



INTERIM TECHNICAL ACTIVITY REPORT WITH PAYMENT REQUEST

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Section I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 *The background of the project*

Vrancea County, located at meeting point of three Romanian provinces, includes in its limits mountainous habitats, (Vrancei Mountains), hills habitats and plain habitats. Vrancea County territory occupies 4817 km², from which more than 45% acts like habitats for large carnivores. Vrancei Mountains acts as the second area populated by large carnivores (considering the density), being the host of 6,5% of the bears population in Romania, 5,5% % of the European lynx population in Romania and 3,7% % of the wolfs population in Romania. But these stable populations need protection because are located in an area where the pastorate is the most important economic activity. The area that the project mainly focuses on is the mountainous and sub-mountainous one in principal, from 1775 m maximal altitude (Lacauti Peak) to 450 m, area covered on more than 70% of its surface by deciduous and boreal forests. Nature conservation in Vrancea County suffered a strong rebound in the last years, the protected area being reduced with more than 85%, today only 2489 ha being under protection, 99% of them in habitats populated by large carnivores. The most important areas for the project are the one containing boreal forests: Marasti (11886 ha), Campuri (17107 ha), Dragomirna (10119 ha), Macradeu (10619 ha), Lepsa (10191 ha), Condratu (17107 ha), Pietrosu (15850), Caldari (14800 ha), Neculele (11709 ha), Tulburea (10196 ha) and Anghelesti (6167 ha)

1.2 *The objectives of the project and expected results*

The **Project Goal** is to conserve, manage and restore, in coexistence with people, viable population of large carnivore species *Ursus arctos*, *Lynx lynx* and *Canis lupus* as part as ecosystems and landscapes from Vrancea County

Project objectives:

- ✓ To create a local management plan for large carnivores in Vrancea County
- ✓ To prevent conflicts between large carnivores and local inhabitants
- ✓ To create an ecological protection network for large carnivores in Vrancea County

Actions and means involved

- ✓ Analysis to identify priority habitats of large carnivore that are not already protected



- ✓ Creating a Large Carnivore Monitoring Centre at Tiganului Creek
- ✓ Stop the decline and improve the species chances to recover and increase in number by monitoring and raising awareness campaign
- ✓ Raising awareness (campaign) concerning the vulnerability of the above-mentioned species
- ✓ Develop a local management scheme for large carnivore (that will cover all necessary conservation precautions for the large carnivore habitats)

Expected results:

- ✓ Large carnivores population mortality control due to conflicts with local inhabitants
- ✓ An ecological network for large carnivores protection in Vrancea County
- ✓ Improving the guarding system for the ecological network for large carnivores protection
- ✓ A local management plan for large carnivores
- ✓ A compensation scheme for damages produced by large carnivores
- ✓ Improving the system for sheepfolds protection in habitats populated by large carnivores, by building an area which to demonstrate the efficiency of the modern protection systems
- ✓ Implementing a campaign for raising awareness about large carnivores vulnerability

1.3 Socio-economical context

The project does not involve management agreements or land purchase therefore it was not the case of consulting the landowners.

Beside the pastoral lands, the other areas are mainly public property. That is the reason why the partners in this project play an important role in managing the interest groups. To avoid eventual conflicts, the partnership was created to cover a large area of competence and expertise but also to ensure the stability of the decisions.

The most important local actors were informed about the project proposal and they feel it is a good initiative.

Regarding the social aspects there are no particular problems that applies to this situation (considering the project itself).



From an economic point of view, the economic activities are represented especially by pastorate and logging.

Only in Putna River basin are located more than 65 sheepfolds, an extremely high density, one of the major causes of the conflicts between local inhabitants and large carnivores

The region where the project is developed is under a strict control considering the hunting activities



Section II: SUMMARY OF THE ACTIVITIES

2.1 Summary of activities for the reported period

In order to achieve the objectives of the project **LIFE02/NAT/RO/8576 In situ conservation of large carnivore in Vrancea County**, in the period **September 1st 200 – September 8th 2003** the following activities have taken place:

A. PREPARATORY ACTIONS, ELABORATION OF MANAGEMENT PLANS AND/OR OF ACTION PLANS

ACTION A.1: Creating a Working Group for project management – proposed to take place at the first partners' meeting in the first month of the project (**September 15th 2002**), immediately after signing the contract with the European Commission.

The actions for creating the Working Group took place in the period **September 1st 2002 – September 26th 2002**.

ACTION A.2: Creating two bodies that will ensure the quality of the habitat management act: The Consultative Council and the Habitat Management Team – proposed to take place at the first partners' meeting in the first month of the project (**September 20th 2002**), and following to be finalized in a separate meeting

The members of the Consultative Council and of the Management Plan Team have been proposed at the first meeting of the partners, in **September 26th 2002**. The members of the Management Plan Team was proposed and approved at the first meeting of the partners in **September 26th 2002**.

ACTION A.3: Preparatory promotion of the project goal – proposed to take place at **the first partners' meeting**, by realized of 3000 leaflets on the project actions and objectives and a press conference.

The action was accomplished in **December 2002** by creating of 4000 leaflets describing the project objectives and actions and by a press conference at the first Consultative Council meeting.

ACTION A.4: Habitats inventory for *Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus* and *Lynx lynx* in Vrancea county – proposed to take place in the period **October 1st 2002 – January 30th 2003**.



This action was accomplished in May 2003 by realisation the report about the status of large carnivore habitats and the data base about the large carnivore. It was realised a model of habitat suitability which will be improve with telemetry data next year of the project.

The action started in **October 1st 2002** and ended at the end of **May 2003**.

ACTION A.5: GAP analysis of the protected areas system in Vrancea county reported to the large carnivores species distribution - proposed to take place in the period **January 15th 2003 – April 15th 2003**.

The action was achieved according with the program, finalized in **April 25th 2003**.

ACTION A.6: Livestock and human settlements evaluation from habitats populated with *Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus* and *Lynx lynx*– proposed for develop in the period **January 15th 2003 – April 30th 2003**

The action was achieved according with the program, finalized in **May 30th 2003**.

ACTION A.7: Establishment of plan for large carnivores conservation in Vrancea county – principles for species protection have been proposed to be carried out in the period **December 1st 2002 –March 30th 2003**.

The principles of management plan for species protection have been finalized on **18th April 2003**, being discussed and approved in **24 May 2003** at the Consultative Council meeting.

B. NON-RECURRING MANAGEMENT

ACTION C.1: Restructuring the habitats populated with large carnivores through the establishment of an ecological network for large carnivores protection in Vrancea county

The action was achieved according with the program, finalized in **May 2003 (report and database)**. Was created an model of habitat suitability who will be improve in the next year of the project based on telemetry data.

ACTION C.2: Creation of the centre for large carnivores monitoring – Țiganul Creek (LCMC)

LCMC was created at Lepşa III Forestry District near to Tiganul Creek. The official opening was in **April 2003**.



ACTION C.3: Training session for the ecological network for large carnivores protection guardians/rangers

For this activity was realised the structure of courses and was the first selection for future ecological network rangers.

D. RECURRING MANAGEMENT

ACTION D.1: *Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus* and *Lynx lynx* populations monitoring

We accomplish the purchase of necessary equipment, the elaboration for monitoring large carnivore. In this year was trapped first 3 bears.

ACTION D.2: Demonstrative establishment of some sheepfolds protection systems in the Barsesti area

Was selected the sheepfolds who will be equipped with electrical fences.

E. PUBLIC AWARENESS AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

ACTION E.1: Dissemination – Media work

Press conferences was organised at the meeting of the Consultative Council in **25 January 2003** and **24 May 2003**. On **22 April 2003** at the official opening day of LCMC was organised a press conference in Lepşa village. Beginning with septemebr 2003 it was set up the project web page at www.carnivoremari.ro

ACTION E.2: Dissemination – Organising events

In **22 April 2003** was organised Earth Day celebration at Bârseşti city hall and Lepşa village. In **5 June 2003** was organised with the occasion of Environment day and Days the open day at the LCMC. In **7 June 2003** was organised the events named “Walking days in Cheile Tişitei” with 40 students from Focaşni.

ACTION E.4: Dissemination – Producing promotion

The leaflets for project promotion was printed in **December 2002** (3000 in Romanian and 1000 in English). In the key points of the project was displayed panels about the site and project with LIFE logo: EPI VN like project headquarter, ADD FV like project secretariat,



LCMC in Lepşa. Also in the main trap line in Tişîţa gorges was displayed warning panel and information panel.

ACTION E.5: Campaign for raising the awareness on the vulnerability of *Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus* and *Lynx lynx*

The raising awareness campaign concept was finalized on **15 february 2003**.

F. OVERALL PROJECT OPERATION

ACTION F.1: Co-ordination, project management and financial administration

The coordination of the project is realised by a core coordination team. The relation with partners is maintained by Working Group (each partners has an member in Working Group). The decision over contractual aspects are discussed only by the Director Council (with heads of each institution).

ACTION F.2: Project Monitoring

According with internal reporting system established in the project, each action is monitored by the project administrator. Each action has an action form completed by project administrator. Periodically the project manager and the project administrator met the project partners for discussions about actions implementation stage.

2.2) Milestones during report period and checklist of identifiable products

Milestones	Name or n ^o of reference action	Deadline	Date of completion
First meeting of partners	A.1, A.2	September, 2002	September 26 th , for the Working Group, January 25 th , 2003 for the Consultative Council
Annual meeting of partners	F.1	December, 2002	January, 25 th
Consultative Council meeting – approval of Principles for species protection	A.7	March, 2003	May 24 th , 2003



Deliverable products	Name or n ^o of reference action	Deadline	Date of completion
4000 copies of Leaflets for project promotion	E.4, A.3	December, 2002	December, 2002
Report on the First Meeting of Partners (Focsani)	A.1, A.2	October, 2002	October, 2002
Report regarding to the state of habitats populated with large carnivore in Vrancea	A.4	January,2003	May, 2003
Database consisting the inventory of habitats (all species)	A.4	April, 2003	May, 2003
Report “GAP analysis of the protected area system in Vrancea county”	A.5	April, 2003	May, 2003
Report “Livestock and human settlements evaluation”	A.6	May, 2003	May, 2003
Report “Methodology for large carnivore monitoring”	D.1	February, 2003	March, 1 st 2003 (bear), June, 1 st 2003 (wolf, lynx)
Web page, draft version	E.1	November, 2002	September, 2002
5000 copies of bilingual Brochure – Large Carnivore in Vrancea	E.4	August, 2003	-
Notice boards	E.4		December, 2002 (at EPI VN, at ADD FV), April, 2003 (at Large Carnivore Monitoring Centre)

2.3) Overview table of results since start of the project

The main achievements of this activity year of the project LIFE NATURE In situ conservation of large carnivores in Vrancea County are:

- ✓ Creation of project management team capable to implement the project activities;
- ✓ Involving with good results in project activities of project partners and also of other local actors interested in realization and implementing the project management for large carnivores *in situ* conservation in Vrancea county;
- ✓ Elaboration of scientifically studies stipulated in the project witch will stay at the base of monitoring of large carnivores and creation of ecological network protection;
- ✓ Accustoming the monitoring team members with captures technique and radio-telemetry;
- ✓ Creation the Large Carnivores Monitoring Center in Lepşa and partial equip with necessary apparatus.

2.4 Problems and difficulties



The main difficulties in this year of project activity were the following:

☞ In the first phase of the project, at the elaboration of contracts between partners, it has established that some partners cannot cover their obligation assumed by partnership commitment. It has appeared the necessity of changing the financial project scheme in some aspects: allocation of some project management jobs, revision of some field aspects, assuming the contribution. As a result of this establishment it has been going to the contracts renegotiations and then it has been asking permission of European Commission for realization of these changes. This was determined some delays which were recuperated, additional clause at the contract with European Commission being registered with the number 510453 in March 3rd 2003.

☞ At this moment Vrancea County Prefecture has announced that the resort ministry has interdicted his financial participation at the project, even if exists a legal contract. This fact did not determine non-participation of prefecture members at the activities attributed to the institution (A.1, A.2, A.3, A.6, A.7, C.1, D.2, E.1, E.2, E.4), but we cannot estimate his participation way in the future. We will try to solve this problem, and we have the support of Vrancea County Prefecture to determine the continuation of partnership.



Section III: DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES

In the period **September 1st 2002– September 8th 2003**, in order to ensure the co-ordination of the projects activities, the creation of the team for the project management was necessary. This team has the following members:

1. **Mr. Silviu Chiriac**, – *project manager*
2. **Ms. Nadia Ivanof** – *project administrator*;
3. **Mr. Remus Dimulescu** – *project secretariat*;
4. **Mrs. Maria Pleșa** – *financial administrator*;
5. **Mr. Vasile Jalbă** – *executive director* ;

A. PREPARATORY ACTIONS, ELABORATION OF MANAGEMENT PLANS AND/OR OF ACTION PLANS

ACTION A.1: Creating a Working Group for project management

In order to create the Working Group for project management, in the period **September 1-15, 2002** took place the preparative discussions with the project partners. The discussions were carried out by the project secretariat established at EPI Vrancea headquarter.

At the beginning of the month, in **September 3, 2002**, project secretariat sent to partners letters of to inform them about the fact that EPI Vrancea signed the financial contract with the European Commission for the LIFE Nature project. These letters included the request to name in the shortest time possible, a representative of the institution to act as contact person in relation with the project secretariat. All partner institutions favourably answered and named their representatives before **September 26th, 2002**.

Project secretariat was subsequently informed each contact person within partner institutions about the addresses and contact details of all partners and established contact persons.

Following the discussions carried with the project partners, it was decided that the first partners meeting to take place on **September 26th, 2002**, at EPI Vrancea headquarter, the project beneficiary (Annex 8)



First partners meeting was organized with the aims of establishing the project workgroup, meeting the partners and invited observers, to inform them about the LIFE nature project objectives, the activities to be performed during it and the administrative regulations for the LIFE projects of the European Union (Standard Administrative Provision).

Representatives of the partner institutions, people from the working group and observers attended the meeting in Focsani, on **September 26th, 2002**. The people participating were:

- **Camelia Arvinte**, Director of the Department for the Relation with Syndicates and Business Holders from Vrancea County Prefecture;
- **Gheorghe Căpățână**, Production Director within Vrancea Forestry Department;
- **Maricica Dediu**, secretary of the Barsesti Town hall, Vrancea County;
- **Dana Tîlvăr**, engineer, Vrancea County Council;
- **Vasile Jalbă**, Chief-Inspector within Vrancea County Environmental Protection Inspectorate;
- **Silviu Chiriac**, Environmental Expert, Coordinator of the Department for Nature Protection and Protected Areas, Vrancea County Environmental Protection Inspectorate;
- **Remus Dimulescu**, President of the Association for Sustainable Development “Focul Viu”, Vrancea;
- **Nadia Ivanof**, Environmental Expert of the Association for Sustainable Development “Focul Viu”, Vrancea;
- **Laurențiu Rozyłowicz**, assistant of the University of Bucharest, member of the Centre for Environmental Research and Impact Studies;
- **Maria Pleșa**, financial manager within Vrancea County Environmental Protection Inspectorate.

The problems considered for discussions at this meeting were the following:

1. Main actions and deadlines;
2. Proposals for the Working Group;
3. Approval of the Working Group activity regulations, following the proposals of the nominated partners and invited participants;
4. Ensuring communication between partners;



5. Proposals for the Activity Regulations of the Consultative Council;
6. Discussing the components of the Consultative Council;
7. Approval of the time and place for the first meeting of the Consultative Council;
8. Approval, following the received proposals, of the working teams members:
 - The team for habitats inventory;
 - The GAP analysis team;
 - The team for the establishment of the local management plan;
 - The habitats restoration team;
 - The team for large carnivores monitoring.
9. Proposals for the project logo;
10. Technical and financial aspects: signing the contracts with each partner, proposals and ways of organizing the press conference to be held with the occasion of the first meeting of the Consultative Council etc.
11. Responsibilities of the contact persons.

During this meeting proposals were made for the components of the Working Group for the project management, proposals related to structure and activity regulations of the Working Group and the methodology regarding project management.

Also during this meeting, the partners agreement was obtained for specific issues related to the project management methodology. Thus, the Working Group will meet every time it is necessary in order to take important decisions for the project activities. It was decided that, in order to obtain necessary information, the research teams would contact only the directly interested partners, the others subsequently to be informed about it directly or through the reports and products created following the activities included in the project.

At the first meeting of partners in Focsani, the components of the Working Group for the project management was approved:

- Vasile Jalbă – EPI VRANCEA
- Silviu Chiriac – EPI VRANCEA
- Nadia Ivanof – ADD “Focul Viu”
- Remus Dimulescu – ADD “Focul Viu”



- Maria Pleșa – EPI VRANCEA
- Laurențiu Rozyłowicz– CCMESI – University of Bucharest
- Camelia Arvinte– VN Prefecture
- Gheorghe Căpățână– D.S. VRANCEA
- Maricica Dediu– Bîrsești Town hall
- Dana Tâlvăr– VRANCEA County Council
- Daniela Dumitrașcu- CCDG

This Working Group will enhance the decision-making process in order to achieve the project objectives with respect to the activities deadlines and avoiding the conflicting interests.

Simultaneously, the meeting had as an objective the preparation and approval of the informative materials, time and place of the first meeting of the Consultative Council for the approval of the Management Plan of LIFE02/NAT/RO/8576 project.

The Working Group agreed on the following structure of the working teams:

Members of the working teams

1. The team for habitats inventory:

- Nadia Ivanof – Environmental Expert of the Association for Sustainable Development “Focul Viu”, Vrancea – coordinator;
- Laurențiu Rozyłowicz – assistant of the University of Bucharest, member of the Centre for Environmental Research and Impact Studies;
- Viorel Popescu – research assistant CCMESI;
- Sorin Bănică – member Association for Sustainable Development “Focul Viu”, Vrancea;
- Gabriel Burghilea – Chief of the Lepsa Forestry District;
- Liviu Barbarau – Lepsa Forestry District Hunting Technician;
- Silviu Chiriac – EPI Vrancea;
- Vasile Jalbă – EPI Vrancea;
- Radu Sandu – Association for Sustainable Development “Focul Viu”, Vrancea.



2. *The GAP analysis team:*
 - Viorel Popescu – research assistant CCMESI – coordinator;
 - Cristian Tetelea – Ph. D. student University of Bucharest;
 - Vasile Jalba – Chief Inspector EPI Vrancea;
 - Gheorghe Căpățînă – Production Director – DS Vrancea.
3. *The habitats restoration team:*
 - Laurențiu Rozyłowicz – assistant of the University of Bucharest, member of the Centre for Environmental Research and Impact Studies – coordinator;
 - Viorel Popescu – research assistant CCMESI;
 - Vasile Jalba – Chief Inspector EPI Vrancea;
 - Alexandru Manole – Economist DS Vrancea;
 - Duta Gheorghe – Director DS Vrancea.
4. *The team for large carnivores monitoring:*
 - Laurențiu Rozyłowicz – assistant of the University of Bucharest, member of the Centre for Environmental Research and Impact Studies – coordinator;
 - Nadia Ivanof – Environmental Expert of the Association for Sustainable Development “Focul Viu”, Vrancea;
 - Silviu Chiriac - Environmental Expert, Coordinator of the Department for Nature Protection and Protected Areas, EPI Vrancea;
 - Viorel Popescu - research assistant CCMESI;
 - Felix Noaptes - DS Vrancea;
 - Bărbăra Liviu - DS Vrancea;
 - Sandu Cărlionu - DS Vrancea;
 - Gheorghe Micu - DS Vrancea.
5. *Equip for socio-economic analysis*
 - Cristian Ioja – research assistant CCMESI – coordinator;
 - Radu Necșuliu – Ph. D. student University of Bucharest;



- Gheorghe Căpățână - Production Director – DS Vrancea
- Radu Sandu – Association for Sustainable Development “Focul Viu”, Vrancea

The main interventions during this meeting belonged to:

◆ Mr. Chiriac Silviu, that presented the participants to this meeting, invited observers and the structure for the upper management, explaining to participants the role of each working team and the need that each partner actively involves in supporting the actions of the teams;

◆ Mr. Vasile Jalbă, talking about the fact that the proper institution to coordinate the field activities is Vrancea Forestry Department, having highly experienced foresters that can help to habitats inventory, large carnivores monitoring and protection of the future ecological network of protected areas;

◆ Mrs. Camelia Arvinte, which wanted to underline the position of her institution that expects an open dialog and cooperation between partner institutions;

◆ Mrs. Daniela Tâlvăr, which mentioned that the structure that she represents does not includes people qualified for field activities, emphasising the need for a change in the way partners get involved for the achievement of the objectives as proposed in the initial project;

◆ Mr. Remus Dimulescu, that as president of the Association for Sustainable Development “Focul Viu” wanted to underline the necessity that each institution identifies other funding sources that would support a campaign for the conservation of flora and fauna species in the habitats populated by large carnivores. Also mentioned was the fact that the raising awareness campaign needs to be supported by a campaign for eco-tourism encouraging in the region, correlated with actions for community development that will enhance large carnivores protection;

◆ Ms. Nadia Ivanof, which brought into discussion the promotion of projects objectives and the need to create the leaflet, the proposed form being necessary to include the LIFE logo and of Vrancea county, the county map that will contain Barsesti demonstrative area and project impact area.

ACTION A.2: Creating two bodies that will ensure the quality of the large carnivore management act: the Consultative Council and the Team for management act

Creation of the two bodies was performed during the first partners meeting from **September 26th, 2002**, when the constitution of the Consultative Council was proposed and approved. The Consultative Council includes local stakeholders, representatives of the local and regional administration, project partners, people with expertise in management and with major interest in applying the protection principles in the county, providing a quick access to decisional mechanisms and The Team for the Local Management Plan that will include



experienced researchers, will be interdisciplinary and will produce a management plan (Annex 8).

The aim of the meeting was to approve, following the discussions held in the Working Group, the constitution of the Consultative Council and of the team for the establishment of the local management plan, also the calendar of activities of these two bodies.

During the meeting, the role of the Consultative Council in the project was presented. According to the environmental legislation in force, all the protected areas will have to have a Management Plan. The creation of the Consultative Council represents an important step for the establishment of the management plan. The Consultative Council consists of 9 people, representatives of the local and regional administration, partners in the project. The Consultative Council will provide the access to decisional mechanisms and will enhance the process, avoiding the contradictory interests.

Consultative Council establishes the leading structure, the statute and the Management Plan of the ecological network for large carnivores from Vrancea County, considers each proposal, decides possible changes and signs the final proposals.

During this meeting it was approved the following composition of the organisms that will ensure the quality of the management acts: Consultative Council and the Team for the establishment of the management plan:

Consultative Council Members

1. **Eng. Vasile Jalbă** – Chief-Inspector within Vrancea County Environmental Protection Inspectorate;
2. **Eng. Titi Olteanu** – Vrancea Forestry Department;
3. **Eng. Daniela Tîlvăr** – Vrancea County Council;
4. **Professor Maria Pătroescu** – University of Bucharest;
5. **Eng. Costică Hîrșu** – Major, Bârsești Town hall
6. **Silviu Chiriac** – Environmental Expert, Coordinator of the Department for Nature Protection and Protected Areas, Vrancea County Environmental Protection Inspectorate;
7. **George Băeșu** – Prefect, Vrancea County Prefecture
8. **Ștefan Ciurescu** – ADD "Focul Viu" Focșani.

The debates regarding the working team started with proposals made by the representatives of each partner and after the analysis of these proposals, the following composition was agreed:



The team for the establishment of the local management plan:

- Cristian Iojă – research assistant CCMESI – coordinator
- Silviu Chiriac – Environmental Expert, Coordinator of the Department for Nature Protection and Protected Areas, Vrancea County Environmental Protection Inspectorate;
- Gheorghe Căpățână – Production Director – Vrancea Forestry Department;

The team for the establishment of the management plan will cooperate with the team for habitats inventory, the responsible of the conservation activities and with partner institutions.

The main interventions during this debate belonged to:

◆ Mr. Laurențiu Rozyłowicz, Representative of the Working Group from CCMESI, which stated that the teams composition has to be multidisciplinary in order to be able to handle all the problems related to the accomplishment of the actions, emphasising that CCMESI will provide highly trained people with expertise in implementing projects related to environmental protection and biodiversity conservation;

◆ Mr. Chiriac Silviu, that explained to participants the role that each team has and the need that each partner or institution gets involved in supporting the activities of the working teams;

◆ Mr. Gheorghe Căpățână, that mentioned the fact that people with good knowledge on the hunting areas and also people used to the difficulties enforced by the environmental conditions, and the team for the establishment of the management plan needs to include people familiar with the social-economic context from Vrancea County but also well-informed on the causes that led to the increasing of large carnivores species vulnerability that the project is focusing on;

◆ Mr. Chiriac Silviu, mentioning the fact that it is possible to shift the deadline for the Consultative Council meeting due to the changes that must be done in the initial budget, element that generate a delay in signing the contracts between EPI Vrancea and partners; this change in the budget must be approved by the European Commission, but he guaranteed that all the project actions will be achieved according to the established deadlines so that problems should not appear in key stage development.

Following the proposals regarding the time for the first meeting of the Consultative Council, the date of **January 25th, 2003** was chosen.

The preparation of the documents for the first meeting of the Consultative Council was performed between **January 6 – 17, 2003** by the project secretariat as it follows:



– For the members of the Consultative Council, a folder was prepared including the following documents: project abstract and main objectives, activities to be performed in the project, the reasons for which these activities are necessary and the expected outcomes with an emphasis on the management plan of the ecological network; the importance of the Consultative Council, its role in the project and the activities it performs, including the deadlines for these activities; the members of the Consultative Council and institutions that they belong to; the composition of the team for the establishment of the management plan; the leaflet for the dissemination of project objectives created by the Media Team; the press release sent by the Media Team to the local, regional and national media representatives; For the media representatives invited to this event, 10 folders were prepared with the following content: press release, description of the main elements of the project (aim and objectives, partners, expected outcomes, the reasons for which the project is necessary, the project period, the main activities), the leaflet for the dissemination of project objectives.

The meeting of the Consultative Council for the establishment of the management plan started at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 12.30 p.m. with a *press conference* for the dissemination of the project objectives.

The problems brought into discussion were:

1. Announcing the members of the team for the establishment of the management plan for the protection and conservation of the large carnivores;
2. Presenting the four main stages of the establishment of the management plan for the protection and conservation of the large carnivores in the western part of Vrancea county;
3. Proposal for creating an informative point inside Barsesti Town hall;
4. Establishment of the date for the official opening of the Large Carnivores Monitoring Centre in Vrancea County;
5. Proposal for introducing the observation file for the foresters to use during patrol missions.

The members of the team for the establishment of the management plan of the ecological network for the protection of large carnivores have as final objective the establishment of the management plan for the protection and conservation of large carnivores in western part of Vrancea County. For this reason, four main stages were proposed together with deadlines for them:

*Stage 1 (Deadline **March 2003**)*

Establishment of the principles for the protection of large carnivores.

*Stage 2 (Deadline **July 2004**)*



Establishment of the statute for the ecological network (for the juridical recognition of this act).

Stage 3 (Deadline February 2005)

Planning of the activities for large carnivores conservation.

Stage 4 (Deadline July 2005)

Compensation scheme for the damages produced by the large carnivores.

The main interventions during the Consultative Council meeting belonged to:

- Mr. Vasile Jalbă, that presented a short description of the project development so far and also the aim of the project, mentioning the fact that EPI Vrancea involved in the project all the institutions with activities in natural resources management, local and county public authorities, research and development institutions and also representatives of the civil society (two NGOs ADD “Focul Viu” Focșani and CCDG);
- Mr. Silviu Chiriac, which gave a short presentation of the performed and ongoing activities, mentioning the fact that the first steps were already made in analysis and identification of priority habitats for large carnivores that are not yet under protection; for the establishment of the Large Carnivores Monitoring Centre, it is necessary to seek for another location, the initial one not offering all the utilities and enough space; he also presented the leaflets created in Action A3 and also the media activities performed until now;
- Mr. Cristian Iojă, presenting the objectives proposed by the team for the establishment of the management plan and evolution stages, and also the work methodology of the team, mentioning the fact that the materials will be created for each stage and these materials will be presented to all the members of the Consultative Council and discussed for their approval;
- Mr. Chiriac, mentioning the fact that in what regards cooperation with the Forestry Department, the people from this institution are highly motivated and offer all the support for the project activities;
- Mr. Gheorghe Căpățână mentioned that AJVPS holds 25% from the hunting areas, so the association should be contacted, in this direction being possible to sign an additional act between Vrancea Forestry Department and AJVPS;
- Mr. Chiriac underlined the fact that some problems appeared in the structure of Vrancea Forestry Department and these are the two commercial societies that replaced Năruja and Tulnici Forestry Districts;
- Mrs. Maria Pătroescu, which mentioned the training course for rangers and the need to correlate their knowledge with the project interests. That is why she proposed to develop an observation file having a significant importance in individual perception. The file



should include standard observation (some made by tick in a box) and a wider space for individual observation. She underlined that the handbooks for the courses should be conceived in a proper language and not to pass to a too technical language. She also mentioned that this project should be successful not only in one field but in several.

ACTION A.3: Preparatory promotion of the project act

Project aim dissemination was performed through the development of preparative campaign with the specific target of attracting support of the local stakeholders through leaflets and press releases in the local, regional and national media.

For the dissemination of the project aim, the media team realised the concept of the leaflet in **September 2002 – November 2002**. The leaflet (Romanian and English version) was subsequently revised from **November 2002 to December 1st, 2002**.

At the beginning of **December 2002**, the final form of the leaflet was finalised and, after analysing the offers, the printing house offering the best ratio quality-price was chosen. For a better dissemination of the project objectives and to a wider audience, it was decided to print 4000 leaflets instead of 3000.

The printing of the English version of the leaflet was performed in **December 9-16 2002**, 1000 pieces, and the Romanian version **December 9-20 2002**, 3000 pieces.

A week before the Consultative Council meeting in Focsani, the project secretariat realised a *press folder* containing the following: press release, description of the project main elements (aim and objectives, partners, expected outcomes, the reasons for which the project is necessary, the project period, the main activities), the leaflet for project objectives dissemination.

The press release was remitted to the local, regional and national newspapers, radio and television stations.

In order to promote the project objectives in the project area, leaflets were shared depending on the priorities:

a) Leaflet and press release: Focșani (City hall, prefecture, Forestry Department, County Council and schools); Adjud, Mărășești, Odobești Panciu (schools and institutions);

b) Leaflet (schools): Andreiașu, Bârsești, Chiojdeni, Câmpuri, Dumitrești, Gura – Calitei, Mera, Năruja, Nereju, Nistorești, Paltin, Păunești, Poiana Cristei, Reghiu, Soveja, Străoane, Tulnici, Valea Sării, Vidra, Vintileasca, Vizantea, Vrâncioaia.

In **September 26th, 2002**, after the first partners meeting, a *press conference* took place with the participation of the Consultative Council members (Vasile Jalbă, Maria Pătroescu, Silviu Chiriac).



ACTION A.4: Habitats inventory for *Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus* and *Lynx lynx* in Vrancea county

The action regarding **Habitats inventory for *Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus*, *Lynx lynx* in Vrancea County** had as objectives identification of the existing habitats in the distribution area of large carnivores and their hierarchisation depending on the anthropic impact. Habitats identification is a result of the cooperation between University of Bucharest, EPI Vrancea, Vrancea Forestry Department and Association for Sustainable Development “Focul Viu”. (formerly named EST Sinistrații Focșani).

Several approaches were used for the characterisation of habitats: geologic, geomorphologic, climatic, pedologic, of vegetation and fauna, human activities. The results of this investigation are presented in Annex no. 9 și 11.

For the achievement of this action several stages of habitats mapping and existing information gathering were performed. The Tișița area (over 2500 ha) a detailed mapping of the vegetal formation was performed.

The status of the habitats populated with large carnivores required the synthesis of a large amount of information, with the specific aim of elaborating a **static model of habitats** which to be possible to improve once the telemetric data are acquisitioned. The model is realised on two stages: characterisation of habitats on hunting areas (see Annex no. 9) and identification of habitats by combining GIS and machine learning methods. The model was realised using the following software: ArcView 3.2, ArcGIS 8.3 and Erdas Imagine and 3D Analyst and Spatial Analyst extensions. In addition, Patch and Habitat Analyst extensions were used for calculating the landscape correlation degree.

GIS Model for habitats suitability includes the following data: *altimetry, streams network, localities, land use, roads network, hunting areas, forest parcels*. The model was almost entirely established, the single to be completed being the forest parcels layer. The latter was established only for the phase of superior units. GIS model allowed realising several graphical representation of the space, providing a correct image on the physical characteristics of the habitat (aspect, slope, terrain ruggedness, streams network density, elevation, etc.). The model will be subsequently exploited to correlate the habitats distribution with the real distribution of large carnivores. The main use of the GIS model will be the support ensured to the establishment of the ecological network for large carnivores protection.

The model was structured in 5 sub-models having as aim characterisation of some patches using the suitability degree for each focused species: core security area, den suitability, physical, prey base, displacement, connectivity.

Core security area sub-model is based on the argument that the habitats less accessible and those less used to the humans (pristine conditions) are the most favourable for maintaining some viable population. Thus, through buffering roads by 1 km the habitats offering maximum of security were delimited. Habitats accessibility map shows that in



Vrancea County there are large surfaces offering maximal security to large carnivores. The models also emphasises the main barriers for animals migration.

Physical sub-model is based on the presumption that physical elements of the habitats are conditioning both the large carnivores and their prey distribution. For example, bears and wolves prefer to use for motion during the winters the accessible valleys and they change their home range during the summer by moving to areas more covered with forests and to mountains ridges. This model allows the visualisation of motion routes, composed from habitats or patches united by natural elements. Slope, aspect and elevation represent favourable or restrictive factors for these species and some of their prey motion. This sub-model led to the elaboration of the map of the physical environment suitability for large carnivores in the summer. For the winter, a new element was introduced and this is the thickness of the snow layer that induces a higher restrictivity especially for wolves and lynxes that have difficulties walking through snow thicker than 50 cm.

Dens suitability Sub-model uses hydrologic and pedologic layers. Large carnivores prefer for dens fixed soils close to waters. Forest formation type is also important, this attribute being used for the hierarchy of the habitats suitable for dens hosting.

Prey base sub-model was applied on the data from the Forestry Department on the ungulates density and diversity. This model is used to improve the previous results because it is considered that for a moderate degree of human impact a viable population of large carnivores can exist if a high density of ungulates exists. It is the case of Tisita area, where although a core security areas does not exist, it hosts a surprisingly high population of large carnivores, especially due to the important population of chamois.

Displacement sub-model considers the following elements: roads effect, human population effects, land use. For this sub-model, there were created maps for roads distribution, roads density and land use (on satellite images LANDSAT 7 MSS using tasselled cap, NDVI and natural colour functions).

Habitats connectivity sub-model was created to be integrated in least-cost path analysis for summer and winter conditions using Animal Movement Analysis and BIOTAS package.

Digital Terrain Model was delivered on two CD-ROMs (Annex 19) by Mr. Sorin Bănică, member of ADD “Focul Viu” Focșani **May 22nd, 2003**, being created in the period **October 1st, 2002 – 1 aprilie 2003**, during this period being created the following:

- For the database necessary in executing thematic maps, it was used the topographic base provided by he maps of Topographic Division (1: 25 000 for the mountain and hill area and 1: 50 000 for the plain area);
- The number of topographic maps in which mountainous area can be found was of 17, and the one for the plain area was of 28;



- Due to the necessity of a detailed cartography and an precise calculation of lengths and surfaces, it was necessary to geo-reference the 45 topographic maps (digitally transposed in the projection used in Romania for that area – Gauss-Kruger, zone 35);
- After the above-mentioned base was created, information layers were executed in digital format in order to be used in creating thematic maps;

A first delivery was made on **February 15th, 2003**; after a revision of the information layers, the final delivery was made on **May 22nd, 2003**.

This general model is not definitive; telemetry data will be introduced in the period September 2003 – September 2004. Because this data do not exist at national level, it was impossible to obtain data for MCP (minim convex polygon) for none of the species. Thus, these models cannot be compared with information about habitats use by the large carnivores species.

ACTION A.5: GAP analysis of the protected areas system in Vrancea county reported to large carnivores species distribution

The report regarding the *GAP Analysis of the protected areas system in Vrancea County reported to large carnivores species distribution* (Annex 10) represents an important step in the activity of elaborating and implementing a large carnivore species conservation regime in Vrancea County. The purpose of this type of Analysis is to verify if the present protected areas system satisfies the needs for protection of the large carnivore species and to identify the gaps between the protected areas and the habitats populated by large carnivores.

The protected areas system in Vrancea County mountain region suffered important changes in the past ten years. First of all, the total surface of the protected areas decreased from 13456 ha in 1992, to 1795 ha in 2000. Second, there is a need of assessment for the remained areas in order to establish if the object of protection still exists.

The necessary data and information for elaborating the Gap Analysis were: the Digital Model of the Vrancea County mountain area (the Digital Terrain Model, land use, forestry parcels, river stream), the standard forms for protected areas description (from Focșani EPI), information on large carnivore species effectives and spatial distribution (from Vrancea Forestry Department).

The first step in conducting the Gap Analysis is mapping of the land use. Forests that are managed by the Vrancea Forestry Department and Village Councils occupy most of the surface.

The second element is to realize the large carnivore species distribution maps. It was conducted by analysing the data for the eleven Hunting Areas and through direct discussions with the Forestry Department personnel in charge with the game (the game wardens). Due to the lack of data, the distribution maps for each species present only the areas with high densities of individuals. Even so, there can be highlighted three maximum concentration areas, corresponding to the Condratu, Pietrosu and Căldări hunting areas. According to the



Forestry Department data, the approximate number of individuals for each species in the project area is: 240 - 250 bears, 75 - 80 wolves and 60 - 65 lynxes.

The third type of data used in Gap Analysis is the stewardship categories. The land stewardship map combines attributes of ownership, management, and a measure of intent to maintain biodiversity. GAP assigns a ranking for land parcels (from 1 to 4), which is called stewardship. Status one lands have the highest degree of management for conservation and status four lands have the lowest. Only 2% of this region is properly managed for biodiversity conservation (represented by the protected areas network). Although some of the protected areas are established in areas with maximum density of Large Carnivores, the small surfaces cannot ensure a proper conservation.

In conclusion, the analysis revealed the fact that there are gaps between the spatial distribution of large carnivore species and the areas managed for conservation (the 2nd class of stewardship areas). The surfaces included in the 2nd class (the present system of protected areas) must be increased until the resulted surface will protect characteristic habitats in order to respond to the large carnivores species conservation needs.

Regarding the practical aspects of the Gap Analysis, it is the basis for elaborating preliminary proposals for establishing an Ecological Network for large carnivore species conservation in Vrancea County. An *Ecological Network* represents a network of interconnected protected areas and zones with the purpose to ensure the long-term conservation of the natural habitats. It includes *core areas*, *buffer areas*, *biological corridors* and *ecological rehabilitation areas*.

The preliminary proposals for the Ecological Network, elaborated together with all the partners in the project are based on the protected areas network established by the Law no 5/2000 (2nd stewardship class). It will be extended through buffer areas surrounding them and the local interest protected areas, established by the Vrancea County Council Decision no 12/1992.

There were proposed 10 areas that are totally or partially overlapped to existing protected areas, and might be considered that they include both core and buffer areas. Beside them, after conducting telemetry measurements and snow tracking, there will be identified the transit corridors of the large carnivore species between the areas with high densities and will be added to the Ecological Network.

ACTION A.6: Livestock and human settlements evaluation from habitats populated with *Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus* and *Lynx lynx*.

The action begun on the 12th of January 2003 by mapping the human settlements within the habitats populated by the large carnivores species, and also obtaining data on their physical dimensions and inhabitants. Another goal was to map and evaluate the sheepfolds from the specific large carnivores habitats, in order to have the correct picture of the real situation in the western part of Vrancea County and to adapt the local conservation program to large carnivore species protection.



Knowing the social and economic characteristics of the communes in the western part of Vrancea County is necessary for: adapting the measures taken in the Ecological Network management plan according to the real economic and social conditions, setting up a compensation scheme for the damages provoked by large carnivores, assessing the human impact on the environment, especially on the large carnivores, identifying the social, economic and environmental problems that are specific to the western part of Vrancea County and proposing realistic measures in order to diminish them and to realize a solid scientific base to support the decision-making process for the local authorities in the field of resources management.

Main objectives of this action referred to obtaining statistical data on the sheepfolds and human settlements in the mountain area of Vrancea County, regarding the frequency of large carnivores attacks on the sheepfolds and human settlements and realizing a scientific report.

The stages for accomplishing the action goals, between **December 2002** and **August 2003** were:

- Establishing the area where the sheepfolds and human settlements will be evaluated;
- Establishing the necessary statistical information and requesting them from the institutions that were able to give them;
- Obtaining the statistical data from them National Institute for Statistics and the Vrancea County Commission for Statistics for the 15 communes;
- Consulting the territory plans for the 15 communes from the western part of Vrancea County;
- Obtaining information on the sheepfolds from the localities in the western part of Vrancea County, according to the requests previously formed;
- Analyzing the statistical data on the population, land use, infrastructure, economic activities, natural disasters;
- Realizing a references list for the communes in the western part of Vrancea County;
- Realizing maps and other graphic materials for emphasising the social and economic features;
- Gathering all the information regarding the activities of livestock growth and sheepfolds in the Bârsești, Nereju, Năruja, Vrâncioaia, Paltin, Vintileasca and Tulnici communes;



- Realizing a standard form for recording the large carnivores attacks, that was forwarded to a few pilot – sheepfolds, in order to analyse the efficiency of the system for monitoring the impact of the large carnivores on the livestock growth;
- Elaborating a form for describing the sheepfolds from the western part of Vrancea County;
- Mapping the sheepfolds;
- Evaluation of the damages caused by the large carnivores;
- Elaborating the final report for sheepfolds evaluation and emphasizing the relations between the large carnivores and livestock growers.

The activities mentioned above permitted the accomplishing of all the goals of the action. There were obtained statistical information on the sheepfolds and humans settlements in the mountain area and the frequency of the large carnivores attacks. An important problem in acquiring the needed information is the fact that the local authorities didn't had a database on the local pasturing and livestock related activities. Because of this situation, for some communes, like Vintileasca, the only reliable data was only the general context.

The scientific report was finished in **May 2003** and includes the written part, the tables, the graphs and maps. The scientific report is composed from nine chapters, as it follows:

1. General aspects

The chapter presents the study objectives, its importance in the project and the main activities to accomplish the objectives.

2. The history of the Vrancea County population evolution

There are presented the evolution of the population in the western part of Vrancea County, the phenomena that were the basis for establishing settlements and traditional economic activities. The chapter emphasizes the importance of the pasturing activities related to the settlements dynamic in the western part of Vrancea County.

3. Demographic aspects

The statistical data permitted a detailed analysis of the demographic aspects that are characteristic for the area. The following aspects were analyzed: time and spatial dynamics, mobility, birth rate and mortality, age, sex, religion and nationality structures, human resources, education level, healthcare. A series of demographic problems were identified:

- Population number decreasing between 1968 – 2002 due to a low birth rate, a high mortality and migration;
- Heterogeneous spatial distribution;



- Uneven sex ratio;
- Uneven age structure due to population ageing;
- Low weight of active population;
- Low weight of the employed population;
- Low level of education.

This kind of problems can determine an increment of the pressure on natural resources, with devastating consequences on the large carnivores habitats. So, it is necessary to impose urgent demographic politics in order to stop the continuous decreasing of the population and to improve the level of education.

4. *Endowments*

There are presented the endowments of the localities from the western part of Vrancea County (electricity, sewerage, fresh water supplying system, heating, postal and telecommunications services, waste management and communication network).

5. *Natural hazards*

The natural hazards are important due to their role in the dynamics of the economic activities. So, the slope processes, like landslides, torrents and ravines are important land degradation factors.

6. *The land use*

The land use distinguishes the economic profile of the communes and the type of human intervention. Most of the studied area is covered by forests (66,7%) so the natural index is quite high. Also, in the category of agricultural land, a large surface is used as pastures and hayfields, showing the development of the livestock growing.

In this chapter, the land use categories and their time and spatial dynamics in the studied area were analyzed and the human pressure indexes were calculated.

7. *Economic activities*

In this chapter the specific categories of economic activities were analyzed. A special attention was paid to agricultural activities (farming and livestock growing), which are the main activities in the study area. There were emphasized the main factors that influence the development of the agricultural activities. For the livestock growing, the spatial and time dynamics of the livestock on species (sheep, cattle, pigs, horses, chicken and beehives) was identified, in order to establish their potential impact on the large carnivores habitats.

There were analyzed the other categories of economic activities developed in the western part of Vrancea County: forestry, hunting, fishing, industry, tourism and commerce.



The specific industrial activities are related to wood exploitations and wood primary processing, food industry (fruit processing).

The tourism is an activity with a great developing potential, but the poor infrastructure makes it less important.

8. *Sheepfolds evaluation*

The pasturing activities are the most exposed to the large carnivores attacks, especially when the activities are carried out in the mountains. The domestic animals are an easy to obtain meal, so they become a point of attraction for the large carnivores, especially in the periods with poor food sources.

For realizing this activity, statistical data from the Mayor's Halls were obtained and local shepherders were questioned.

The following aspects were approached:

- *Pastures characteristics*, in order to assess the livestock growth activities;
- *The ways the herds access the pastures*, in order to show the potential risk of attack of the large carnivores;
- *The pasturing period*, in order to identify the period in which the domestic animals stay in the mountain area;
- *Sheepfolds' localization* for identifying the areas with a high frequency of attacks;
- *Technical characterization of the sheepfolds* for assessing the conditions;
- *The livestock number* for assessing the impact of the livestock growing activities on the large carnivores habitats and the risk to record damages due to the attacks;
- *The security system* for establishing the efficiency, the economic rentability of the pasturing activities and the risk to record large carnivores attacks and damages;
- *Disorders determined by pasturing* for assessing the impact on the environment of these activities;
- *Disorders at the sheepfolds* in order to identify the problems the livestock growers are confronting with;
- *The way the products are commercialised*, in order to assess the rentability of the activity;
- *The sheepfold personnel* in order to evaluate the education level of the people involved in sheep growing;



- *Evaluation of the damages caused by the large carnivores* in order to establish the impact of the large carnivores upon pasturing activities;
- *Evaluation of the annual profit of the sheepfolds* in order to establish the rentability of the pasturing activities;

A complex analysis of the sheepfolds within the Tulnici commune was realized also, because in this case, detailed information was obtained.

The average number of the killed animals, caused by large carnivores is 3-4 sheep per year for each sheepfold, but the number varies much depending on the year, the sheepfold and the localization of the sheepfold. In 2002, the situation was as it follows: 3-4 sheep in Nistorești commune, 10 sheep for a sheepfold of 400 sheep in Chiojdeni commune (it is possible that the value could be exaggerated, because the sheepfold is situated in a hilly area, not into the mountains), 2-3 sheep for a sheepfold of 200 sheep in Vizantea-Livezi commune, 3 sheep for a sheepfold of 400 sheep in Negrilești commune, between 1 and 5 sheep in Tulnici commune for 200-500 individuals sheepfolds, 2 sheep per sheepfold of 200 sheep in Soveja commune, 10-15 sheep for a sheepfold of 400 sheepfold in Paltin commune, 7-8 sheep for a sheepfold of 500 sheep in Năruja commune.

Most of the livestock damages are caused by the bear and the wolf and the weight of the attacks are: Chiojdeni (most are wolf attacks), Vrâncioaia (bear attacks); Bârsești, Jitia, Nistorești, Paltin (bear and wolf attacks); Năruja, Tulnici, Valea Sării, Vidra (wolf, bear and lynx attacks).

In conclusion, the pasturing activities are an important income and food source for most of the communes from the western part of Vrancea County. Though, from the information obtained from the local authorities and livestock growers, it can be noticed that there are just a few cases when the rentability of the pasturing activities is seriously threatened. Due to the fact that the area is characterized by a low economic development, any small damage influences the welfare of the population.

9. *References*

There was realized a references list with 73 titles regarding the study area, the pasturing activities in Romania and different methods used for elaborating the scientific report.

Action A.7: Establishment of a local plan for large carnivores conservation in Vrancea County

The activities for establishing a habitat's management plan begun in **December 2002** by elaborating the habitat preservation principles.

The team for establishing the habitat's management plan, lead by Mr. Cristian Ioja realized a draft material that was sent to the project partners on **April the 5th 2003**. This draft material suffered modifications during the meeting of the Working Group members and until



April the 11th 2003 the partners had to submit the modifications for completion of the material.

The report *Principles of the Ecological Network for large carnivores protection management plan from the western part of Vrancea County* was finished on April the 18th 2003 and was presented for approval to the members of the Consultative Council on May the 24th 2003 at Focșani, Vrancea County.

The meeting at Focșani was organized by the Vrancea EPI in collaboration with the Association for Sustainable Development « Focul Viu » Focșani.

The goal of the meeting was to approve the principles of the Ecological Network for large carnivores protection management plan from the western part of Vrancea County.

During the Consultative Council meeting, the following aspects were debated:

- 1) Presentation of the members;
- 2) Presentation of the main objective of the project - the Ecological Network Management Plan;
- 3) The role of the Consultative Council in establishing the management plan;
- 4) Presentation of the management plan establishing principles;
- 5) Debates regarding the management plan principles;
- 6) Approval of the final draft of the principles;
- 7) The press conference.

The report *Principles of the Ecological Network for large carnivores protection management plan from the western part of Vrancea County* is composed from the following:

- **The Law Frame that demonstrates the existence of the protected area** – it includes the Romanian and European laws regarding the biodiversity conservation measures;

- **Explanations:**

The management plan - definition, aim, objectives

- **Principles of the Ecological Network for large carnivores protection management plan from the western part of Vrancea County** – there were defined and explained the following general principles that will support the activity to realize the management plan:

The first principle is the *unitary general opinion* which specifies that in establishing a management plan there must be a whole, global way of thinking. This principle aims the



creation of a unitary picture of an area through cooperation between the Forestry Districts and Vrancea EPI, in order to increase the efficiency of the protected areas.

The next principle is the *sustainable development principle*, the improvement of the quality of life and ensuring the management coherence; the management plan aims the natural and cultural heritage management improvement, by promoting activities with low environmental impact:

- Preserving and putting to good use the natural environment - the management plan promotes the natural resources exploitations respecting the protection and conservation measures;

- Promoting the establishment of local territorial planning by integrating the objectives of the *Ecological Network for large carnivores conservation* – it is necessary in order to ensure that the management plan constitutes a premise for local and regional social - economic development and a way to protect the natural and cultural resources of the territory;

- Maintaining and developing sustainable agricultural activities that will grant the conservation of natural habitats and landscapes and large carnivore species – solving the human - large carnivores conflicts in the sheepfolds represents one of the objectives of the management plan for the *Ecological Network for large carnivores conservation*;

- Promoting the adequate development of the forests and game species – the management plan for the *Ecological Network for large carnivores conservation* aims the protection of the forestry resources and promotion of the traditional methods of exploitation, according the rules of the Forestry Code;

- Encouraging the ecological tourism by respecting the local equilibrium – the management plan doesn't want to impose an action plan for tourism development, but to propose alternatives for the economic development of the area;

- Local services management – the management plan aims to settle the local services that prejudice the environment and local communities (waste waters, inappropriate resource exploitation, landfills etc);

- Informing the local population and developing permanent education – represent different ways for long-term development, as long as the human resources doesn't migrate;

- Improving the quality of life, ensuring the carrying out of existing low impact activities and assessing the environmental impact – the management plan represents a tool for the promotion of the low impact activities and the restriction of the activities that seriously affect the environment and local communities.

The principle of *respecting local autonomy* refers to the importance of the local administrations for the Ecological Network for large carnivores conservation, due to the fact



that decisions taken at this level have a immediate reflection in the natural environment; in conclusion, the local autonomy may represent a tool for promoting activities that are usually taken at higher levels.

The principle of *precaution and transparency in the decision - making process* is an useful environmental instrument for avoiding the appearance of malfunctioning areas, but doesn't impose the exclusion of the environment impact aspects of different activities. This principle must be the basis of all the decisions in the western part of Vrancea County, in order to stop the increase of the land degradation processes that involve significant costs that cannot be supported by the local communities; also, the lack of scientific data must not be used as a reason for postponing the measures for avoiding or reducing the risk of loosing or diminishing biodiversity.

Another principle is the *biodiversity conservation* and there were described the concepts and instruments promoted by the European Directive 92/43/EEC.

The principle of *informing and integrating the population* in the activities developed in the Ecological Network for large carnivores conservation aims to emphasize real measures for integrating local population in the management plan activities, especially by promoting the benefits resulted from the new type of management of the area and the local communities must be convinced that no prejudices can result by applying this type of management and territorial planning.

The principle of *improving and reconstructing the damaged ecosystems and landscapes* aims to realize and apply a set of politics and strategies for the protection and conservation of the natural environment; most of the lack of balance is due to the short-time facilities given to different local communities or economic agents.

The last principle is the *correlation of the actions to the real situation* and application of adequate measures by different institutions, with the specification that applying theoretical measures for solving real problems may have unwanted effects both in economic and social levels.

After the meeting of the Consultative Council held on the **24th of May 2003**, there were approved the *Principles of the Ecological Network for large carnivores protection management plan from the western part of Vrancea County* (Annex 13).

At this time, the workgroup is elaborating the statute of the Ecological Network and the team for the management plan is developing a draft material that will be sent to all the partners in the project and will be presented to the Consultative Council in **July 2004**.



C. NON-RECURRING MANAGEMENT

ACTION C.1: Restructuring the habitats populated with large carnivores through the establishment of an ecological network for large carnivores protection in Vrancea county

The C1 action has begun in respect with initial planning, in July 2003, after finalisation of actions A4, A5 and A6. It was named the equip for implementation of this action and was announced the terms for realisation of the deliverable products: feasibility study, marking the ecological network protection system, improvement of feeding stations.

In the first stage was realised the synthesis of information about habitats populated by large carnivore in Vrancea county on the base of informations provided by the following reports: A4 – Habitats inventory for *Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus*, *Lynx lynx* in Vrancea County; A5 – Gap analysis of the protected areas system in Vrancea County reported to large carnivores species distribution and A 6; Livestock and human settlements evaluation form habitats populated with *Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus*, *Lynx lynx*.

In this moment has begun the realisation of feasibility study for the ecological protection network: legal frame description, aims of ecological network, selection of areas included in ecological network, zoning the ecological protection network.

ACTION C.2: Creation of the centre for large carnivores monitoring (Large Carnivore Monitoring Centre) – Țiganul Creek

Between **November, 15th 2002 – March, 2003** it has developed the working for arrange Large Carnivores Monitoring Centre, location contract of building being signed in **March, 12^{sd} 2003** and it has finished in **April, 2003**.

The team responsible for this action is formed by:

- Silviu Chiriac – EPI VN
- Alexandru Manole – VN DS
- Cristian Tetelea – CCMESI

In the initial project, the location for the centre was proposed at the Țiganu Creek. The team responsible with this action have verified the condition offered by Țiganu Creek Forestry District. With this occasion it has been establish the following:

- Forestry district is not connected at the power energy network;
- Forestry access road witch made the connection with national road DN2D is impracticable in winter conditions;
- Drinking water sources presents a high seasonal variation;



- This area is very rare frequented with tourists because of road forestry quality.

In these conditions the team has decided to analyse other possible location on Condratu hunting area (the same area like Tiganul Creek).

After studying of all options it has been made the decision to arrange with minimum costs two rooms in the forestry district Lepşa III, located in Tulnici commune, Lepşa village, in an area with maximum density of large carnivores and with a high tourist flow.

Against the fact that the space is insufficient for the LCMC goal (app. 25 sq. m), and the possibility of arrange of some strictly necessary rooms for accommodation is very low (it does not exist a kitchen and a resting room), on **March 12th 2003** was signed the contract no. 1564 with VN DS for realising the LCMC at Lepşa III Forestry District (Annex 21)

Beginning with this date it has been started the arrange work of LCMC, these activities being realised by the project team members. Against the fact that the works has been developed with difficulty because of superpose of other activities, on **April, 18th 2003** was finalised the LCMC arranging.

The LCMC was equipped with the instruments necessary to the monitoring activities (GPS, telemetry equipment, computer, IR and normal binoculars etc). The accommodation for team member in Condratu and Macradeu area was provided centre beginning with **April, 18th 2003**. LCMC provide telemetry monitoring and normal telemetry, having in the same time also an educational role and like an tourist informational point.

With the Earth Day occasion, on **April, 22nd 2003** was organised the official opening of LCMCM.

In the future we analyse the possibility to place the centre in an other location witch to provide optimum develop of monitoring action.

ACTION C.3: Training session for the ecological network for large carnivores protection guardians/rangers

Beginning with **June, 15th 2003** it started the participants selection for ensuring the training for the ecological network for large carnivores protection rangers. VN DS has select a group of 23 persons among witch 3 persons for each forestry district among of 7 forestry district and one person from two forestry district in plain area, witch will participate at 4 training sessions with 6 participants each. The selection of guarding team was finalised at the ending of August 2003. The participants training will be make after courses structured and made of specialists from CCMESI Bucharest University.

Courses structure for ecological network protection guardian has realized in period **June, 15th - August, 15th 2003** and it include the following courses (Annex 14):

- *Protected areas* (maximum duration 8 hours), having as objectives: the understanding of protected area concept and of principals indicators witch characterize



different types of protected areas; catching the actual situation of protected areas in Vrancea county; knowing of principals legislative acts from biodiversity conservation area.

- *Vrancea Mountains – socio-economics realities* (maximum duration 8 hours), having as objectives: knowing of social and economic realities witch define the west of Vrancea county; evidencing of natural and tourist potential of Vrancea Mountain.
- *Large carnivores in west of Vrancea county* (maximum duration 8 hours), having as objectives: knowing of some general aspects about large carnivores species ecology; evidencing the actual situation of large carnivores number in Vrancea county;the inventory modality of large carnivores number; large carnivores protection.
- *Ranger job* (maximum duration 8 hours), having as objectives: clear delimitation of ranger attributions inside the ecological network in the west of Vrancea county; evidencing the general and specific ranger attributions; presentation of ranger integration in administrative structure of ecological network in West of Vrancea county; evidencing the rangers relationship with local authorities, resources administrators, local communities and tourists; presentation of large carnivores protection possibilities.
- *Communication, presentation and resolving conflicts techniques* (duration 8 hours), having as objectives: developing the communication abilities and conflicts resolving; understanding the oral or write communication part for fulfilling the general and specific attributions of rangers.

It is following that the course structure to be definitive in November, 2003 and the course contain in December, 2003. The training season duration is one week and it will be develop in some of Forestry Department chalet and at the end of the course (witch will begin in November, 2003), Bucharest University along with Forestry Department and VN EPI will emit a certificate for rangers course absolving.

D. RECURRING MANAGEMENT

ACTION D.1: Ursus arctos, Canis lupus and Lynx lynx populations monitoring

The large carnivore monitoring activities is one of the most important in the project. This activity will assure the scientific support for initiation of ecological network for large carnivore protection and the realisation of and local management plan for large carnivore protection.

In order to run out the monitoring activities was made the following steps:

- The consultation with other team who run such activities (especially LIFERO/NAT/RO/6435);
- Identification of necessary equipments and purchasing;



- Organising the meetings for defining the methodology of large carnivore monitoring in Vrancea County;
- Elaboration of the methodology for large carnivore monitoring in Vrancea County;
- Collecting the information about optimal areas for installing the traps lines and boxes:
- Traps installation.

After the consultation with partners was establish the equip for large carnivore monitoring: Laurentiu Rozylowicz CCMESI, head of team; Silviu Chiriac – EPI Vrancea; Sandu Radu – ADD FV; Nadia Ivanof – ADD ADD FV; Tetelea Cristian – CCMESI; Viorel Popescu – CCMESI; Remus Dimulescu – ADD Focul Viu ; Capatana Gheorghe – DS Vrancea ; Liviu Balbarau – DS Vrancea ; Gabriel Burghilea – DS Vrancea ; Stanciu Gheorghe – DS Vrancea ; Felix Noaptes – DS Vrancea ; Sandu Carlioru – DS Vrancea ; doctor Vulpoiu Florin .

Defining monitoring methodology

After the meeting between the team members was chose the main types of traps used for capturing the large carnivores. The veterinary doctor, Mr. Vulpoiu has been involved in identification of main types of drugs for tranquillising available in Romania

In order to build the trap boxes for bears, the persons form DS Vrancea, EPI VN and ADD FV was at headquarter of ICAS Brasov (LIFE 6435). It was a meeting about trapping methods (traps, baits, lures, field aspects) and a travel in the field (Piatra Craiului Mountains) was installed a trap line for wolves and a boxes trap for bear.

For trapping, tranquillising and monitoring activities was purchased the following equipments:

- Belisle leg hold trap – 34 pieces
- Belisle 330 Super X – 24 pieces
- Trap boxes for bears – 3 pieces
- CO₂ long range projector, CO₂ short range projector
- syringes, needles
- ATS radio collars (VHS type)
- Drugs for tranquillising and releasing



- 3 Yagi Antennas with 4 elements
- 3 receivers

The traps and drugs was purchased in respect with Romanian and EU legislation (Law 462/2001 about strictly protected species and Agreement about humanitarian capturing methods between EC, Canada and Russia from 1998).

After realization of first methodology for large carnivore monitoring, on the 29-30 march 2003, at Lepșa was organized an Workshop in order to have the scientifically approval from the specialist. At this Workshop was invited the specialists from DS Vrancea and ICESA Brasov. After this Workshop our team created a final methodology for monitoring the large carnivore in Vrancea County.

The monitoring methodology has the following chapters: natural history and species statute, trapping methods, traps types, ethics in trapping activities, tranquilizing, radiolocation, biometry, safety information (see Annex 16).

Marking the large carnivore

In the march 2003 has begun the marking of large carnivore in Vrancea County. For this tranquilizing the individuals was requested the services from Dr. Vulpoiu.

The traps were installed in the first stage at the bait station and feeding site Bahneanu Observatory and La Pandar Observatory.

On March 2003 it was installed firs trap for bears on Cheile Tisitei, La Pândar Observatory, were was observed bear tracks on snow.

On 10.04 2003 was observed a sick bear, probably struck by a car on the national road Lepsa-Soveja. The bear was transported in Cheile Tișitei, where was applied an emergency treatments. Unfortunately the bear died after 2 days.

The high frequency of bears in Bahneanu and Vultururu area observatory area was the input for decision to install a trap for bear there.

On 13.06.2003 at 3 AM Mr Liviu Balbarau has observed 2 bears in the box trap. The bears was radio collared with collars 150.412 and 150.382 (first for a female named Dora, second for a male named Băhneanu)

On 7 06.2003 the trap installed in Vultururu area was activated. In a few days (on 16.06.03) a bear was trapped. The bear was collared with collar 150.424 and named Vultururu (male).

Till now in the project was trapped 3 bears, collared with ATS collars VHS type. The estimated life period for a collar is 3 years.



Effective monitoring

The monitoring activities was realised cu an irregular frequency due the inability of the team members. The monitoring activities was realised based on form through homing and triangulation.

In the same time was initiated some field trips in the areas with high densities of wolves and lynxes in order to establish the proper areas for installing the trap lines. Also was filled form with tracks and was collected scats for diet analysis.

In 14-26 July was installed first trap line for lynx and bears in Bahneanu areas. Here was localised a wolf pack after howling.

The daily monitoring of traps and track was a good experience in order to understand the behaviour of a wolf pack.

The activities from first decade of August was mainly for installation and surveillance of a trap line in Vintileasca area, where was localised a lynx female and kittens.

Now the team members are involved in daily surveillance of traps and tracks of the radio collared bears. Also in this time we prepare the winter season to assure the proper continuation of activities.

Result interpretation

The telemetry data are interpreted at Large Carnivore Monitoring Centre in Lepsa, project secretariat and University of Bucharest. The data from forms are introduced in specialised software. The telemetry correction is made by LOAS 2.09 (Location Of A Signal), and the home data are obtained with BIOTAS 1.0.2 and Animal Movement 2.0, extension of ArcView 3.2.

ACTION D.2: Demonstrative establishment of some sheepfolds protection systems in the Barsesti area

The establishment on demonstrative area in Bârsești has begun in 15 March 2003, by collecting the informations about settlements and sheepfolds from the Bârsești area.

The Bârsești Demonstrative Area is located in superior watershed of Zăbala creek, where the inhabitants of Bârsești commune own grassland and forest. In order to manage the land the inhabitants has the own organisation, structured like on NGO named “obște”.

At the first meeting with Bârsești city hall, the equip responsible has made to contacts with the owner of sheepfolds. The equip responsible own the action is formed by: Silviu Chiriac – EPI Vrancea, Costică Hârșu – Primăria Bârsești, Cristian Tetelea, Cristian Iojă, Marius Matache – CCMESI, Nadia Ivanof, Sandu Radu – ADD Focul Viu, Dana Tâlvăr – CJ Vn, Camelia Arvinte-Cotun- PVn.

After the finalization of the report about the livestock in Bârsești area (A6) at Bârsești city hall was a meeting with shepherds in order to make the first selection of the sheepfolds



to be included in the Demonstrative area. The selection was made after the statistical data for carnivore attack and losses. The selection will be finalised after 15 September when the sheepfolds will be back in village.

In order to make the proper choice of the protection system Nadia Ivanof and Sandu Radu from ADD FV was at the field demonstration organised by ICAS Braşov in **11-13 April 2003** in Săcele. The demonstration has the objective to present different equipments for sheepfolds protection. With this occasion was obtained the informations about different protection systems for our situation.

E. PUBLIC AWARENESS AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

ACTION E.1: Dissemination – Media work

The media group has provided press releases for every event developed within the project (partner's meetings, Earth Day, Green Days) and **organized press conferences after each of the Consultative Council's Meetings (January, 25th, 2003 and May, 24th, 2003).**

For the press conferences, the responsible for the media work package Mr. Marius Matache - CCMESI, has prepared press portfolios for all the media participants to this meeting: press releases for events, description of the most important events and activities of the project, the total budget of the project, time schedule etc.

Also it was organised a **press conference at Lepşa**, on **April, 22nd 2003**, at LCMC opening and the meeting with shepherds for sheepfolds modern systems protection promotion, events for Earth Day celebration.

Beginning with September 2002, the media-working group has been developing the project web page. For this purpose, it has been working at the set up of the www.carnivoremari.ro domain (means large carnivore) the web page has been permanently updated with information regarding the activities or events developed in this project, also having place development of English version of this page and witch is going to be definitive until October, 15th 2003 when this version will be approved.

During this year the project implementation team and the media team has developed an intensive activity of project promotion, concretising by press articles in local and national press Also it has been promoted in press articles witch debated large carnivores protection and their habitats in Vrancea county. (Annex 1).

ACTION E.2: Dissemination – Organising events

On **22 aprilie 2002** was celebrate at Lepşa and Bârseşti **Earth Day**. At Lepşa was the official opening of Large Carnivore Monitoring Centre and at the Bârseşti was the meetings with the shepherds and other inhabitants of the commune.



The Earth Day celebration has been the following objectives: raising awareness in the field of environmental aspects, raising awareness on the vulnerability of large carnivores and promotion of projects goal.

The celebration was organised by EPI VN, ADD FV, Bârsești city hall and University of Bucharest.

The meeting from Bârsești was organised at the local schools and was present 11 shepherds, 9 farmers and 10 other persons (teachers, counsellors etc).

The main subjects of the meeting was: the need for protection of large carnivore and electrical fences, practical aspects.

At the meeting was presented the following items: status of bears, wolves and lynxes in Romania and world; the large carnivore presence – positive and negative aspects; livestock damages; conflicts with humans; why protect them; electrical fences – what means; are the electrical fences dangerous for livestock and human?-

The meeting was very useful for our team and inhabitants. The main conclusion was that the we have the full support of the inhabitants in implementing the Bârsești Demonstrative Area but is necessary to proof the utility of the protection system.

The second event was the official opening of the Large Carnivore Monitoring centre at the Lepșa. At the official opening was present the partners from EPI VN, ADD FV, University of Bucharest, Bârsești City Hall, DS VN and CCDG. After the event was a press conference with journalist from local media (papers, radio and TV).

For the inhabitants of Lepșa village, on **5 June 2003**, with the occasion of **Environment Day celebration and Green Days** activities was organised **The Open Days at the LCMC**. In LCMC was organised events to present the role of the centre and to promote the large carnivore conservation.

On **7 June 2003** was organised an excursion with 40 students on Cheile Tișiței. To selected the students was organised by EPI Vn and painting trial with the main subject “Carnivore and environments conservation”. The winner was the student from 10 stage at the National College “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, from Focșani.

In the frame of Green Days activities was realised an leaflets about Green Week 2003 and our project goals and a poster with Natura 2000 objectives.

ACTION E.4: Dissemination – Producing promotion materials

Until now, in the project it has been realised the following materials:

- leaflet promoting the projects goals and objectives (3000 copies in Romanian, 1000 copies in English)
- leaflet promoting the Green Days concept (100 copies)



- poster promoting the projects goals (side A0 – 5 copies)
- stick with the project logo (3000 copies)
- stick with LIFE logo (300 copies)
- panels promoting the project at: EPI VN, ADD FV, LCMC
- information and warning panels in protected area Tișița Gorges.

Media department has prepared the contents for the documentary film depending on the most successful pictures. At this moment it is continuing the achieve of documentary film (it is shooting the most important moments about project results and implementation procedure) and it is counting the materials for species leaflets achieving.

For this year we attach a CD ROM with images carrying out after field activities.

These activities have been developed simultaneous with other field research activities and important events in the project.

The bilingual brochure was been postponed for next year due the lack of good pictures from the area. After the 2003 winter monitoring session this product will be realised.

ACTION E.5: Campaign for raising the awareness on the vulnerability of *Ursus arctos*, *Canis lupus* and *Lynx lynx*

The concept of awareness campaign started in **January 15th 2003** by achieving of campaign for raising the awareness on the vulnerability of target species, made by CCDG witch it was finalised in February 15th 2003.

The purpose of education campaign is to develop a favourable population attitude giving the carnivores species and to implicate population in large carnivores management process in the county.

Campaign for raising the awareness of the local population on the vulnerability of large carnivores in Vrancea county follow to rich the next objectives:

O 1. Achieving a study witch to determinate population attitude by the large carnivores species in Vrancea county, the local population interest to participate in the large carnivores management process in county and identified the most efficient ways of spreading the information to the population.

O 2. Identify of target groups and active implication of groups represents and publics for strategy of large carnivores conservation developing in Vrancea county because the local population support for managerial solutions proposal is crucial for the large carnivores management efficiency in county.



O 3. Changing the local population attitude about large carnivores species in the way of understanding and acceptance of the meaning that these are part of regional ecosystems.

O 4. Information a large number of peoples witch are living in this area about existence of large carnivores species, about their habitats and about rolling of a management project of their habitats.

The target groups with important part in management of large carnivores in Vrancea county

1. Shepherds from study communes area
2. Local administrations of communes from program LIFE perimeter
4. Local press represents
5. Local TV represents

In the project it can be identified also other target groups depending on:

- Their interest about large carnivores management
- Their potential part in having decision about large carnivores management
- They show interest in working together with other target groups and they maybe find commune solutions for large carnivores management

In March, **10th 2003** has achieved the beginning questionnaire creation activity for the awareness campaign witch are:

- General rules for poll developing (technical rules, behaviour rules, administrative rules);
 - Farms selection rules
 - Farm respondent selection rules;
 - Instructions for route page computation;
 - Questionnaires distribution on locality, age and sex groups;
 - Route page;
 - Tip questionnaire named *Local population perception about large carnivores in Vrancea county* (28 questions).

On August, 8th 2003 has finalised the processing and interpretation action of the beginning questionnaires for this campaign. The questionnaire was applied in period March – April 2003 for a representative sample of local population, questionnaire who has content



subjects belonging to divers social categories, on different study levels, establishing that the presence of large carnivores is know by majority interview subjects, more than 95% of subjects declaring that they know the existence of large carnivores in Vrancea county and a large part of the interviewing subjects has seen wolf and bear samples or tracks of those in the woods but lynx has been seeing a few less than other two carnivores, fact witch is explaining by the ethnology of this species.

Synthesis results obtained after questionnaires interpretation is available in English (Annex 15)

F. OVERALL PROJECT OPERATION

ACTION F.1: Co-ordination, project mangement and financial administration

The project coordination is realized by and equip from Vrancea EPI and Association from Suitable Development „Focul Viu” (ADD FV, formerly EST Focsani). The persons involved in project management are: Silviu Chiriac – project manager, Remus Dimulescu – project secretariat, Nadia Ivanof – project administrator, Maria Pleșa – bookkeeper and Vasile Jalbă – executive director EPI Vrancea.

At the first steps of the project was established the responsibilities for each member of project coordination equip and was signed the detailed agreements with each partners. The agreements with partners was signed according with SAP and Romanian legislation (See Annex.....).

At the first meeting of coordination team was establish the role of each member and the working frame. The project secretariat (project assistant manager office and project administrator office) is located in an apartment rented by ADD FV in Focsani. The office of project manager, bookkeeper and executive director of EPI Vn is located at the headquarter of EPI VN. The meetings of working group were run out from every important decision. The meetings between project management equip and partners were also made in order to solve some financial or research problems.

The first meeting of Working Group it was at the end of September 2002 and all partners was present. At the beginning of January 2002 it was another working group meeting and the first Consultative Council meeting.

In order to have a proper financial control for the European Commission contribution, an account in EUR and ROL has been opened. Because the inflation in Romania is still high, the money is kept in EUR and the exchange in Romanian currency is made only with one week in advance of payments.

The financial administration is realized by chief bookkeeper of EPI VN, Mrs. Maria Pleșa. Executive director of EPI and chief bookkeeper signs all the financial acts. The project secretariat has copies after every payment documents, from beneficiary and partners.



In order to cover the financial contribution of EPI VN, the Romanian Government has adopted an Governmental Ordinance (no. 582/21 may 2003) for covering the contribution (see Annex).

In the frame of LIFE project, in respect with the initial project, has purchased the necessary equipment's for running the first activities. The following equipment's was purchased:

- ☞ Off road car for field trip **Toyota Hylux DBD 4d (for EPI VN)** and used off road car **Nissan Patrol GR2 (for CCMESI)**
- ☞ Video camera **Canon DM XM2**, and accessories **(for EPI VN)** ;
- ☞ Photo camera **Canon EOS 3** and accessories **(for EPI VN)** ;
- ☞ Photo accessories **(Body Canon D30, macro and normal objective) (for CCMESI)**
- ☞ **Radio collars ATS** (M2610 for bears, M2520 for wolves and M 2220 for lynxes), Yagi antennas 4 elements, FM 100 receivers;
- ☞ Laptop **ACER ASPIRE 1406**;
- ☞ **PC ALPIS PLATINIX PIV, 1,7 GHz, CANON S750** printer, phone for project secretariat.
- ☞ **Palmer Cap-Chur CO₂ gun, CO₂ pistol** and accessories for immobilization of large carnivore;
- ☞ Traps **Belisle 330 Super, Belisle leghold**, accessories, lure and bait form Les Entreprises Luc Dione;
- ☞ Boxes for bears;
- ☞ Furniture for Large Carnivore Monitoring;
- ☞ Safety Equipment research team, for field work.

ACTION F.2: Project Monitoring

According with internal reporting system established in the project, each action is monitored by the project administrator. Each action has an action form completed by project administrator. Periodically the project manager and the project administrator met the project partners for discussions about actions implementation stage.

Each partner has made an annual activity report witch stay at the institution evaluation base.



Stage of project development is reporting to the Director Council. The report is made once a year and includes project success indicators. Basing on these indicators, in eventuality of appearing problems which impose contractual modifying, the Director Council approves beginning the changing procedures.

Scientifically approval of produces is achieved by a specialist team from Bucharest University (Professor Călin Tesio, Dean of Biology Faculty, Professor Dr. Lotus Meșter, head of vertebrates zoology course, Profesor Dr. Nicolae Popescu, Geography Faculty), Romanian Academy (Professor Dan Munteanu). The scientific reports, especially the monitoring methodology and modern protection system for sheepfolds were realised after consulting the ICAS Brașov members (LIFE RO/6435). Thus it exists experiences changes at ICAS Brașov and in the project implementation area. Also, is has been discussed the monitoring methodology at the Workshop organised in the frame of LIFE GR/7698 in Greece in December, 2002 and at the conference *Society for Conservation Biology*, organised in Duluth, Minnesota in July 2003.

3.6 Socio-economic Context of the Project

The project does not involve management agreements or land purchase therefore it was not the case of consulting the landowners.

Beside the pastoral lands, the other areas are mainly public property. That is the reason why the partners in this project play an important role in managing the interest groups. To avoid eventual conflicts, the partnership was created to cover a large area of competence and expertise but also to ensure the stability of the decisions.

The most important local actors were informed about the project proposal and they feel it is a good initiative.

Regarding the social aspects there are no particular problems that applies to this situation (considering the project itself).

From an economic point of view, the economic activities are represented especially by pastorate and logging.

Only in Putna River basin are located more than 65 sheepfolds, an extremely high density, one of the major causes of the conflicts between local inhabitants and large carnivores

The region where the project is developed is under a strict control considering the hunting activities

3.7 Complementary activities of the project (experience exchanges with similar projects, websites links, etc.)

The European Commission LIFE Unit and Ministry for Water and Environmental Protection has organised on the **4th September 2002** a meeting with the LIFE beneficiary.



At this meeting were presented Mrs Elena Lymberidi, Mrs. Concha Olmeda and Mr Marc Maury from EC and external monitoring team and Mr. Vasile Jalbă, Mr. Silviu Chiriac and Mr. Laurențiu Rozyłowicz from EPI Vn and University of Bucharest. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the main rules for management of LIFE projects.

Mr. Silviu Chiriac from EPI VN and Mr. Tetelea Cristian from University of Bucharest were invited to the international meeting “Supporting the conservation areas in mountain areas from Europe” in the period **13-15 December 2002** in Paranesti, Greece. This meeting was organised under LIFE Nature project “*Implementing management plans in Gramos and Rodopi area*”. The aim of the meeting was to put together experts, NGO’s and project leaders in order to assure the implementation of Habitat Directive and Bern Convention. At this workshop was present our project like an example of conservation actions in mountains areas.

University of Bucharest has organised in period **24-27 march 2003** the international symposium “*First International Conference on Environmental Research and Assesment*” ICERA 2003. In the name of the project was present Mrs. Nadia Ivanof with a paper named „Large carnivore conservation in Vrancea County”.

In the period **11 – 13 april 2003** ICAS Braşov has organised a workshop about the necessity of modern protection systems for sheepfolds in Săcele, Braşov County. Mrs. Nadia Ivanof and Mr. Radu Sandu were presented. In the same time was organised discussion with member of LIFE 6435 Piatra Craiului about electrical fences.

In the period **12 – 14 july 2003** was organised at Poiana Brasov an workshop entitled „*Carpathian workshop on large carnivore conservation*” organised by LCIE and ICAS Brasov. At this workshop it was presented Mr. Laurențiu Rozyłowicz, Mr. Cristian Iojă, Mr. Viorel Popescu and Mr. Cristian Tetelea from CCMESI and Nadia Ivanof from ADD” Focul Viu” Focşani. At the poster session was the following scientifically presentation: „*GAPs between large carnivore distribution and protected areas in Vrancea county*”, „*Socio-economic aspect in the elaboration of large carnivore conservation plans*”, „*Habitat suitability for large carnivore conservation in Vrancea County*”.

In period **2 - 9 july 2003** was organised in Duluth Minnesota USA the Annual Conference of Society for Conservation Biology. Mr. Laurențiu Rozyłowicz was present at the session entitled *Mammal conservation* and at the workshop *Reintroduction of large carnivores. Success stories*.



CONCLUSIONS:

Even though some of the activities planned for the first year of the project have been accomplished with some delay, this fact did not affect achievement of the goals set out for this period of time. At this moment we are already deeply involved in developing the activities of this year, most of the things that ended by now have been carried out well, therefore we don't see any major problem in fulfilling the goals set for year 2002 - 2003.

We did succeed in creating a well-organized project management team, a necessary element for the good implementation of the project.