

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### ***Cooperating for Biodiversity and Human-Wildlife Coexistence in the SKROUA Transboundary Area***

**30th of January 2025**

Baia Mare, Romania

WWF-Romania - Filiala Maramures Association announces the start of a new project designed to protect nature and improve life for both people and wildlife in the border area of Slovakia, Romania, and Ukraine. The project, *Cooperating for Safeguarding Biodiversity and Ensuring Viable Human-Wildlife Coexistence in the SKROUA Transboundary Area (COOP4SAFE)*, brings together five main partners: WWF Romania – Filiala Maramures Association, RachivEcoTour, County Association of Hunters and Anglers Maramures, AEVIS, and Verkhovynskyi National Nature Park. This initiative is co-funded by the European Union.

The Carpathians are one of Europe's most important natural areas, home to a diverse range of plants and animals, and serve as a vital wildlife corridor. However, the region faces significant challenges, including habitat destruction and human-wildlife conflict. This project aims to address these issues by protecting natural habitats and creating solutions for peaceful coexistence between humans and wildlife.

The project focuses on three main objectives:

- Developing a comprehensive data collection and monitoring system to assess biodiversity and human-wildlife conflicts.
- Piloting nature-based solutions to restore habitats and enhance ecological connectivity.
- Co-designing, testing, and promoting tools for preventing human-wildlife conflicts.

### **What Makes This Project Special**

The COOP4SAFE project fosters cross-border collaboration and will utilize innovative tools, including a citizen science app, to actively involve local communities. This initiative empowers individuals to contribute to conservation efforts and ensures everyone has a voice in safeguarding the region's biodiversity.

### **Who Will Benefit**

The project will benefit numerous groups, including:

- Forest managers and conservation organizations
- Local communities, farmers, and landowners
- Schools, researchers, and universities
- Over 200 communities across Slovakia, Romania, and Ukraine

### **Why It Matters**

"Wildlife conservation is vital for maintaining biodiversity, ecological balance, and essential ecosystem services that benefit both nature and local communities," said Alexandra Verdeș, Project Manager at WWF Romania – Filiala Maramures Association.

**Start date of the project:** 01.01.2025

**End date of the project:** 31.12.2026

**Total EU contribution:** 832 134.87 EUR

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#### **Description of the Programme**

The Interreg VI-A NEXT Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine Programme is part of the 2021-2027 European Union financial framework, governed by EU Cohesion Policy. The Programme aims to foster the development of the Hungarian-Slovak-Romanian-Ukrainian border region with a particular focus on the Ukrainian areas. It includes the following territorial units: Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén counties in Hungary; Košický kraj and Prešovský kraj in Slovakia; Maramureş, Satu-Mare, and Suceava counties in Romania; Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Chernivtsi oblasts in Ukraine. The Programme supports EU-funded solutions to shared challenges, ensuring a resilient, green, healthy, and cooperative border region. It focuses on climate change adaptation, equal access to healthcare, biodiversity enhancement, sustainable tourism, and cross-border cooperation.

For more information, visit <https://next.huskroua-cbc.eu/>

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