

**TRANSBOUNDARY ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY OF ALPS AND DINARIC MOUNTAINS**

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ABSTRACT

The DINALPCONNECT project will address the challenge of improving transnational cooperation to reduce fragmentation and improve EC for long-term conservation of biodiversity and delivery of ecosystem services in the project area. Due to its diverse topography, climatic variation and human activity project area is known for its exceptional and vulnerable biodiversity. Balkan peninsula acted as ice age refugia and played a crucial role for re-colonization of Central and Northern Europe by plant and animal species and it still presents a source gene pool for tree species such as beech and black alder. Some of Europe’s largest well preserved old growth forests are found in Dinaric mountains. However, this is threatened by habitat fragmentation and habitat loss due to a range of pressures associated with agriculture and forestry such as agriculture intensification or agriculture abandonment and intensive forest logging. Un-coordinated development of infrastructure and urbanization further fragment natural habitats and reduce long-term resilience of ecosystems and their services. In addition, climate change will pose a significant challenge in mountainous areas where EC will be essential for species shifting their range. Therefore, a conceptual framework is needed which would coordinate development to maintain EC and identify priority areas for implementation of green infrastructure at different governance levels (macro-regional and transboundary). A DINALPCONNECT strategy for EC in Dinaric Mountains and connectivity with the Alps based on spatial analysis of current corridors and barriers will provide such a framework at the macro-regional level. Action plans based on guidelines for agricultural and forestry practices protecting biodiversity will enable implementation of actions for improved EC of selected priority habitats on both sides of the national border.

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