managers, contributing to the planning, coordination, and dissemination of event information.
  - Actively participate in the Strategic Expert Group, which will operate online, to compile project results and prepare them for strategic guideline development.
  - Ensure that the Strategic Guideline is presented and discussed at the Working Groups on Biodiversity, Sustainable Forest Management and Climate Change.
  - Presentation of the project work and results at relevant bodies and conferences, including involvement in the progress reports and promotion at government level.
- 6. Capacity Building, Exchanges, and Capitalization**
  - Support the capacity-building, exchange, and capitalization activities to ensure the sustainability, knowledge sharing, and implementation of project results.
- 7. Communication and Awareness-Raising**
  - Support the maintenance and updating of content on the project website and your own organisation website, including the publication of news on Forest Connect activities.
  - Contribute to the publication of press articles and publications in international networks.
  - Conduct awareness-raising and promotional activities to showcase the project's results in the Danube Region and beyond.



- Involve international community members and organizations in pilot initiatives aimed at achieving positive biodiversity outcomes and reducing conflicts with large carnivores.

## Deliverables

### Deliverable 1. Development and Alignment of Biodiversity Information Systems

- **Presentation:** Slides detailing the enhancements, integration process, and future recommendations for Development and Alignment of Biodiversity Information Systems.

### Deliverable 2. Climate Change Impact Analysis and Forest Corridor Mapping

- **Recommendations:** Strategic recommendations based on the climate risk analysis and corridor mapping.

### Deliverable 3. Development and Implementation of Training Programs

- **Workshop Participation:** Regional conference participation and delivery of key insights and methodologies.

### Deliverable 4. Engagement with Local Communities

- **Presentation** about the results from Engagement with Local Communities

### Deliverable 5. Development of Strategic Guidelines for Protected Areas

- **Strategic Guideline Contributions:** Support the process to develop Strategic Guidelines for Protected Areas.
- **Workshop/Meeting Facilitation:** Organization and facilitation of expert meetings, including planning, coordination, and documentation.

### Deliverable 6. Capacity Building, Exchanges, and Capitalization

- **Best Practices and Lessons Learned:** Capacity Building, Exchanges, and Capitalization

### Deliverable 7. Communication and Awareness-Raising

- **2 Website Content:** 2 Updates with information about the project on the service provider's own website.
- **2 Press Articles and Publications:** Copies of all press articles and publications.
- **Awareness-Raising Campaign Report:** Summary of awareness-raising and promotional activities conducted, including audience engagement and impact analysis.

## Time plan

The required services have to be provided by 30 June 2026.

## Budget

Please note that the total available budget for these services is 50.000,00 € including all taxes and duties.

## Submission Details

The contract is awarded on the basis of a complete offer (service description, concept, qualifications and references, comprehensible calculation) and by an award committee. The award decision is made according to the following weighting:

40% Price

30% Experience in the regional and national context (Danube Region Countries)



- 20% Experience and capacity in climate-forest connectivity across eco-regions, Capacity building and experience-sharing, Large Carnivores
- 10% Expertise in the field of Interreg projects

Interested parties should submit their tenders by 16.10.2024, including all relevant documentation that demonstrates their expertise and capability to deliver the services outlined. The offer should be submitted by mail to Elisabeth Wiegele, [e.wiegele@fh-kaernten.at](mailto:e.wiegele@fh-kaernten.at)

## Contact Information

For further details about the Forest Connect project, please visit our project website (<https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/forestconnect>) or contact us at [e.wiegele@fh-kaernten.at](mailto:e.wiegele@fh-kaernten.at).

This tender is open to all qualified experts and organizations capable of meeting the project requirements and contributing to the successful implementation of Forest Connect.