

Bucharest, April 2011

Letter to the European Commission

Re: Minimising the negative impact of the planned Lugoj–Deva motorway on the connectivity of Natura 2000 sites in the Carpathians of Romania.

The Lugoj–Deva motorway is part of the Pan European Transportation TENT-T Corridor IV, which is co-funded by the European Commission, through the Cohesion Fund, and by the Romanian Government. [Europe Aid/122273/D/SER/RO]

The motorway will intersect an extremely important ecological corridor for large carnivores (and other species) between the Western Carpathians (Apuseni Mountains) and Southern Carpathians. The ecological corridor has already suffered fragmentation due to existing transportation infrastructure and developments.

The ecological connectivity provided by this last green corridor is essential for the Favourable Conservation Status of large carnivores (a key species group (Annex II) in the Natura 2000 network). In particular, the corridor is crucial for ensuring the viability of the Apuseni Mountain brown bear population, which has become isolated from other bear populations in the Carpathian Mountains. In response, the European Commission advised Romania during the 2008 bio-geographical seminar to designate new Natura 2000 sites to secure connectivity between Western Carpathians (Apuseni Mountains) and Southern Carpathians of Romania.

Based on a collaborative study conducted by a number of organisations¹ and supported by Romanian Ministry of Environment and Forests, new Natura 2000 sites have been proposed in order to safeguard connectivity between the Western and Southern

¹ Greenlight Services, Romanian Forest Research and Management Institute, Romanian National Environment Guard, Carpathian Wildlife Foundation, Faculty of Silviculture and Forest Engineering Brasov.

Carpathians in Romania. The planned motorway will intersect one of these new Natura 2000 sites, “Podisul Lipovei – Poiana Rusca”. Without appropriate mitigation measures, the motorway will become a barrier to terrestrial wildlife and irrevocably damage the ecological functionality of the network. Properly designed mitigation measures are required for assuring the permeability of the motorway, and in this case, these are necessary for securing the long-term viability of large carnivore populations in this region.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out for the planned motorway. We, the signatories of this letter, believe that the EIA, in its present form, does not incorporate the latest scientific knowledge and is therefore unable to ensure ecological connectivity. During a fieldtrip carried out on 31st of January and 1st of February, we visited the locations where the EIA proposed mitigation measures for the motorway project. We assessed the feasibility of these measures according to the local sites and explored alternative strategies. This resulted in the following findings:

- The existing proposals do not cover locations which have been identified by scientists as being important for the movement of large carnivores.
- Some proposed measures for large carnivores do not take into account issues relating to existing transportation infrastructure and present land use, and have therefore been placed in locations where their effectiveness is questionable.
- Although the majority of the boxed culverts described in the EIA may be used by small mammals, amphibians and reptiles, they are not suitable for large mammals (including carnivores).
- The proposed locations for crossing structures for large carnivores are in areas that are not currently designated conservation areas. It is vital that important connectivity corridors are protected, thus ensuring that appropriate measures can be taken to conserve wildlife.

Based on the recent study outlining the new Natura 2000 sites, we consider that the mitigation measures proposed by the motorway project EIA are not appropriate for large carnivores. We, as a group of scientists, propose additional measures, which are presented in detail in the attached memo.

A properly implemented motorway project that protects European and Romanian biodiversity could become a model for other road developments, helping to resolve conflicts between transportation infrastructure development and environment conservation priorities.

We, the signatories of this letter, ask the European Commission to impose proper connectivity mitigation measures for the Lugoj–Deva motorway project [Europe Aid/122273/D/SER/RO] to ensure the movement of wildlife between habitats, even if this means the revision of the current development plans.

In addition, the signatories of this letter urge the European Commission to support the designation of the new Natura 2000 sites which will conserve critical habitats and corridors for important European species.

Yours sincerely,



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