



LIFE Project Number
LIFE 13 NAT/RO/001154

Progress Report IV
Covering the project activities from 01.05.2019 to 31.08.2020

Reporting Date
31.08.2020

LIFE+ LIFE FOR BEAR
Conservation of Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*) population in Romania

Project Data

Project location	National level for some actions, Implementation area: Brasov-Prahova Valley Area
Project start date:	01.10.2014
Project end date:	01.10.2019
	Accepted Extension date: 31.12.2020 (amendment no. 2)
	Proposed Extension date: 31.12.2021
Total budget	1.567.512 €
EU contribution:	1.115.911 €
(%) of eligible costs	71.19 % of total eligible budget

Beneficiary data

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ABBREVIATIONS

Project acronym

**LIFE 13 NAT/RO/001154
LIFE FOR BEAR**

COORDINATING BENEFICIARY

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
IN FORESTRY Marin Drăcea

INCDS

ASSOCIATED BENEFICIARY

CARPATHIAN FOUNDATION
LOCAL FORESTS PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION KRONSTADT R.A.
MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT
R.N.P. ROMSILVA - BUCEGI NATURAL PARK ADMINISTRATION R.A.
THE FOREST DISTRICT OF RÂȘNOV R.A.

**FC
KRT
MM
PNB
OS**

Other

BEAR TEAM

BT

Executive Summary

General progress - English

The project "Conservation of the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) population in Romania" started on 03.10.2014, with a deadline on 31.12.2020, according to Amendment no. 2. The project did not encounter major technical difficulties in achieving the objectives of the actions, but there were some delays in achieving deliverables, delays that do not affect the overall progress of the project, but can be remedied by approving the project extension until 31.12.2021.

The preparatory activities of type A: two actions are completed and one is in progress, as follows:

Action A1. Economic analysis of interest groups which was completed in 2015 and **Action A3.** The analysis of the habitat support capacity of the brown bear habitat at national level was completed in September 2019 by carrying out a practical guide for the habitat support capacity analysis,

Action A2. The analysis of human-bear conflicts at national and local level is ongoing, having an essential role in identifying and analyzing human-bear conflicts, so that the result of these analyzes is presented to the authorities involved in the management and conservation of the species. In this context, we can conclude that in the last 4 years, based on the data collected in this action, the trend of direct human-bear conflicts and damage caused by bears, at national level has been increasing. The project team makes every effort to keep up with the increase of the population and bear densities in Romania, so as to minimize as much as possible the potential direct human-bear conflicts.

Type C actions, in this reporting period, actively contributed to laying the groundwork for the Brown Bear Population Management Plan in Romania, a document under way in Action C1. Type C actions also contributed to the efforts to reduce direct human-bear conflicts, as well as to maintain the conservation status of the bear population brown in Romania, within actions C2-C8. Based on Order no. 625/2018 on the approval of the National Action Plan for the conservation of the brown bear population in Romania, was submitted in 2020, to the Ministry of European Funds on the POIM program, the project proposal **Implementation of the national action plan for the conservation of the brown bear population in Romania**, having SMIS code 136899.

During the reporting period, the team of specialists created within **Action C2** and approved by the Ministry of Environment by address no. Address no. 21830 / ECU of 01.10.2018 intervened in 26 conflict cases in the project area. The project team participated in the realization of a proposal to complete the normative acts on the modalities of granting compensations and prevention of damages caused by some wild animals, so that human and material goods are included in the compensation list in case of conflicts caused by brown bear species. In January 2020, *LAW no. 13/2020 of January 9, 2020 for the amendment and completion of the Law on hunting and protection of the hunting fund no. 407/2006*, included some of the provisions proposed by the project team through the associated beneficiary Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, which were supported by a series of senators and deputies, regarding the type of damages to be compensated by the Romanian state (Annex C2.3. LAW No. 13/2020 of 9 January 2020), so that, in addition to agro-zootechnical and forestry damages, human was also included in the list of compensation for damage caused by bears, both as compensation for hospitalization and also offering moral damages obtained as a result of direct attacks of the bear on human.

During the reporting period, in **Action C3**, 4 problem bear relocation actions were carried out, to which 4 GPS / GSM monitoring systems were installed. Also during this reporting period, the general conclusion obtained from the monitoring of relocated and monitored bears (GPS / GSM) is that

relocating bears that have deviant feeding behavior (habituated bears) is not a viable solution for the individual in the long run. These individuals return to the place where they were captured or cause the same problems in the new relocation areas. Young bears or adults which didn't changed their natural behavior too much have a chance to change their behavior back into the natural one (practically those who are still afraid of humans). As part of action C3, we currently benefit from information from 19 bears monitored with GPS / GSM system.

In **Action C4**, the works to improve the trophic supply favorable to the natural feeding of the bear in the vicinity of the conflict areas were monitored. It was found that the success rate falls within the forestry technical norms. At June 2020, the average success rate is about 85% for crops used to improve the food supply. During the reporting period, an increase in bear densities was found in the areas where anthills were installed, which endangered the viability of some ant families. Between June 2019 and April 2020, when the project team traveled to the field to identify and multiply anthills, it was found that some anthills in the project implementation area were destroyed by bears, so the team had to move to other counties to identify, multiply and transport new anthills to conflict areas in the project area. In the summer of 2019 and at the end of the summer of 2020, 108 more anthills were multiplied and placed in 13 different areas. As a solution we proposed to bring other families of ants in the same areas, where they were installed in the first stage of the project (2016-2018), so that they have higher chances of natural reproduction even after the destruction of some anthills by bears (by natural feeding).

Based on the Technical Study carried out in **Action C5**, on improving the trophic potential of lands intended for wildlife feeding and based on the expertise of the project team, and the results of Action C4, based on proposals to implement technical rules on improvement and diversification to the trophic offer favorable to the natural feeding of the bear, the project team included this activity to be integrated in the POIM project submitted to the Ministry of European Funds (*Implementation of the national action plan for the conservation of the brown bear population in Romania, with SMIS code 136899*). The associated beneficiaries of the project still implement the measures with applicability in forest management in Natura 2000 sites in the project implementation area. These measures relate to special provisions for the management of bear-friendly stands in conflict areas.

By implementing measures for the protection of domestic animals, agricultural crops and orchards, within **Action C6**, it was noted the reduction of conflicts in the areas where the electric fences provided by the project were installed. In the summer of 2019, the situation of 116 sheepfolds in the project implementation area were monitored, distributed within 12 administrative units (town halls). Centralizing these data, resulted damages in a total of 48 animals killed by bear (33 sheep; 11 cows; 1 donkey; 3 pigs) registered in the project area. By the summer of 2020, the project team had distributed a number of 20 electric fences, of which 10 systems were purchased under the LIFE FOR BEAR project, and 10 systems were purchased from other funds. As a preliminary conclusion, in the areas where the electric fences were installed and used correctly, no damage done by the bear was recorded, but damage was recorded outside the electric fences on the pasture or around the sheepfolds where there was no protection. Another important conclusion is the functionality of electric fences at maximum capacity, in combination with dogs and shepherds if they also act when the bear attacks the animals inside the protected perimeter.

In the **C7 action**, all the project maps from the reporting period were made and the entire project GIS database was centralized and archived.

Improving household waste management in human-bear conflict areas, under **Action C8**, continues with visible improvements in some communities, where local mayors have understood the issue of bears visiting these areas. After patrols and repeated meetings of the project team with local

communities, based on improving the management of household waste by local communities, the number of bears that enter daily in urban areas where household waste is collected has been reduced. Between May 2019 and August 2020, 26 bear specimens were identified that frequent different locations of household waste in the project implementation area, compared to 36 bear specimens identified between May 2018 and April 2019. In August 2020 we managed to complete the procurement procedure for the service for the manufacture and installation of bear-proof systems in the field and to sign the contract with the winning company of the tender, which gave us the maximum deadline for execution and installation in the field until December 2020. At the time of reporting, the prototype was designed and made, which was accepted by the project team (meets the requirements of the specifications) and the first 5 bear-proof systems were completed, to be installed in Azuga locality in Prahova county by the end of September 2020. After completing the installation of these systems we would like to monitor for 12 months their efficiency and impact on bears. We consider that these systems are very important for bear management in Romania, because we intend to replicate the experience of using these systems in the project implementation area, at national level, by attracting national and / or European funding, in order to purchase and install them in the field.

Within the *type D* monitoring activities, the specific monitoring activities were continued. In **action D1** following the quantification of the effect produced by the project implementation (especially activities C) on the conservation status of the brown bear, where in the last report it was found that the overall conservation status is favorable for the brown bear species in the project implementation area. During the reporting period, the pressures and threats on the bear species in the project implementation area were monitored.

In **action D2**, the centralization of data and information is being done for the final report, aiming to correlate them to provide a clearer picture of the socio-economic impact. Both the numerical aspects given by the indicators and the aspects related to the consequences of the actions carried out for the conservation of the bear population will be integrated. This can be done in time. For example, the effects of improving the trophic supply from the Act. C.4. can be seen only several years after planting. For this reason, the annual reports contained mostly numerical information. Due to the major aspect to be monitored related to the installation of bear-proof systems, the writing of the final report was postponed, for which reason we propose that the deadline for the completion of the final report to be at the end of the project.

In *type E actions* all materials were produced and distributed most of them.

The promotion of the project and the awareness on the different aspects targeted by the type E actions, is being done permanently by the members of the LIFE FOR BEAR project team, in the context of all events and activities regarding actions undertaken within the project, but also at every opportunity created by participating in events and actions outside the project framework.

During the implementation of the project, members of its team participated in a multitude of events and actions. Within the interactions, a collaboration network was formed which provided the necessary information and feedback for the smooth running of the project and the achievement of the proposed objectives. The collaborations created and the successes of some actions encourage us in the belief that even in the context in which the meetings are difficult to put into practice, the relationships once created can work successfully. Information and awareness will continue in a much smaller context, with field actions or other meetings that arise with people from interest groups.

Within the **E1 action**, 3 books resulting from this project will be printed at the Forestry Publishing House: “Action plan for the conservation of the brown bear population (*Ursus arctos arctos*) in

Romania” (in Romanian and English, in 400 copies each) and "Analysis of the habitat capacity support of the brown bear habitat at national level in terms of socio-economic development in the last decade" (in 200 copies in Romanian).

During the **E2 action**, efforts were made to improve the website, but due to technical reasons related to the poor and outdated operation of certain plug-ins that generated numerous errors, no major improvement could be achieved. We propose the reconstruction of the entire website on a new domain with an outside contract for the technical service.

Whithin **Actions E3 and E4** we aim to rehabilitate the wooden structure and reinforce it with metal support for all panels, as well as to replace 12 panels that have been altered (3 at E3 and 9 at E4). These improvements are possible using money from savings, without the need for budget changes.

For **Action E5**, the SCI Promotion Awareness Report was prepared.

The *type F activities* were carried out by the project management team according to the initial plan, and the structure of the management team was modified, after Mrs. ec. Mariana Fumea, who holds the position of financial manager of the project, employee of INCDS, was infected with the COVID-19 virus, was hospitalized for a while and after healing she retired on 01.07.2020. The position remained vacant at the time reporting.

In September 2019, it was completed within the **action F2** - Report on the exchange of experience in the country. The exchange of experience was carried out with the LIFE 12 NAT / UK / 001068 LIFE Connect Carpathians project team developed by Fauna & Flora International (FFI) with the project headquarters in Deva, Hunedoara County, Romania.

From 21 to 27 July 2019, part of the project team traveled from other financial sources, independent of the LIFE FOR BEAR project, to the International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB) - “Conservation Beyond Boundaries: Connecting Biodiversity with Communities, Governments and Stakeholders”, From Malaysia, where some of the good practice experiences were presented, as well as results from the LIFE FOR BEAR project.

During the reporting period, the procurement procedure for the project audit service provided for in **Action F3** was completed.

Written
Ramon JURJ – Manager proiect