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State Party Report

on the State of Conservation of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe

submitted by Austria on behalf of the States Parties

Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine

Reference Number: 1133ter

in response to World Heritage Committee Decisions 42 COM 7B.71 and 43 COM 7B.13

[for submission by 1st February 2020]

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Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
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Table of contents

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
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LE 14-20

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Glossary

We found different use and definitions of forest and forest-related terms. To ensure a common understanding of the forest-specific terms in this report we would like to provide the following definitions. The definitions are based on those used in the indicative definitions taken from the Report of the ad hoc technical expert group on forest biological diversity of the Convention on Biological Diversity (https://www.cbd.int/forest/definitions.shtml).

Table 1: Glossary of the report

Term	Definition	Source
Forest	The group considers the FAO definition of a forest as the basic one (FAO, 1998; FRA 2000), but acknowledge that many other useful definitions of 'forest' exist in published form. The fact that 'forest' has been defined in many ways is a reflection of the diversity of forests and forest ecosystems in the world and of the diversity of human approaches to forests. In this document, a forest is a land area of more than 0.5 ha, with a tree canopy cover of more than 10%, which is not primarily under agricultural or other specific non-forest land use. In the case of young forests or regions where tree growth is climatically suppressed, the trees should be capable of reaching a height of 5 m in situ, and of meeting the canopy cover requirement.	CBD
Forest biome	This reflects the ecological and physiognomic characteristics of the vegetation and broadly corresponds to climatic regions of the Earth. In this document, it is used in reference to boreal, temperate and tropical forest biomes.	CBD
Forest type	Within biomes, a forest type is a group of forest ecosystems of generally similar composition that can be readily differentiated from other such groups by their tree and undercanopy species composition, productivity and/or crown closure.	CBD
Forest ecosystem	A forest ecosystem can be defined at a range of scales. It is a dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their abiotic environment interacting as a functional unit, where trees are a key component of the system. Humans, with their cultural, economic and environmental needs are an integral part of many forest ecosystems.	CBD

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Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

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Primary forest = Primeval forest	A primary forest is a forest that has never been logged and has developed following natural disturbances and under natural processes, regardless of its age. It is referred to 'direct human disturbance' as the intentional clearing of forest by any means (including fire) to manage or alter them for human use. (We follow this stricter definition and do not include managed forest on sites of continuous forest cover).	CBD
Secondary forest	A secondary forest is a forest that has been logged and has recovered naturally or artificially. Not all secondary forests provide the same value to sustaining biological diversity, or goods and services, as did primary forest in the same location. In Europe, secondary forest is forest land where there has been a period of complete clearance by humans with or without a period of conversion to another land use. Forest cover has regenerated naturally or artificially through planting.	CBD
Old growth forest	Old growth forest stands are stands in primary or secondary forests that have developed the structures and species normally associated with old primary forest of that type have sufficiently accumulated to act as a forest ecosystem distinct from any younger age class.	CBD
Natural forest	A forest composed of indigenous trees and not classified as forest plantation.	FAO
Mature forest	In this report we use the term for managed forests in the age class of 80+ yrs. Tree height is close to the maximum, but as distinguished from old growth forest many natural structural elements (dead wood, canopy gaps, different age classes or development phases) might be missing.	
Plantation forest	A plantation forest may be afforested land, or a secondary forest established by planting or direct seeding. A gradient exists among plantation forests from even-aged, single species monocultures of exotic species with a fibre production objective to mixed species, native to the site with both fibre and biodiversity objectives. This gradient will probably also reflect the capability of the plantation forest to maintain 'normal' local biological diversity.	CBD
Degraded forest	A degraded forest is a secondary forest that has lost, through human activities, the structure, function, species composition or productivity normally associated with a natural forest type expected on that site. Hence, a degraded forest delivers a reduced supply of goods and services from the given site and maintains only limited biological diversity. Biological diversity of degraded forests includes many non-	CBD

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LE 14-20

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	tree components, which may dominate in the undercanopy vegetation.	
Reforestation	Reforestation is the re-growth of forests after a temporary (< 10 years.) condition with less than 10% canopy cover due to human-induced or natural perturbations (FAO, FRA 2000).	CBD
Afforestation	Afforestation is the conversion from other land uses into forest, or the increase of canopy cover to the 10% defined threshold for forest (FAO, FRA 2000).	CBD
Forest fragmentation	Forest fragmentation refers to any process that results in the conversion of formerly continuous forest into patches of forest separated by non-forested lands.	CBD
Habitat loss	Habitat loss, used with reference to an individual species, is the permanent conversion of former (forest) habitat to an area where that species can no longer exist, be it still forested or not.	CBD
Forest species	A forest species is a species that forms part of a forest ecosystem or is dependent on a forest for part or all of its day-to-day living requirements or for its reproductive requirements. Therefore, an animal species may be considered a forest species even if it does not live most of its life in a forest.	CBD
Native species	A native species is one which naturally exists at a given location or in a particular ecosystem, i.e. it has not been moved there by humans.	CBD
Endemic species	An endemic species is a native species restricted to a particular geographic region owing to factors such as isolation or in response to soil or climatic conditions.	CBD
Alien species	An alien species is a species, sub-species or member of a lower taxon that has been introduced outside its normal past and present distribution; the definition includes the gametes, seeds, eggs, propagules or any other part of such species that might survive and subsequently reproduce (GISP, 2001).	CBD
Invasive alien species	An invasive alien species is an alien species which becomes established in natural or semi-natural ecosystems or habitats. It is an agent of change and threatens native biological diversity (IUCN, 2000).	CBD

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LE 14-20

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1 Executive summary of the report

This State of Conservation Report is submitted by Austria and was prepared by the States Parties Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine as requested by UNESCO in the World Heritage Committee Decisions 42 COM 7B.71 and 43 COM 7B.13. Each chapter of the report deals with and discusses different requests and questions raised in the former mentioned decision.

As requested by the WH Committee, the State Party of **Slovakia has prepared a proposal for boundary modification**. The proposal for boundary modification of the Slovak component parts was approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 14 October 2019 (by Resolution n. 508/2019, see: https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/24259/1). The justification for this modification is included in this report, while the full nomination is included in the extension nomination dossier submitted to the World Heritage Centre by 10 States Parties by the 1st of February 2020.

A non-intervention regime applies within the whole property – either by means of legal protection of existing nature reserves or beyond these nature reserves, non-intervention regime has been endorsed by two Resolutions of the Slovak Government (n. 528/2017 from November 2017 and n. 508/2019 from October 2019). To ensure long-term protection, three new projects for nature reserves are in preparation. It is expected that all three reserves will be approved by law in 2020.

Belgium is reporting on the process to **enlarge component parts in the Sonian forest**. A current status of the discussion on the enlargement of the Walloon component part Ticton A (nord) from 14 to 50 ha is presented. An enlargement of the component part Ticton B (south) is limited by the existing infrastructure. The removal of the infrastructure is under discussion. Another plan is presented, which connects the two Brussels component parts Grippensdell A and B by a green bridge, so that one component part exceeds the 50 ha limit.

The results of the process of developing a **guidance document** 'Management of the property and buffer zone zonation' are summarised and the new draft document is included in the annex of this report.

A **reactive monitoring mission** was successfully implemented in **Romania and Albania** in October 2019.

Croatia has delivered a detailed description of the proposed minor boundary modification. While the total area of the property remains the same, the two buffer zones have been merged into one and geometric corrections have been applied.

Austria is announcing an expected enlargement of the Wilderness Area of Dürrenstein.

Belgium is reporting improvements in the ecological connectivity of the buffer zones.

Italy is referring to enlargements and boundary modifications submitted in the nomination dossier for the extension submitted by the 1st of February 2020.

Slovenia is reporting on important steps for additional legal protection of both components (Krokar, Snežnik – Ždrocle) and on the envisaged enlargement of the buffer zone of the Krokar component. This process is also supported by the BEECH-POWER INTERREG Project.

Austria, Italy and Slovenia are reporting on the activities in the property or buffer zone.

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2 Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

The following chapters address questions and requests raised by UNESCO in World Heritage Committee Decisions 42 COM 7B.71 and 43 COM 7B.13 paragraph by paragraph. The paragraph discussed is quoted at the beginning of the relevant chapters; the answers and arguments follow this citation.

The following methods were used to elaborate these answers and arguments:

- an online expert questionnaire, which was prepared in accordance with the requests raised by UNESCO in the above-mentioned Decision,
- an academic analysis of the answers collected,
- a systematic literature search considering the latest scientific findings and
- international beech forest expert discussions.

This report shows the current situation within the World Heritage property and the future management of the component parts and their buffer zones.

2.1 Decision on legal protection status of Slovak component parts and logging in buffer zone (42 COM 7B.71 – 4)

Decision 42 COM 7B.71 - 4. Notes the confirmation provided by the State Party of Slovakia that logging remains suspended within the Slovak components of the property, but notes with utmost concern the continued absence of adequate legal protection for part of the property and the continued reports of logging within the buffer zone and within the property;

Firstly, it should be underlined that logging remains suspended both under the current delineation of the Slovak components of the property and under the new delineation proposed by the boundary modification. As Slovakia provided more detailed information in the 2018 State of Conservation Report, the suspension of logging in the Slovak components and close-to-nature forest management in their buffer zones were legally endorsed by the Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic of 15 November 2017 that remains in force.

Two component parts – Havešová and Rožok almost entirely overlap with existing homonymous nature reserves which are strictly protected and without any intervention (since their designation in 1964 and 1965 respectively). As far as the Stužica – Bukovské vrchy component is concerned (in its currently inscribed delineation according to maps of the nomination dossier), the non-intervention regime is ensured in the territory of three national nature reserves (NNR) (Jarabá skala, Pľaša, Stužica) and three nature reserves (NR) (Borsukov vrch, Šípková and Udava).

In addition, other parts of Stužica – Bukovské vrchy component (outside NNRs or NRs) are part of the so-called ecologically functional area 1B (EFP1B), in which, according to the Management plan of Poloniny National Park for the years 2017 – 2026, the non-intervention regime should be applied. A non-intervention regime continues to be observed in EFP1B also due to the voluntary commitment of

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

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non-state forest owners. It should be mentioned that pursuant to the Act on Nature and Landscape Protection, all the decisions on granting authorisation for activities or plans that may have an impact on the protected area shall comply with the measures adopted in the Management plan of Poloniny National Park.

Regarding the component Vihorlat, a non-intervention regime is currently ensured in the territory of three NNR (Morské oko, Motrogon and Vihorlat), three NR (Jedlinka, Baba pod Vihorlatom, Ďurova mláka) and two natural monuments (Sninský kameň, Malé Morské oko). In the remaining part of the Vihorlat component, logging remains suspended in accordance with the above-mentioned Governmental Resolution. All activities have already been halted before its adoption, because of on-going negotiations with stakeholders (landowners or land users).

Details on the protection status under the proposed boundary modifications can be found in chapter 2.3 in this document.

2.2 Decision on provision of legal protection on Slovak component parts (42 COM 7B.71 – 5)

Decision 42 COM 7B.71 - 5. Considers that the additional measures proposed by the State Party of Slovakia to provide legal protection of parts of the property which currently do not benefit from a nonintervention regime, including through designation of new nature reserves, are therefore of utmost urgency, and requests the State Party of Slovakia to expedite this process, ensuring legal protection from logging while continuing to involve and consult relevant stakeholders;

Slovakia has prepared a proposal for the significant boundary modification of the Slovak component parts, in line with Decision 42 COM 7B.71 (paragraph 6). The new proposal for the boundary modification of Slovak component parts was adopted by the Slovak Government on 14 October 2019 in its resolution n. 508/2019. This proposal, which was developed in the participatory process and was endorsed by all stakeholders, provides all necessary guarantees for an adequate protection of the OUV and allows the implementation of all related legal provisions and management arrangements.

The new proposal ensures a strict non-intervention regime excluding any logging activities in the property. The new protection buffer sub-zone is proposed to better ensure the protection of the property´s OUV. In accordance with the Governmental Resolution n. 508/2019, the protection buffer sub-zone will be protected within the 5th or 4th level of protection by a specific management regime that is very close to non-intervention (only single-tree selection aimed at protecting the OUV of the property is allowed, only with permission of the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic). The buffer zone was further extended by designating additional landscape conservation buffer sub-zone, to strengthen protection and enhance the connectivity between component parts. In accordance with above-mentioned Governmental Resolution, in the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone, only close-to-nature forest management can be applied, in line with the Act on Nature Protection and Act on Forests, and in compliance with forest management plans that would be updated in cooperation with the State Nature Conservancy.

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
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As emphasised in the previous paragraphs, non-intervention regime applies within the entire property – either through legal protection of existing nature reserves or outside these nature reserves, the non-intervention regime was endorsed by two Resolutions of the Slovak Government (n. 528/2017 from November 2017 and n. 508/2019 from October 2019). It should be added that any activities were halted after the World Heritage Committee notified the State Party Slovakia to resolve the issue of unclear boundaries and management regime.

In the past years, Slovakia has intensively prepared the proposal for the boundary modification according to the Decisions of the World Heritage Committee referring to this issue and also according to recommendations from the Reactive Monitoring Mission from 2014 and Advisory Mission in 2018 (see the next section). The Governmental Resolution n. 508/2019 approved a proposal for significant boundary modification. This Resolution includes a binding task to prepare new projects for the establishment of new nature reserves to provide adequate legal protection of the property.

In the current proposal, three component parts (out of six proposed) – Rožok, Havešová, Kyjovský prales – fully overlap with existing nature reserves or only minor corrections are needed. For the other three component parts (Stužica – Bukovské vrchy, Udava, Vihorlat), three new projects for nature reserves are in preparation. Two projects have already been elaborated and the process of their adoption began in November 2019. One project aims at establishing the Nature Reserve Vihorlatské pralesy to ensure the legal protection of the component part Vihorlat as proposed for boundary modification (i.e. existing nature reserves or natural monuments will be merged into the new Nature Reserve Vihorlatské pralesy). The second project is Nature Reserve Rydošová, which together with the existing Nature Reserve Udava belongs to the component part Udava. The component part Udava is not yet separately inscribed on the World Heritage list, but it belongs to the component part Stužica – Bukovské vrchy in its present form. In the proposal for the boundary modification, it was necessary to exclude approximately 10 km of the border stripe from the component part due to the disagreement of private landowners, resulting in a separation of Udava from the Stužica – Bukovské vrchy component part. The third project for the establishment of the Nature Reserve Veľký Bukovec is in the process of elaboration and is to be completed and submitted to decision-making bodies in the next few weeks. This Nature Reserve Veľký Bukovec will be a part of the component part Stužica-Bukovské vrchy as proposed to be delimited by boundary modification together with the existing Nature Reserves Stužica, Jarabá skala, Pľaša and Borsukov vrch.

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

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2.3 Decision on Slovak proposal for boundary modifications (42 COM 7B.71 – 6)

Decision 42 COM 7B.71 - 6. Noting continued efforts of the State Party of Slovakia to elaborate a proposal for boundary modifications for the Slovak components of the property, including through consultation with the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, considers that given its potential impact on the OUV of the property, the boundary modification should be submitted as a significant modification in line with paragraph 165 of the Operational Guidelines, and also requests the State Party of Slovakia to finalize the proposal as a matter of priority, in consultation with the other States Parties of this transnational property, ensuring that:

a) the proposed boundary modification results in better protection of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property and the new delineation includes all important areas for the expression of this OUV,

b) all areas within the property are provided with an adequate legal protection regime,

c) consultations have been held with relevant stakeholders through a participatory process,

d) proposed buffer zones are adequate in size and are subject to a management regime which ensures the protection of the property's OUV;

The State Party of Slovakia has invested significant efforts in the past years in order to prepare a boundary modification proposal that would ensure better expression and protection of the OUV of the property, while being properly consulted and endorsed by the relevant stakeholders. It should be noted that the new proposal will significantly enhance the integrity and protection of the property, compared to the current status (discrepancies between the text of the nomination dossier from 2007 and its map annexes, inaccurate map delineation of the property that does not consistently capture its OUV, nor does it reflect existing protected areas, property rights or forest management units). In the boundary modification process, Slovakia has followed the recommendations from the Reactive Monitoring Mission from 2014 and has sought further advice through consultations with the World Heritage Centre, IUCN or other individual experts.

In 2018, Slovakia invited an Advisory mission to obtain advice on the current proposal for a significant boundary modification of the Slovak components of the property, which was elaborated in line with Decision 42 COM 7B.71 – 6. Joint World heritage Centre/IUCN Advisory mission to the Slovak components of the World Heritage property in October took place from 16 to 19 October 2018. The recommendations resulting from this mission, which are included in the mission report, were fully taken into account in the process of significant boundary modification.

The World Heritage Committee requested in paragraph 6 of the Decision cited above that several recommendations should be ensured in the boundary modification process. These were addressed as follows:

a) The proposed boundary modification results in better protection of the OUV of the property and the new delineation includes all important areas in terms of their OUV, as the basis for the boundary modification served the data provided by the mapping of natural/ancient/old-growth forests organised by the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic. In 2014, more than 7,000 ha were mapped by the National Forestry Centre of Zvolen in the Poloniny National Park and Vihorlat Protected

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
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Landscape Area. Further complementary information resulting from the mapping of ancient and old growth forest carried out by non-governmental organisations FSC and Prales (in two phases in between 2009 – 2015) has been incorporated and reflected in the current proposal for boundary modification that includes all mapped primeval/old-growth forests as far as possible. The boundary modification of the Slovak component parts was carried out in order to consistently cover all highly valuable areas necessary for the expression of the OUV.

b) The boundary modification of the Slovak component parts will significantly improve and provide adequate legal protection of the property. As mentioned in the previous sections, the proposal for the boundary modification of the Slovak component parts was approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 14 October 2019 (by Resolution n. 508/2019, see: https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/24259/1). The current proposal will provide adequate legal protection for the property and its buffer zones. All proposed component parts are either already protected under the 5th level of protection (strict non-intervention regime), or the designation process for new nature reserves with the 5th level of protection has already started (for component parts Udava and Vihorlat in November 2019) or is underway (for the extension of Stužica – Bukovské vrchy, the project for the nature reserve Veľký Bukovec has been prepared and the process is expected to start in the next weeks) – see also section 2.2. The designation of these new nature reserves by the Slovak Government is planned for the first half of 2020.

c) The boundary modification proposal was developed through the participatory process to prepare a proposal that would be accepted and supported by all the stakeholders concerned. The Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic and its expert organisation State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic have therefore conducted numerous discussions, negotiations, meetings and expert missions in the past years.

The results of these negotiations have been taken into account in the current boundary modification proposal. In case of Stužica – Bukovské vrchy, one part of this component – a narrow strip along the Slovak-Polish border approximately 10 km in length – must be excluded due to the disagreement of landowners. This resulted in the division of this component into two separate component parts Udava and Stužica – Bukovské vrchy (in a modified delimitation). The Ministry of Environment and State Nature Conservancy continuously tried to find a mutually acceptable solution and offered these landowners associations adequate compensations (in line with the Act on Nature and Landscape Protection). Due to their persistent disagreement with raising the level of protection to provide the necessary legal guarantee of the non-intervention regime, these areas were not included in the new boundary modification proposal.

d) Newly delineated buffer zones are proposed to better ensure the protection of the property´s OUV. The buffer zone has been divided into two types according to its function – protection buffer subzone and landscape conservation buffer subzone (see further sections of this report). The landscape conservation buffer subzone has been added to provide additional protection of the property and to enhance the connectivity between the component parts. It is therefore proposed to increase the area of the buffer zone of the property, as inscribed in 2007, from 13,818.39 ha (tables in text) and 11,772.16 ha (map annexes) to 15,081.8 ha.

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

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The proposal for a significant boundary modification of the Slovak part of the property was submitted as a new nomination in accordance with the Operational Guidelines and is part of the nomination dossier for the third extension of the property submitted to the World Heritage Centre in January 2020.

2.4 Decision on protection status and buffer zone management of Slovak component parts (42 COM 7B.71 – 7)

Decision 42 COM 7B.71 - 7. Reiterates its position that due to the continued lack of adequate legal protection of the Slovak components of the property, their protection from logging and other potential threats cannot be guaranteed in the long term, which would clearly constitute a potential danger to the OUV of this serial transnational property as a whole, in line with Paragraphs 137 and 180 of the Operational Guidelines, and also considers that this needs to be urgently addressed by adequate legal provisions and an appropriate management regime of its buffer zones;

The proposed border modification and expansion of existing nature reserves has led to considerable improvements in the protection status. Please refer to the justification for the boundary modification, which is described in chapter 2.13 Decision on proposal for significant boundary modification of Slovak component parts (43 COM 7B.13 – 11) on page 31 of this document.

2.5 Decision on strict protections from logging in the property in Slovakia and Romania (42 COM 7B.71 – 8)

*Decision 42 COM 7B.71 - 8. Also recalling Decision **41 COM 8B.7**, which requested the States Parties of this property to emphasize buffer zone management supporting undisturbed natural processes, further requests the States Parties of Romania and Slovakia to ensure that logging is, and remains, strictly prohibited within the property, and that no logging operations are allowed in the buffer zones of the property, if they could have negative impact on natural processes and the property's OUV;*

The activities of the States Parties on buffer zone management will be described in the section of Decision 43 COM 7B.13 – 7 (page 21)

There is scientific evidence that so-called 'edge effects' caused by canopy opening, e.g. by logging activities affect the microclimate of adjacent forest ecosystems.

These micro-climatic effects are well documented by several studies: Matlack (1993) describes microclimatic effects up to 50 m from the forest edge. Jemali et al. (2017) document effects on temperature up to 50 m and humidity up to 40-60 m. Schmidt et al. (2017) expect altered conditions in soils of transition zones from the forest edge in 10–20 m with a maximum of 50 m and 25–50 m for above-ground areas with a maximum of 125 m. Davies-Colley et al. (2000) have observed changes in temperature up to 50 m within the forest stand. Gehlahusen et al. (2000) document edge effects on the microclimate 40-80 m within the forest stand and observe the invasion of exotic species up to 25 m into the forest. These studies give important information about the minimum distance between the property and the human introduced canopy openings.

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

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Spittlehouse et al. (2004) show that openings of less than one tree height in diameter have no significant influence on the microclimate of surrounding forest stands.

This provides important information on the maximum size of human-introduced gaps in buffer zones near the property to avoid negative microclimatic effects.

Based on these scientific studies, recommendations on the management of the protection buffer subzone were developed.

Figure 1: Clear cuts closer to the property than 50-80 m can have effects on the microclimate within the property.

To protect the beech forests in the component parts from these negative, man-made influences of forest management, the States Parties will ensure that no logging activities with a size larger than the height of a tree is carried out within the buffer zone with protective function with a minimum width of 100 m. In many cases, much larger non-intervention management zones have been established.

Statement of the State Party of Slovakia:

The information on the non-intervention regime in the property and the necessary steps taken by the State Party of Slovakia (proposal for boundary modification, process of designation of new nature reserves) to ensure adequate legal protection in accordance with the relevant Decisions of the WHC has already been provided in the previous sections. Two Governmental Resolutions further endorsed the protection of the Slovak components of the property and their buffer zones.

The above-mentioned Governmental Resolution n. 508/2019 also contained basic guidelines for the implementation of the legal protection regime of the Slovak component parts and their buffer zones, as well as respective management arrangements. The Resolution confirms a strict non-intervention regime in the property and defines that the protection buffer sub-zone will be protected under the 5th or 4th level of protection with a specific management regime, very close to non-intervention. Only single-tree extraction under the permission of the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic is allowed, to ensure the protection of the OUV of the property. The landscape conservation buffer sub-zone will be protected under the 3rd or 4th level of protection, with only close-to-nature forest management, to improve the ecological state of the natural beech forest ecosystems (including natural regeneration of all tree species of potential natural forest type, regular distribution of dead wood, uneven-aged forest stands and continuous change to selective logging).

In addition, the entire Slovak legislative framework for nature and landscape protection has been strengthened by the recent amendment of the Act on Nature and Landscape Protection (n. 543/2002

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

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Coll.), effective from 1 January 2020. The Amendment defines stricter protection of national parks (3rd level of protection), where the only allowed type of management is close-to-nature forest management and forbids larger clear-cuts or shelter-wood cuts. In the highest 5th protection level (strict non-intervention regime) no exceptions are permitted. The Amendment brings additional restrictions for the 3rd, 4th and 5th level of protection. The specific management regime of the Slovak component parts will be defined by the comprehensive integrated management plan, which will also take into account common management guidelines for the entire property and other surrounding protected areas. The integrated management plan is currently being prepared and is expected to be completed in August 2020.

Statement of the State Party of Romania:

In the case of Romania, the UNESCO World Heritage Property that is situated within the national parks overlaps with the protection zone of the national parks by the IUCN Management Category II (tree harvesting is strictly forbidden).

For the following components:

- *Codrul Secular Șinca (040),*
- *Codrul Secular Slătioara (041)- is also a protected area - natural reserve without active management),*
- *Grosii Țibleșului (047,048),*
- *Strâmbu Băiuț (050)*

the protection is ensured by the forest management plan in place (strict forest reserve without active management.

According to the national legislation, in the buffer zones of the national parks, in the case of the forest plots bordering to the protection zone of the national parks (as well as by default to the UNESCO World Heritage Property) there are allowed only conservation works or sanitary cuttings. Therefore, that implies interventions on surfaces smaller than a height of tree in diameter.

Still, a pending issue is represented by those forest plots bordering the protection zones, where different regeneration cuts were performed in the past, (before the approval of the internal zoning of the national park, respectively of the UNESCO World Heritage sites). We arise your attention that the completion of the works started as it is required by the national legislation (the regeneration cuts are applied for a minimum period of 15-20 years).

These situations will be analyzed punctually, and the best decisions will be taken for the stability of the forest ecosystem in the respective areas. Until the approval of national legislation dedicated to UNESCO World Heritage Sites that will regulate also the case of forests in the buffer zone of these sites, we have issued an internal order that was communicated to the local forest districts. They were informed about the obligation not to mark and cut the trees located closer than 50 m from the protection area of the UNESCO component. Exceptional cases will be brought to the attention of Romsilva's headquarter who, together with the representatives of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests, will establish the most suitable solution and will inform all the State Parties, UNESCO and IUCN.

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Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

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2.6 Decision on submission of a joint report (42 COM 7B.71 – 9)

*Decision 42 COM 7B.71 - 9. Requests furthermore the States Parties of this property to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2019**, an updated joint report on the state of conservation of the property, including on the transnational management of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 44th session in 2020*

As the decisions 42 COM 7B.71 and 43 COM 7B.13 are addressed to the same World Heritage Property and will be evaluated at the same Committee Meeting in 2020 (44 COM), the States Parties decided to elaborate one joint report for both decisions.

2.7 Decision on request on future enlargement of Belgium component parts (43 COM 7B.13 – 5)

Decision 43 COM 7B.13 - 5. Noting the measures developed by the State Party of Belgium to address the Committee's request to consider the future enlargement of components to at least the established minimum size of 50 ha, requests it to continue its efforts in this regard to fully address the Committee's request;

On the third of October 2019 an informal visit of the Sonian with IUCN was organised. Decision 43 COM 7B.13 of the Committee was discussed in detail by the participants. A first configuration of the enlargement of the Walloon sites and the location for the green bridge connecting two components in Brussels was presented.

The Walloon part of Sonian, of which about 270 hectares are public state forest, consists of 120 to 200-year-old beech forest stands. Like the other parts of the Sonian Forest in Flanders and Brussels, the Walloon part has been designated as a Natura 2000 site (BE31002 - *Vallées de l'Argentine et de la Lasne*) and as a regional protected landscape.

The actual Walloon components of the property are Ticton A (nord) with a surface of 13.98 hectares and Ticton B (south) with a surface of 8.13 hectares. Both parts were designated as strict forest reserves in the management plan. In order to respond to the WHC Decision 43 COM 7B.13, the Walloon administration (Département de la Nature et des Forêts) examined various hypotheses to extend the existing the components to a minimum size of 50 hectares.

The option of connecting the two components parts was studied but was not pursued because of the distance between the two components, the existing infrastructural barriers (roads and clinic Derscheidt), the vicinity of the forest border in the south and the occurrence of ecologically heterogeneous forest stands in between the component parts.

Nevertheless, the plans for the demolition of the Derscheidt clinic, the option of connecting the two components would lead to a heterogeneous and inconsistent configuration.

For the same reasons, the expansion of the Ticton B component was not proposed.

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Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

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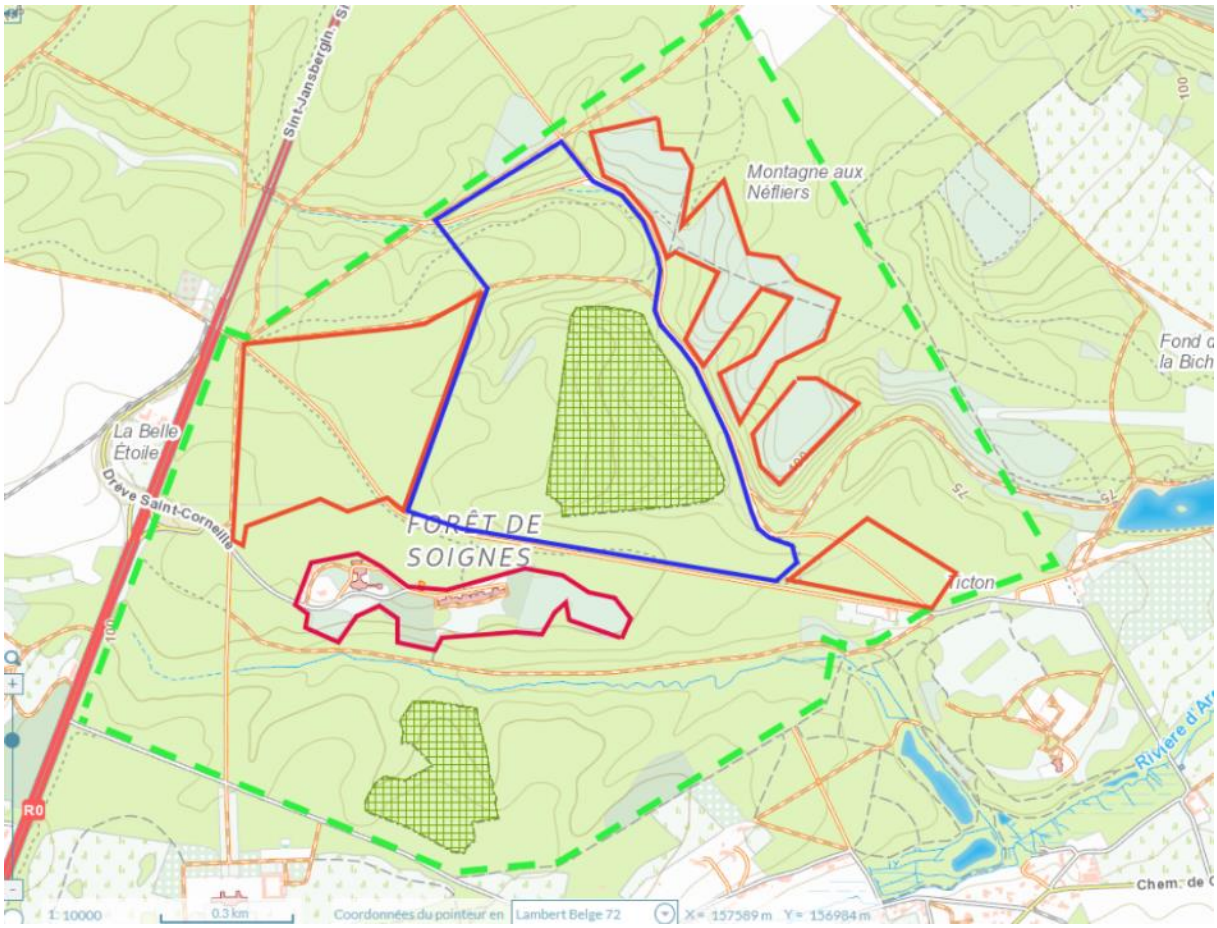
In addition, the surrounding forest stands of the Ticton A component consists of different valuable beech stands with very similar characteristics as the component Ticton A, the disturbance is this zone is minimal due to the configuration of the recreational network.

As a conclusion of this analysis, an increase of the Ticton A component by approximately 35 hectares is proposed. To the north, the limit of the enlarged Ticton A component would form the regional border with Flanders. The other boundaries are marked by a different type of forest stand containing a certain percentage of coniferous trees. The enlarged area is ecologically consistent with the original component and is surrounded by various recreational paths and forest roads.

The figure below shows the two existing Ticton A and Ticton B components. The area delignated with the blue line indicates the proposed extension of the Ticton A component to 50 hectares. The zones marked in red are excluded due to the species composition (conifers) and stands with high regeneration gaps. The green dotted line indicates the property boundary of the Walloon administration.



The precise configuration of the component, including the protective buffer zone, will be defined in accordance with the guidance documents on buffer zone management.

In order to formalise the extension of Ticton A, the Walloon Government must take a decision on the enlargement of the actual forest reserve. Based on this decision, the management plan will have to be adapted. A minor boundary modification will be proposed for the component.

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

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Regarding the Brussels components, the solution of the Committee Decision 43 COM 7B.13 would be to build a new green bridge connection between Grippensdelle A and Grippensdelle B. The two component parts with the numbers 9 and 10 (Grippensdelle A & B) are separated by a road. The road is so small that the trees can meet their crowns from both sides of the road. Brussels has conducted a feasibility study to construct a green bridge (ecoduct) as an ecological corridor connecting the two component parts, thus creating one component Grippensdelle of 61 hectares. Eliminating defragmentation by building a green bridge is an explicit objective of the new management plan adopted by the Government on 6/06/2019. So far, the formal decision to build this green bridge has not yet been taken by the regional government. The discussions between the Administration and the Minister's cabinet are ongoing.

The figure below indicates the proposed location of the green bridge in red (project d'écopoint de la chaussée de la Hulpe). The green bridges already realised (defragmentation of the ring road in Groenendaal and the railway Line 161) are indicated in green.

2.8 Decision on the guidance document on buffer zone management (43 COM 7B.13 – 6)

Decision 43 COM 7B.13 - 6. Notes with appreciation the willingness of the States Parties to develop joint guidelines for buffer zone design and management and the progress achieved to date, but expresses concern that no progress has been made on clear guidelines regarding acceptable logging activities within the established buffer zones and reiterates the importance of good buffer zone design and effectiveness as the only feasible way to protect the integrity of the small forest remnants included in this property;

As the property is located in 41 different protected areas within 12 different countries, the ownership, spatial design, legal protection status and management regulation of the buffer zones were and are very diverse. To ensure the functionality of the buffer zone for each component part of the property

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
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and to harmonise the management approach, a process to develop a joint guidance document has been started. The following activities have already been carried out (or are planned):

2018 (May-Aug.)	Literature research on threats and functionality of buffer zones (Coordination office)
2018 (Aug-Sept.)	Online questionnaire on rating of threats for all component parts (clusters) by all States Parties
2018 (Aug.-Oct.)	Development of a draft guidance document on buffer zone design and management (Coordination Office)
2018 (Nov.)	Evaluation and feedback from States Parties on the draft guidance document.
2018 (Dec.)	Submission of the approved version of the guidance document in the States Parties Report on 1st of Dec. 2018 to UNESCO.
2019 (March)	Technical workshop on the guidance document in Sibiu (RO) (States Parties & Coordination Office).
2019 (May)	Presentation of the draft regulations for buffer zones to IUCN experts in Bern in the course of the preparation of the next extension.
2019 (May)	Discussion of the current version of the guidance document at the Joint Committee Meeting (JMC) in Suceava (RO) (States Parties & Coordination Office). Another technical workshop was planned, and the final decision was postponed to the JMC meeting in April 2020
2019 (June-Sep.)	Online questionnaire on the current rules and regulations within all component parts (States Parties).
2019 (Oct.)	International technical workshop on buffer zone management for the beech forest WH (experts from States Parties, IUCN, Coordination Office).
2019 (Nov.-Dec.)	Update of the guidance document according to the workshop outcomes.
2020 (Jan)	Submission on the updated draft guidance document for feedback to the States Parties. Inclusion of the draft document in the States Parties Report (submitted by 1st of Feb. 2020).

Planned:

2020 (April)	Decision on the new updated version of the guidance document between all 12 States Parties at the JMC-meeting in Belgium.

The draft guidance document presented and discussed with IUCN experts in Bern in May 2019 was also used as the basis for the preparation process for the ongoing extension process (States Parties and component parts according to the submission of tentative submission formats in Feb. 2019).

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

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2.9 Decision on appropriate buffer zone management (43 COM 7B.13 – 7)

*Decision 43 COM 7B.13 - 7. Considering that Decision **41 COM 8B.7** requested all States Parties of this property to give special emphasis to appropriate buffer zone management in order to support undisturbed natural processes, urges the States Parties to define a clear and strict approach to buffer zone design and management which will allow for the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property and to seek further guidance from the World Heritage Centre and IUCN on this issue;*

The results of the process of developing a guidance document (as described in the section above) are summarised in a new draft document, which is included in the annex to this report (7.1 Draft Guidance Document: 'Management of the property and buffer zone zonation page 58). This document will be put for decision making for approval at the next Joint Management Committee Meeting in April 2020. This document contains the proposal on the rules and regulations for the management of the property and the buffer zone.

2.10 Decision on missing contribution to reports and request by Albania (43 COM 7B.13 – 8)

Decision 43 COM 7B.13 - 8. Regrets that the State Party of Albania did not provide any update regarding the state of conservation of its components through the joint report submitted by the States Parties, and also requests it to provide a response to the letters from the World Heritage Centre, especially regarding third party information about illegal logging in the buffer zone of one of the Albanian components;

In the UNESCO area there are no tree cuttings by private entities and the NAPA through the Elbasan RAPA, exercises continuous control to prevent any tree cuttings by individuals. It is not about mass logging and loading of timber into trucks, which cannot even enter the area as the trails are pedestrian-only. Referring the article, it is noted that issues related to logging in the buffer zones are not applicable for these two properties.

According to the information provided, there has been no illegal logging on the 'Gashi River' property and in its buffer zone since 2017. The rugged and inaccessible terrain and the large distance from the main roads make access to this property and its buffer zone difficult and make illegal logging and illegal transportation considerably more difficult.

The same applies to the 'Rrajca' property and its buffer zone, where illegal logging is claimed. The property and the buffer zone are in the 'central zone' of 'Shebenik-Jabllanice' National Park, which ensures very good protection of the property and its buffer zone.

No activity is currently being carried out in the buffer zone of the 'Rrajca', as it is located in the 'central zone' of the Shebenik-Jabllanice National Park, **where activities are not only prohibited because it is a UNESCO property, but also because the area must comply with the law on Protected Areas.**

In the buffer zone of 'Gashi River' property few activities are carried out, which are limited to two types, **namely gathering medicinal herbs and grazing**.

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
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Finally, in response to the letter of the World Heritage Centre sent on August 1, 2019, regarding the file for the Approval of Construction Permit No. 14, dated 12 of July, 2019 for the object '*Construction of the new generating power source Hec Drita*', in the area of the Gashi River, Kukesi RAPA stated that the water intake building, the pressure basin, the HPP building with the respective pipeline to be constructed, which was approved via the above-mentioned permit, are located outside the boundaries of the 'Gashi River' property **and also outside its buffer zone**.

On the 'Rrajca' property and its buffer zone, as we explained above, there has been no illegal logging in the period from the inscription until now.

There **are no government-approved development plans** in the area of the property and its buffer zone.

The water supply system for the inhabitants of the Rrajca village is being rebuilt, and the works for the canal, the extension of the construction pipelines, the transport of building materials, etc. are in progress. **However, no tree logging is reported**.

In 2019, there was no illegal logging, no grazing damage and no cases of fires in the property and in the buffer zone.

The beech forest in the 'Rrajca' property is located in the central area of the 'Shebenik-Jablanica' National Park and is managed according to the Management Plan of the NP.

2.11 Decision on logging in Buffer zones in Romania and other States Parties (43 COM 7B.13 – 9)

Decision 43 COM 7B.13 - 9. Also notes with concern the information provided by the State Party of Romania, which shows that logging operations undertaken in the buffer zones of the Romanian components of the property took place in areas close or adjacent to the boundaries of the components and reiterates its request, extending it to all States Parties, to ensure that logging is, and remains, strictly prohibited within the property, and that no logging operations are allowed in the buffer zones of the property if they could negatively impact natural processes and the property's OUV;

Statement of the State Party of Romania:

According to the national legislation, in the buffer zones of the national parks and also within the buffer zones of the UNESCO World Heritage components that are not included in the national park area, similar forest management provisions were adopted in the forest management plans (approved for a 10 year period and through a ministerial order). As stated, only tendering operations or selective cuttings that promote natural regeneration is permitted for a period of more than 10 years.

Clear-cutting is prohibited in all UNESCO buffer zone areas.

Also, in the case of forest plots adjacent to the protection zone, only conservation work or sanitary cutting is allowed, which means interventions on areas with a diameter of less than one tree height. In the conservation work, a maximum of 10% of the standing volume of the forest plot may be harvested within 10 years. Among the selective cuttings, the *group shelterwood system* (with a

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Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
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regeneration period of at least 15 years and up to 3 to 5 interventions per forest management plot), and in some cases *the irregular shelterwood system* is the most common.

In case of managed forests, the Romanian forestry approach is to promote natural regeneration in order to preserve, also through active management, the natural forest tree composition specific to this area. Thus, according to the forest technical instructions, it is forbidden to regenerate a forest with different forest species other than the existing natural ones according to forest sites.

Taking into account the above elements, we believe that the forest activities carried out in the buffer zone do not have any impact on the OUV of the UNESCO World Heritage Property. Moreover, pending the approval of a national regulation, a Romsilva internal order was issued (which was also communicated to the forest districts), in which it is mentioned that trees closer than 50 m from the protection area of the UNESCO component will not be cut. Nevertheless, there are some special situations of forest plots bordering the protection zones of the UNESCO World Heritage Property, where in the past (prior to the approval of the internal zoning of the national park, respectively of the UNESCO site) various regeneration cuts were carried out. According to the existing legislation, the completion of regeneration work is necessary to ensure the stability of the forest ecosystem present on these specific forest management plots.

In the future, these exceptional cases will be brought to the attention of the representatives of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests, in order to find the most suitable solution for the beech forest ecosystems.

Cheile Nerei – Beușnița (Romania 039)
The Administration of the Cheile Nerei – Beușnița National Park also ensures the management of the property 39 CheileNerei – Beușnița of UNESCO World Heritage which is included in the national park area. The Order no. 1642 / 12.08.2016 of the Romanian Ministry of Environment, Water and Forest approved the Management Plan of the CheileNerei – Beușnița National Park, which regulates that the entire property 39 CheileNerei – Beușnița of UNESCO World Heritage is strictly protected. More than 70% of the buffer zones of the property are also protected and no logging activities are allowed. In the rest of the buffer zones of the property, responsible and sustainable forest management is applied according to the Romanian legislation in force and to the FSC forest certification standards, to ensure that logging activities do not have a negative impact on the natural processes of the strictly protected area and the property's Outstanding Universal Value. The entire forest area of property and the buffer zone is certificated by FSC.

Codrul Secular Sinca (Romania 040)
The area of the UNESCO Codrul Secular Sinca site is managed by the Padurile Sincii Forest District. The activities on the site are monitored by the Forest Guard Brasov and supported by WWF Romania.
No human activities have been registered within the core zone area, except for strictly monitored and guided tourism.

In the buffer zone, a total of 30 cubic meters of wood were harvested in 2019 as a result of calamities.

Codrul Secular Slătioara (Romania 041)

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
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The surface of the UNESCO World Heritage Property Codrul Secular Slătioara site is managed by the Forestry Directorate of Suceava, a subunit of the National Forest Administration – Romsilva. Activities at the site are monitored by the Stulpicani Forest District, which was established under the overall coordination of the Suceava Forestry Directorate.
The entire UNESCO World Heritage Property Codrul Secular Slătioara and its buffer zone are included in a national natural reserve where harvesting of natural resources or other activities that may affect the forest natural reserve are not allowed. Therefore, according to the forest management plan, no works are foreseen, and the harvesting of wood is forbidden.
The boundaries of the UNESCO Codrul Secular Slătioara site are clearly defined on site, without any violations of the forest fund or threats to the integrity of the site. The UNESCO site Codrul Secular Slătioara does not contain public or forest roads or constructions.

Cozia (Romania 042, 043)
The entire area of the UNESCO site is located within the inner boundaries of the Cozia National Park and is administered by the Cozia National Park Administration, a legal entity within the Romsilva National Forest Authority.
The UNESCO property and its buffer zone are also included in the NATURA 2000 sites (in accordance with the provisions of the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive). Due to the complex management of these protected areas (National Park, Natura 2000 site, UNESCO site), the Ministry of Environment approved the Integrated Management Plan in 2017. Following the approval of this management plan, the forestry management plans have been harmonised to respect the internal zoning of the protected areas and the activities permitted by the protected areas management plan.
The buffer zone of the UNESCO site overlaps with the buffer zones of the park where only certain activities are allowed, while respecting the principle of sustainable use of natural resources. In the case of the forests, sustainable forest management is applied, so that forestry activities are selective and of low intensity.
The forests on the surface of the UNESCO site are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which demonstrates that they respect the principles of sustainable development, with forest management focusing on both economic and social aspects as well as environmental issues. The administration of this national park advises on possible interventions, and continuously supervises and monitors the approved work. All activities with possible negative impacts on the environment are analysed by the Scientific Council of the National Park, which decides whether they can be carried out.

Domogled – Valea Cernei (Romania 044, 045, 046)
The UNESCO World Heritage Property and the buffer zone overlap with the Domogled-Valea Cernei National Park, which has an administrative structure that is a unit with legal personality within the National Forest Administration-Romsilva. The area is also designated as a Natura 2000 Site (ROSCI0069, ROSPA0035 Domogled-Cerna Valley) and has an integrated management plan approved by the central public authority for environmental protection in 2016. The forest management plans have been harmonised according to the provisions of the national park management plan, taking into account its internal zoning system. The UNESCO World Heritage Property overlaps with the core area of the park.
The buffer zone of the site overlaps with the buffer zone of the park, where sustainable forest management is applied, with selective and low-intensity forestry operations. The forests are certified

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Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
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by FSC, which demonstrates that they respect the principles of sustainable development, with forest management emphasising economic and social aspects as well as ecological aspects.

The Domogled – Valea Cernei UNESCO site, with a total area of 61,193.54 ha, of which 9,732.26 ha are UNESCO property and 5,461.28 ha are buffer zone, is the largest cluster among the ones nominated in 2017.

The Domogled-Valea Cernei buffer zone represents a very large area with multiple interventions. To get a clear overview of the level of these interventions between 2017 – 2019, please see the figures below.

Cleaning – these tendering operations are applied to improve the quality, growth and composition of the forest stands, by extracting the bad shaped, injured, sick and dead or the trees belonging to less valuable species.

- No of stands: 26;
- Total area of intervention: 192 ha;
- Average area of the intervention/stand: 7.4 ha;
- Average total standing volume/stand: 681 m^3;
- Average harvested volume/stand: 52.2 m^3;
- Average ratio harvested volume/total standing volume: 7.7%

Thinning – the tendering operation in which the number of trees on the forest plot is reduced, with a temporary reduction in consistency, in order to improve the structure, growth and quality of the trees and, finally, their functional efficiency.

- No of stands: 47;
- Total area of intervention: 547 ha;
- Average area of the intervention/stand: 11.6 ha;
- Average total standing volume/stand: 3780 m^3;
- Average harvested volume/stand: 368 m^3;
- Average ratio harvested volume/total standing volume: 9.7%

Shelterwood cutting – *group shelterwood system* (including final logging, which is the last step of this intervention system) – is part of the group of forest interventions with repeated, localised cuts, where regeneration takes place under the canopy. The main characteristic of this intervention is the beginning of the regeneration process at a variable number of points on the surface of the forest plot. When applying this intervention, the number of canopy openings, their size, shape and distribution are determined in relation to the progress of the regeneration.

- No of stands: 79;
- Total area of intervention: 736 ha;
- Average area of the intervention/stand: 9.3 ha;
- Average total standing volume/stand: 4909 m^3;
- Average harvested volume/stand: 1179 m^3;
- Average ratio harvested volume/total standing volume: 24%.

Single tree selection (*irregular shelterwood system*) – in Romania, this forest operation means the application of a system of interventions with a continuous character, aiming at the selective harvesting of a few trees or small groups of trees, giving the forest stand a permanent character, with trees at all stages of growth and a mixed stand structure.

- No of stands: 10;
- Total area of intervention: 96.4 ha;

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Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
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- Average area of the intervention/stand: 9.6 ha;
- Average total standing volume/stand: 4107 m^3;
- Average harvested volume/stand: 413 m^3;
- Average ratio harvested volume/total standing volume: 10%.

Conservation work- system – is a set of interventions applied to some stands at an advanced age in order to maintain or improve their phytosanitary status, to ensure the stability of the forest and to continuously improve the fulfilment of the protective functions assigned to them: carrying out sanitary cuttings; taking damaged and poor-quality trees (poorly adapted or with obvious technological defects), creating conditions for the development of existing seedlings or those to be installed at different points of intervention, as well as of the groups of trees within the stand, which are at different stages of development and support the natural process of regeneration in the difficult forest sites conditions.

- No of stands: 52;
- Total area of intervention: 1033 ha;
- Average area of the intervention/stand: 19.9 ha;
- Average total standing volume/stand: 5665 m^3;
- Average harvested volume/stand: 341 m^3;
- Average ratio harvested volume/total standing volume: 6%.

Calamities (*incidental products*) – the interventions applied in accordance with the legislation for the harvesting of trees damaged by the action of destabilising biotic and abiotic factors.

- No of stands: 80;
- Total area of intervention: 324 ha;
- Average area of the intervention/stand: 4 ha;
- Average total standing volume/stand: 6188 m^3;
- Average harvested volume/stand: 164 m^3;
- Average ratio harvested volume/total standing volume: 2.6%.

Within the buffer zone, the forest works do not negatively affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, despite the numerous reports from environmental NGOs to stop interventions in some forests they consider to be virgin forests. In order to clarify these aspects, forests that meet the criteria for virgin or quasi-virgin were identified and mapped with the help of experts / NGOs and were included in a dedicated national catalogue. The actions were carried out by a team of qualified experts and approximately 2,000 hectares of virgin forests were identified in the buffer zone of the site. As a result, they were included in the National Catalogue of virgin and quasi-virgin forests in 2019. According to the national regulation, no harvesting activities are allowed in the virgin and quasi-virgin forests (even if these areas are not in the protected zone of a natural protected area – e.g. national park)

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

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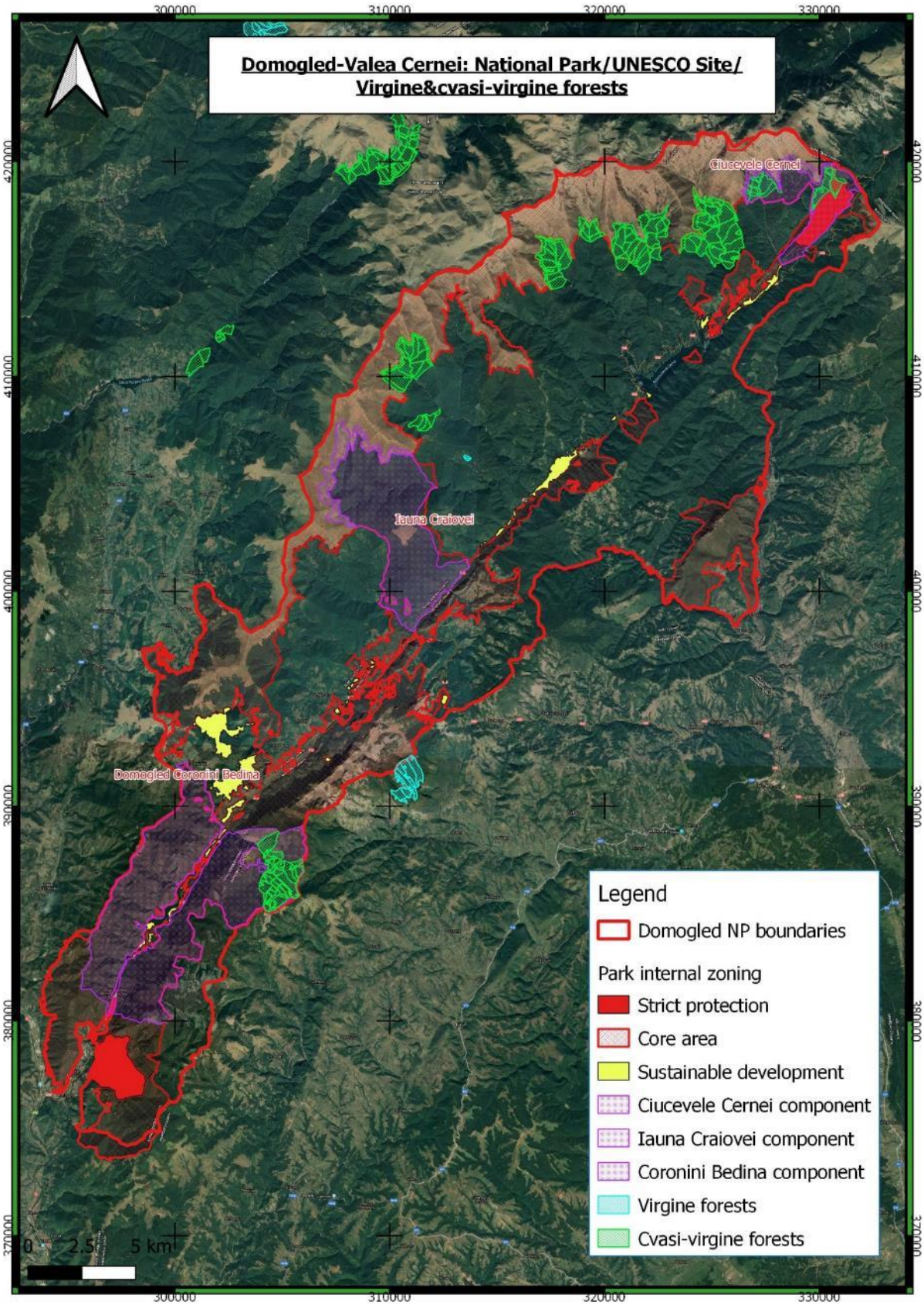

The Park Administration conducts regular monitoring activities, especially in the buffer zone where

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LE 14-20

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permits are issued. According to the law, activities with potential negative environmental impact are analysed by the Scientific Council of the national park.

Grosii Tiblesului. (Romania 047, 048)
The entire site overlaps with the Natura 2000 site ROSCO0285 'Codrii Seculari de la Strimbu Baiut'. The forests within the site are FSC certified (Forest Stewardship Council). The property is about 927 ha, all activities except research, education and controlled tourism are forbidden. The buffer zone area is 567.7 ha, and according to the forest management plan only tending operations, selective and low intensity harvesting (like group shelterwood system, conservation or sanitary cuttings) are applied. These works are included in the forest management plan, elaborated by the National Institute for Research and Development in Forestry, and approved by the ministry responsible for forestry. The buffer zone is crossed by a forest road that connects forests located outside the site. The quantity of timber transported on this road is low and it comes from forests situated in the buffer area of the UNESCO site, as well as from forests located outside the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Izvoarele Nerei (Romania 049)
The UNESCO Site almost entirely overlaps with the Semenic – Cheile Carasului National Park, except for part of the buffer zone, in the eastern part of the site. The UNESCO property overlaps with Izvoarele Nerei Nature Reserve, giving it a legal status of non-intervention. The buffer zone of the UNESCO site within the park overlaps with the buffer zone of the national park.
All forests are State property and are managed by the subunits of the National Forest Administration ROMSILVA. The administrative structure of Semenic – Cheile Carasului National Park is a unit with legal entity within the National Forest Administration-Romsilva.
The area of the UNESCO site is also part of a Natura 2000 site and the integrated management plan is pending approval from the State Authority on Environment (Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests). The forest management plan is correlated with the proposed integrated management plan of the protected areas. According to the zoning system of this management plan, the UNESCO property is located in the strict protection zone. This is the most strictly protected zone of a national park, and according to the national legal regulations a total non-intervention regime must be respected, including all forms of exploitations and use of natural resources are forbidden. The buffer zone includes surfaces with non-intervention regime and other surfaces with applied sustainable forest management, consisting of selective interventions (such as tending operations, group shelterwood system, conservation or sanitary cuttings), with low intensity, which do not affect the Outstanding Universal Value for which the UNESCO Site was designated.
The forests included in the World Heritage Site component and in the buffer zone are certified by FSC, which demonstrates that the principles of sustainable development are being applied, with forest management focusing on social and economic but also on ecological issues.
The Administration of the National Park monitors the area, manages all activities (for which third parties need the Administration's approval) and activities with potentially negative environmental impacts are analysed by the Scientific Council of the national park.

Strimbu Baiut. (Romania 050)
The entire UNESCO World Heritage Site overlaps with the Natura 2000 site ROSCO0285 'Codrii Seculari de la Strimbu Baiut'. The forests within the site are FSC certified (Forest Stewardship Council). The property is about 598 ha, all activities except research, education and controlled tourism are forbidden. The buffer zone area is 713.1 ha, and according to the forest management plan only tending

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
E.C.O. Institute of Ecology
Lakeside B07 b, 9020 Klagenfurt, Austria
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operations, selective and low intensity harvesting are applied (such as group shelterwood system, conservation or sanitary cuttings). These works are included in the forest management plan, elaborated by the National Institute for Research and Development in Forestry, and approved by the Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests.

Summary on the status of all States Parties:

In October 2019, a detailed report on the current status of rules and regulations for each component part (or cluster) was delivered to UNESCO.

A summary of the response to the current buffer zone regulations is given below. The tables show the different land-use types in the row headings and the available answers in the column headings. The possible answers were:

- NA: Not allowed (colour code green)
- AsP: Allowed with special permission (colour code orange)
- AsA: Allowed in specific areas (colour code blue)
- GA: Generally allowed (colour code red)

The number in the table cells indicates the number of answers per answer and land use type. The maximum is 41 answers. The intensity of the colour is proportional to the number of answers.

Table 2: Overview on the current (2019) regulations on logging activities in 41 (out of 42) component parts/clusters and their buffer zones

Forestry	Not allowed	Allowed with special permission	Allowed on specific areas	Generally allowed
Artificial restoration	18	14	2	7
Clear cuts < 0,3 ha	33	2	3	3
Clear cuts > 0,3 ha	34	3	2	2
Cutting of firewood	26	8	3	4
Sanitary cuts	13	13	5	10
Security management along trails		14	4	23
Selective logging	21	6	4	10
Shelterwood cuttings < 0,3 ha	24	3	3	10
Shelterwood cuttings > 0,3 ha	33	2	2	3
Tendering operations in young stands	19	8	3	11

The current status of the buffer zone regulations does not include the proposed integration of the functional concept of protection and landscape conservation sub-zones, which will be described in detail in the next section. The aim of the harmonisation process in the buffer zone management is to have a stricter limitation of logging in those parts of the buffer zone, where negative impact on the

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
E.C.O. Institute of Ecology
Lakeside B07 b, 9020 Klagenfurt, Austria
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OUV might be caused by logging activities. This process can be started after the approval of the guidance document by the JMC (next meeting in April 2020).

2.12 Decision on Reactive Monitoring Mission in Albania and Romania (43 COM 7B.13 – 10)

Decision 43 COM 7B.13 - 10. Further requests the States Parties of Albania and Romania to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission to the Albanian and Romanian components of the property, respectively, and all States Parties of this transnational property to provide, prior to this mission, an overview about the management regime of their respective buffer zones and the management operations, which took place since inscription, in order to assess whether activities in the buffer zones of the property might have negative impacts on its OUV;

Statement of the State Party of Albania:

Albania has invited a joint reactive monitoring mission of UNESCO and IUCN for the period from 20 to 22 November 2019. The mission was successfully implemented and both components, Lumi I Gashit and Rrajca, were visited by UNESCO and IUCN experts. By now, a monitoring report was not delivered from the experts, but Albania got very positive comments after the mission took place.

Statement of the State Party of Romania:

The State Party of Romania invited a Reactive Monitoring Mission UNESCO/IUCN to assess the activities undertaken in the buffer zones of Cheile Nerei – Beusnita and Domogled – Valea Cernei components of UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site 'Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe'. The mission took place from 13 to 19 November 2019 in Caras Severin and Mehedinti County.

During the field visits and the stakeholder consultation meetings, the team of experts gathered useful information on national buffer zone management (e.g. practices, forestry management plans provisions, norms, etc.), but also listened to the voice of the local communities (e.g. local mayors, NGOs, local environmental institutions, etc.).

We organised **two stage consultations *with stakeholders.*** During the meetings, various aspects were raised, such as:

- Better communication at the local and national level regarding the necessity to ensure adequate protection of the UNESCO sites through buffer zones, following the provisions of the UNESCO operational guide (criterion IX).
- The need to raise awareness in the case of the impact of various investment projects, (e.g. the project of the DN66A national road, new technical improvements such as the two-stage waterfall system at the Cerna Dam that Hidroelectrica has in plan to implement in the near future), voltage lines buried in the galleries already existing or new cables. In all these cases, before any project development, the State Party of Romania must obtain the opinion of the UNESCO and IUCN, if these projects are in the buffer zone or the UNESCO site, before the beginning of the works by undertaking an environmental assessment with a dedicated part to the impact on the OUV of the UNESCO sites (including the buffer zone). Within the documentation of the impact assessment, the IUCN recommended the inclusion of a special chapter dedicated to UNESCO beech forest sites and taking into account the guidelines included in the World Heritage Advisory Note: Environmental Assessment (2013).

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
E.C.O. Institute of Ecology
Lakeside B07 b, 9020 Klagenfurt, Austria
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- The need to identify new sources of income for local communities by better promoting UNESCO sites, respectively monitoring the number of tourists (e.g. by completing a questionnaire of their flow in the areas of interest of UNESCO sites).
- Grazing activity is allowed in the buffer zones and the non-intervention zone of UNESCO sites, as long as it is practised in a sustainable way, without exceeding the support capacity of the ecosystem. The Romanian authorities were advised to monitor this type of activity (e.g. inventory of sheep, cows, etc.).
- The need to change the limits of the hunting funds superimposed over the national parks. This will also clarify the legal provision regarding the management of hunting fauna within the national park. In this respect, the peace of hunting will be respected in UNESCO sites and their buffer zones, following the legislation in force regarding hunting and protection of the hunting fund.

As part of this mission, the UNESCO and IUCN experts investigated the fire from **Dobraia hamlet** (a small village), part of the buffer zone of the Domogled components, due to some worrying information from the newspapers. After the field visit, the mission concluded that there is no impact on human settlements.
Due to the discussion we had related to a road infrastructure project, we invited an expert from the National Road Infrastructure Management Company (CNAIR) to offer more details regarding the road project of **DN66A** (location, the objectives of investments, technical specifications, etc.)

As part of the mission, the State Party of Romania sends additional documentation to the team of the experts of UNESCO and IUCN for offering further clarifications and information related to buffer zone management and various projects developments.

2.13 Decision on proposal for significant boundary modification of Slovak component parts (43 COM 7B.13 – 11)

Decision 43 COM 7B.13 - 11. Also noting the intention of the State Party of Slovakia to submit a proposal for significant boundary modification of its components by February 2020, also urges it to ensure that the recommendations of the 2018 Advisory mission are fully taken into account in the preparation of the final proposal and reiterates its position that, due to the continued lack of adequate legal protection of the Slovak components of the property, their protection from logging and other potential threats cannot be guaranteed in the long term, which would clearly constitute a potential danger to the OUV of this serial transnational property as a whole, in line with Paragraphs 137 and 180 of the Operational Guidelines;

The State Party of Slovakia submits the following information on the proposed boundary modification:

Area of the property (in hectares)

a) The area of the property as inscribed

Component name		Area as inscribed (in ha)	
		Tables in the text	Map annexes
Havešová	**component**	**171.3**	**179.33**

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
E.C.O. Institute of Ecology
Lakeside B07 b, 9020 Klagenfurt, Austria
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	buffer zone	63.99	1924.01
Rožok	**component**	**67.1**	**69.38**
	buffer zone	41.4	846.84
Stužica, Bukovské vrchy	**component**	**2,950.00**	**1,881.30**
	buffer zone	11,300.00	7,164.87
Vihorlat	**component**	**2,578.00**	**1,404.89**
	buffer zone	2,413.00	1,836.45
Sum	**property**	**5,766.40**	**3,534.90**
	buffer zone	13,818.39	11,772.16

a) The area of the property as proposed to be modified

Number	Name of the component part	Zone	Surface area (ha)
1.	**Havešová**	**core zone**	**167. 9**
		buffer zone (protective function)	164.1
		buffer zone (landscape conservation function)	6,310.8
2.	**Rožok**	**core zone**	**74.4**
		buffer zone (protective function)	48.8
		buffer zone (landscape conservation function)	1,090.1
3.	**Stužica - Bukovské vrchy**	**core zone**	**1,742.5**
		buffer zone (protective function)	703.6
		buffer zone (landscape conservation function)	4,991.2
4.	**Vihorlat**	**core zone**	**1,553.1**
		buffer zone (protective function)	607.9
		buffer zone (landscape conservation function)	246.2
5.	**Kyjovský prales**	**core zone**	**289.4**
		buffer zone (protective function)	104.5
		buffer zone (landscape conservation function)	0
6.	**Udava**	**core zone**	**455.8**
		buffer zone (protective function)	71.0
		buffer zone (landscape conservation function)	743.6
Sum		**core zone**	**4,283.0**
		buffer zone (protective function)	1,699.9
		buffer zone (landscape conservation function)	13,381.9

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
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Description of the modification

The boundary modification concerns all four currently inscribed Slovak components of the property and their buffer zones. The modification is considered as a significant boundary modification, in line with paragraph 165 of the Operational Guidelines. The buffer zone has been subdivided into two types, according to its main function – protection buffer sub-zone and landscape conservation buffer sub-zone.

Havešová

The modification of the component part Havešová is only minor, aligning the boundaries to the delineation of the National Nature Reserve Havešová. Compared with the nomination file (text: 171.30 ha, map: 179.33 ha), the proposal is only marginally reduced to 167.88 ha. The buffer zone varied significantly in the 2007 nomination dossier (63.99 ha in the text and 1,924.01 ha in the map). In the new proposal, it has been enlarged (compared to the 2007 nomination dossier) and internally divided into protection buffer sub-zone(164.07 ha) and landscape conservation buffer sub-zone (6310.77 ha), with total area of 6,474.84 ha. Proposed buffer zone roughly includes the delineation of the buffer zone from 2007.

Rožok

Similar to the Havešová component, the boundaries of the Rožok component were slightly adapted in the new proposal – from 67.10 ha (text) and 69.38 ha (map) in the 2007 nomination file to 74.37 ha in the current proposal. The adapted boundaries would fully match the boundaries of the Strict National Nature Reserve Rožok. Again, the discrepancies of the buffer zone's size were significant in 2007 (864.84 ha in the map and 41.40 ha in the text). In the current proposal, it has been enlarged to 1,138.89, of which 48.77 ha are in the protection buffer sub-zone and 1,090.12 ha are in the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone. The shape of the buffer zone approximately copies its delineation from 2007, while north of the component, it stretches towards the newly proposed part of the Stužica – Bukovské vrchy component.

Stužica – Bukovské vrchy

The changes of the Stužica – Bukovské vrchy component were more substantial, as they contain enlargements as well as exclusions. The original component, having a shape of a narrow strip along the Slovak-Polish border, was divided into two parts: Stužica – Bukovské vrchy with modified delineation (a new extension southwards was added stretching towards the Rožok component) and Udava, which has become a separate component according to the modification proposal. The modification extended the core zone of the Stužica part southwards within the buffer zone as inscribed in 2007, and excluded approximately 10 km of the border stripe from the component due to the disagreement of private landowners, resulting in a separation of Udava from the Stužica – Bukovské vrchy component. The new size of the remaining part of Stužica – Bukovské vrchy, including the newly added southern appendix, is 1,742.47 ha. The buffer zone of the component was enlarged to 5,694.84 ha, of which 703.63 ha are in the protection buffer sub-zone and 4,991.21 ha are in the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone.

In comparison, in the nomination dossier from 2007, the size of the component (including Udava) was 2,950.00 ha (text) and 1,881.30 ha (map), the buffer zone covered 11,300.00 ha (text) and 7,164.87 ha (map). It should be noted that in the current proposal, part of the boundary of the component

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
E.C.O. Institute of Ecology
Lakeside B07 b, 9020 Klagenfurt, Austria
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has been stretched outwards, further from the border (National Nature Reserve Jarabá skala), while in other parts, it has been adjusted to the borders of the existing strict nature reserves (National Nature Reserve Stužica, Nature Reserve Borsukov vrch).

Udava

In the current proposal, the new component Udava, former part of the Stužica – Bukovské vrchy component, was created as a separate component part, covering a core area of 455.82 ha and a buffer zone of 814.69 ha, of which 71.04 ha is proposed as the protection buffer sub-zone and 743.64 ha is classified as the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone.

In comparison with the 2007 nomination dossier, the boundaries of the core zone of the Udava part were modified and the core zone was enlarged and adapted to the boundaries of the existing strict nature reserve. Moreover, the core zone was extended westward, along the Slovak-Polish border, in order to cover additional primeval/old-growth forests identified by mapping. The buffer zone was also enlarged compared to delineation from 2007. Despite its seemingly isolated position, the component Udava is part of the Poloniny National Park and remain ecologically connected to Stužica component through forested areas along the Slovak-Polish border that remain without or only with very limited intervention.

Vihorlat

The boundary modification was more substantial in case of the Vihorlat component. The boundaries of its core zone, as inscribed in 2007, intersected with several small Strict Nature Reserves, but did not capture them systematically. Moreover, not all forest stands classified as natural were part of the core zone (e.g. around lake Morské oko). The boundaries of the component were redesigned with aim to systematically include all areas important for the expression of the OUV.

The discrepancies in the 2007 nomination dossier were noticeable – for the core zone, 2,578.00 ha in the text and 1,404.89 in the map and for the buffer zone, 2,413.00 ha in the text and 1,836.45 in the map. In the current proposal, the core zone was enlarged compared to the map delineation from 2007 to 1,553.06 ha and it encompasses all existing strict nature reserves. The total size of the buffer zone is 854.08 ha (607.91 ha in the protection buffer sub-zone and 246.17 ha in the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone). In the western part of the component, the design of the northern part of the buffer zone had to be narrower, as these areas are part of the military district with its specific regime and restrictions.

Kyjovský prales

Kyjovský prales is a newly proposed component for the World Heritage property. The component has an area of 289.41 ha and a protection buffer sub-zone of 104.47 ha. The landscape conservation buffer sub-zone has not been established due to the fact that the component is part of the military district. However, the manager of the military district (state enterprise Military Forests and Estates of the Slovak Republic) had agreed to apply only close-to-nature forest management in the surrounding forest areas.

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
E.C.O. Institute of Ecology
Lakeside B07 b, 9020 Klagenfurt, Austria
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Justification for the modification

The four Slovak components of the World Heritage property 'Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe' were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2007, jointly with six components in Ukraine. In 2011, it was noticed that the 2007 nomination file included discrepancies between the reported size and the maps of the Slovak components. The legal protection regime did not correspond to the Slovak components, as inscribed in 2007. Similarly, a Reactive Monitoring mission concluded in 2014 that the current boundary design of the Slovak components would not adequately reflect its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). The Committee consequently requested the State Party in 2015 to develop a proposal for boundary modification of its components (Decision 39 COM 7B.19). In light of the potential impact of the boundary modification on the OUV of the property, the Committee considered in its Decision 42 COM 7B.71, that the modification should be submitted as a significant boundary modification, in line with paragraph 165 of the Operational Guidelines.

The discrepancies between the text of the nomination dossier and the map annexes, but also unclear information about what should be taken as a reference point for boundary modification therefore restricted the implementation of the adequate legal protection status of the property. Moreover, the boundary modification required a participatory process and negotiations with all stakeholders, who have not been included in the preparatory phase for the nomination in 2007, in order to prepare a proposal that would be accepted and supported by all the stakeholders concerned. The Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic and its expert organisation State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic therefore carried out numerous discussions, negotiations, meetings and expert missions in the past years to prepare a participatory proposal that would at the same time satisfy all the requirements of the World Heritage Committee and its expert body IUCN to a maximum extent.

The results of mapping of natural/ancient/old-growth forests served as a basis for the elaboration of the current proposal. As Slovakia reported in 2016 in the State of Conservation report, within the project supported by a grant from Switzerland, the National Forestry Centre of Zvolen mapped more than 7,000 hectares of forest habitats in Poloniny and in Vihorlat in 2014, in accordance with the Methodical Procedure on Delimiting Natural Forests to Identify the State of Forests and to Identify Primeval Forests and Natural Forests within the UNESCO World Heritage Property. Other complementary information resulting from mapping of ancient and old growth forest are available from the mapping of non-governmental organisations FSC and Prales (carried out in two phases in between 2009 – 2015). All these results were incorporated and reflected in the current proposal for boundary modification that includes to a maximum possible extent all the mapped primeval/old-growth forests (see digital annexes – map of the forest naturality 2007/2019 files: SPD_All_Prir_Verzia2007_A3.pdf and SPD_All_Prir_Verzia20191014_A3.pdf).

The boundary modification of the Slovak components has been carried out in order to consistently capture all the highly valuable areas that are necessary for the expression of the OUV. In general, the boundaries were modified in order to adjust them to existing strict nature reserves (in most of the cases, this included their enlargement compared to their delineation from 2007, as in case of

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
E.C.O. Institute of Ecology
Lakeside B07 b, 9020 Klagenfurt, Austria
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Stužica, Udava, partly in Vihorlat), and also in order to add new parts of natural forests that have not been systematically included in the nomination dossier from 2007.

The boundary modification was especially significant in case of the Stužica – Bukovské vrchy component, where the component was split into two parts. The areas that were part of the nomination dossier in 2007 have not been included in the current proposal due to the disagreement of private landowners associations. The Ministry of Environment together with the State Nature Conservancy held in past years numerous meetings with representatives of three landowners associations concerned and adequate compensations have been repeatedly offered (in accordance with the Act n. 543/2002 Coll. on the Nature and Landscape Protection). In the first half of 2019, The Ministry and the State Nature Conservancy addressed letters to Chairpersons, Board Members, as well as to all the regular members of these three associations (meaning altogether approx. 870 letters). These letters were sent before their General Assemblies in order to inform all the members about implications and conditions of designating nature reserves with 5th level of protection, as well as about available compensations and benefits that can be leveraged thanks to nature protection and international recognition as a World Heritage site. Due to their disagreement with increasing the level of protection, and therefore inability to provide an adequate legal guarantee for protection of these areas, the part of Stužica – Bukovské vrchy along the Slovak-Polish border in private ownership (see map annexes) has not been included in the proposal.

Nevertheless, the current proposal for the boundary modification of the Slovak components represents a comprehensive proposal based on results of primeval and ancient forest mapping that was prepared in the participatory process and was endorsed by all the stakeholders. After several years, this proposal has been elaborated with aim to provide all the necessary guarantees for the adequate protection of the OUV and allows for implementation of all the related legal provisions and management arrangements.

Contribution to the maintenance of the Outstanding Universal Value

Slovak component parts, as first inscribed parts of the property, are indispensable for adequate representation of the unique evolution and adaptability of the Beech in the Carpathian Beech Forest Region, with its largest occurrence of beech forests in the whole Europe. Slovak components are thus integral part of the Carpathian 'backbone' of primeval and ancient beech forest – of a continuous arc of natural and seminatural beech forests extending along the Eastern Carpathians, stretching across Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine. These last, best conserved, remnants of monodominant beech forests are formed of highly productive and extremely stable ecosystems on mesotrophic substrates, such as flysh and volcanic rock (andesite). Particularly favourable site conditions allow the beech to reach heights up to 56 m – tallest European beech trees measured.

Implications for legal protection

The boundary modification of the Slovak components, as proposed in this nomination dossier, will significantly improve and provide adequate legal protection of the property. The proposal for

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
E.C.O. Institute of Ecology
Lakeside B07 b, 9020 Klagenfurt, Austria
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boundary modification of the Slovak components was approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 14 October 2019 (by Resolution of the Slovak Government n. 508/2019, see: https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/24259/1). The Governmental Resolution will therefore provide a legal basis for implementation of the adequate legal provisions, as required by the WHC. The proposal for boundary modification together with background documentation, as approved by the Slovak Government, included concrete map annexes with specific identification of all included forest stands. Also, the Governmental Resolution provided basic guidelines for implementation of the legal protection regime of the Slovak components and their buffer zones, together with respective management arrangements.

In case of two component parts, Rožok and Havešová, the boundaries will after modification fully overlap with existing strict nature reserves with the 5th level of protection according to Slovak legislation (meaning strict non-intervention regime). In case of Stužica – Bukovské vrchy, the boundaries are partly aligned with the existing strict nature reserves (5th level of protection). Extension of Stužica – Bukovské vrchy ('southern appendix') is proposed, that would include another strict Nature Reserve Borsučiny. The ridge connecting existing nature reserves is currently under 3rd level of protection, but the proposal for designation of a new nature reserve with 5th level of protection is foreseen in 2020. The Udava component is similarly proposed to be aligned with the boundaries of the existing strict nature reserve. Additional extension of this component is also proposed – inclusion of the primeval forest Rydošová. The process of designation of a new Nature Reserve Rydošová (5th level of protection) has already started in November 2019 (pursuant to Act on Nature and Landscape Protection). The public consultations have been finished and the designation of the nature reserve is envisaged in the beginning of 2020. The same designation process has started in November 2019 for the Vihorlat component, where all existing nature reserves will be merged into one strict Nature Reserve Vihorlatský prales, overlapping with the proposed component Vihorlat. Its designation by the Government of the Slovak Republic is also envisaged in the beginning of 2020. Lastly, the newly proposed component Kyjovský prales overlaps with the existing strict nature reserve and both the component and its buffer zone would be therefore protected under 5th level of protection.

As for the buffer zone, in accordance with the all newly delineated protective buffer zones will be protected under 4th or 5th level of protection, in line with the recommendation from the joint WHC/IUCN Advisory mission in 2018. With regard to the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone, it will be protected under 3rd or 4th level of protection.

Implications for management arrangements

The current proposal will provide adequate legal protection for the property and its buffer zones. All proposed components are either already protected under 5th level of protection (strict non-intervention regime), or the designation process of nature reserves with 5th level of protection has already started (components Udava and Vihorlat). For the newly added part of the Stužica – Bukovské vrchy component, the designation process is envisaged in 2020.

Mit Unterstützung von Bund und Europäischer Union
Bundesministerium Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus
LE 14-20

COORDINATION OFFICE
E.C.O. Institute of Ecology
Lakeside B07 b, 9020 Klagenfurt, Austria
coordination@beechforests.eu

In accordance with the above mentioned Governmental Resolution, the protection buffer sub-zone will be protected under 5th or 4th level of protection with specific management regime, very close to non-intervention. Only single-tree extraction under the permission of the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic would be allowed, aimed at ensuring the protection of the OUV of the property.

The landscape conservation buffer sub-zone will be protected under 3rd or 4th level of protection. It should be noted that from the 1st January 2020, a new amendment of the Act on Nature and Landscape Protection (n. 543/2002 Coll.) has come into force. This Act provides a basic legal framework for nature and landscape protection in Slovakia, defines different categories of protected areas, as well as five levels of protection and restrictions and regulations of management/activities according to these levels of protection.

Up to 2020, there were only few restrictions in terms of forest management in the 3rd level of protection. State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic (which was not responsible for actual management of protected areas) had a competence to intervene in the forest management only during the approval process of forest management plans (by providing an expert opinion that was not always fully taken into account by forest managers). In addition, forest management plans have to comply with management plans of protected areas (if such management plans exist).

The amendment of the Act on Nature and Landscape Conservation brings several changes to the system of nature protection in Slovakia and strengthens competencies of the State Nature Conservancy. From 1st January 2020, larger clear-cuts or shelter-wood cuts are forbidden in national parks, the only allowed type of management is close-to-nature forest management. Any so-called salvage logging (in case of calamities) larger than 0.3 ha must be firstly approved by the State Nature Conservancy. The forest management plans in protected areas must be prepared in cooperation with the State Nature Conservancy who will also define binding requirements for their preparation and will actively participate in their approval process (including public consultations). In addition, the amendment defines the aim of national parks to ensure natural undisturbed evolution of natural processes at least at 75 % of their area, with short-term aim to create a strict protection (non-intervention) zones generally at least at 50 % of their area.

In accordance with the Governmental Resolution n. 508/209, in the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone, only close-to-nature forest management can be applied, in line with Act on Nature Protection and Act on Forests, and in compliance with forest management plans that would be updated in cooperation with the State Nature Conservancy. The management of landscape protection buffer zone should improve the ecological state of natural beech forest ecosystems and shall include natural regeneration of all tree species of potential natural forest type, regular distribution of dead wood, uneven-aged forest stands and continuous change to selective logging.

More detailed management regime of Slovak components will be defined by the integrated management plan that will also reflect common management guidelines and that is currently under preparation and should be finished in August 2020.

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Maps

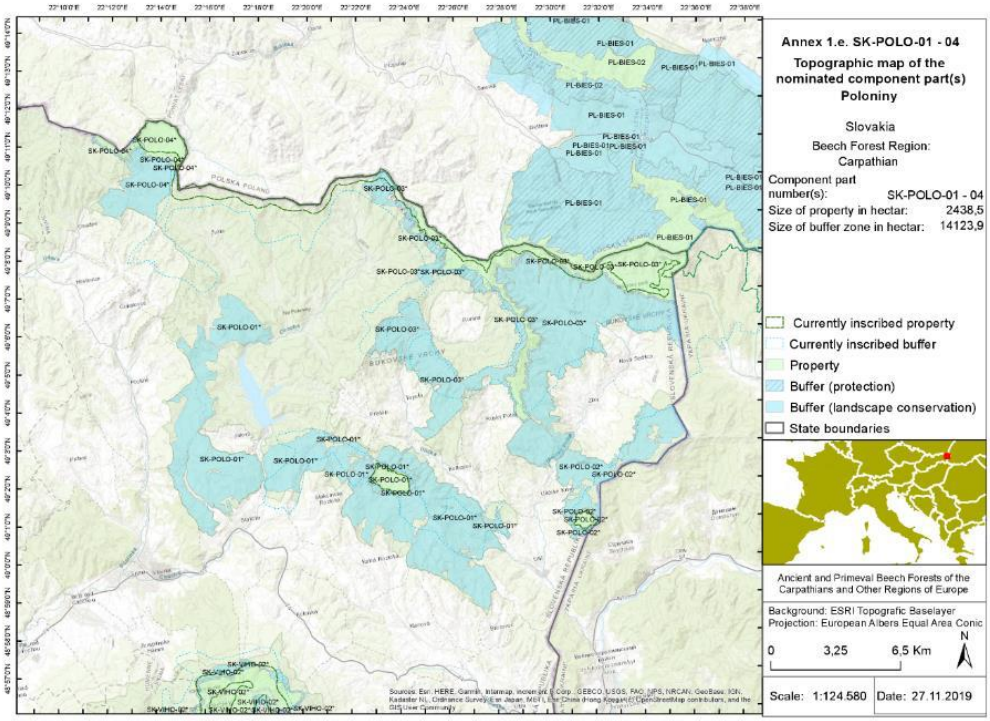

Figure 2: Proposed boundary modifications of the Poloniny cluster (SK) including boundaries of inscribed component parts and buffer zones.

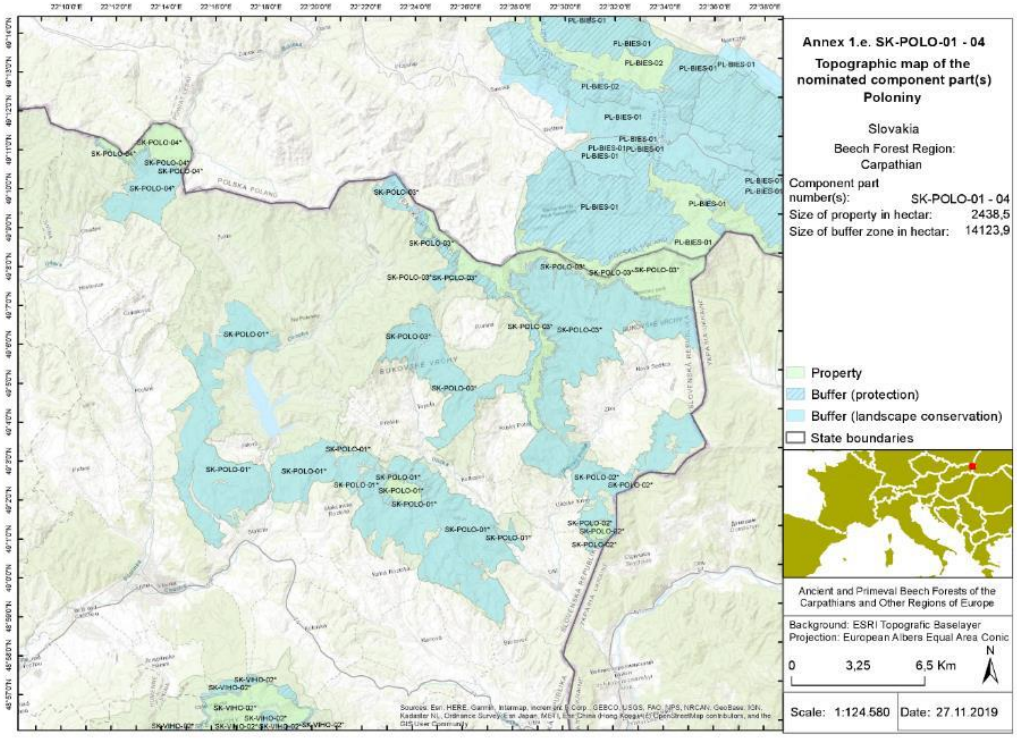

Figure 3: Proposed boundary modifications of the Poloniny cluster (SK).

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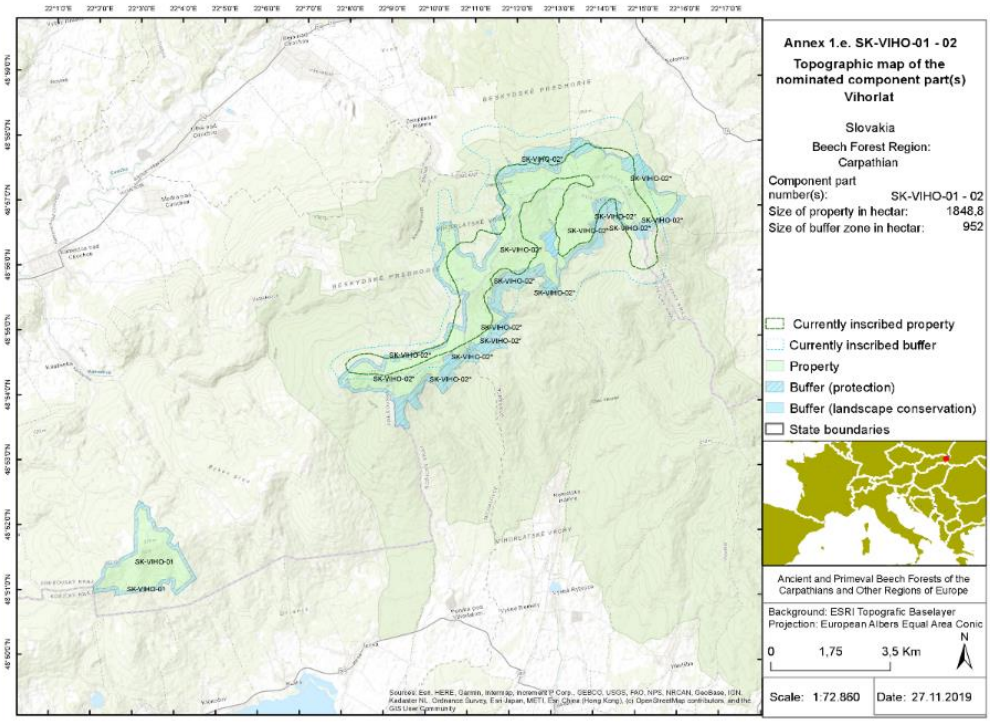

Figure 4: Proposed boundary modifications of the Vihorlat cluster (SK) including boundaries of inscribed component parts and buffer zones.

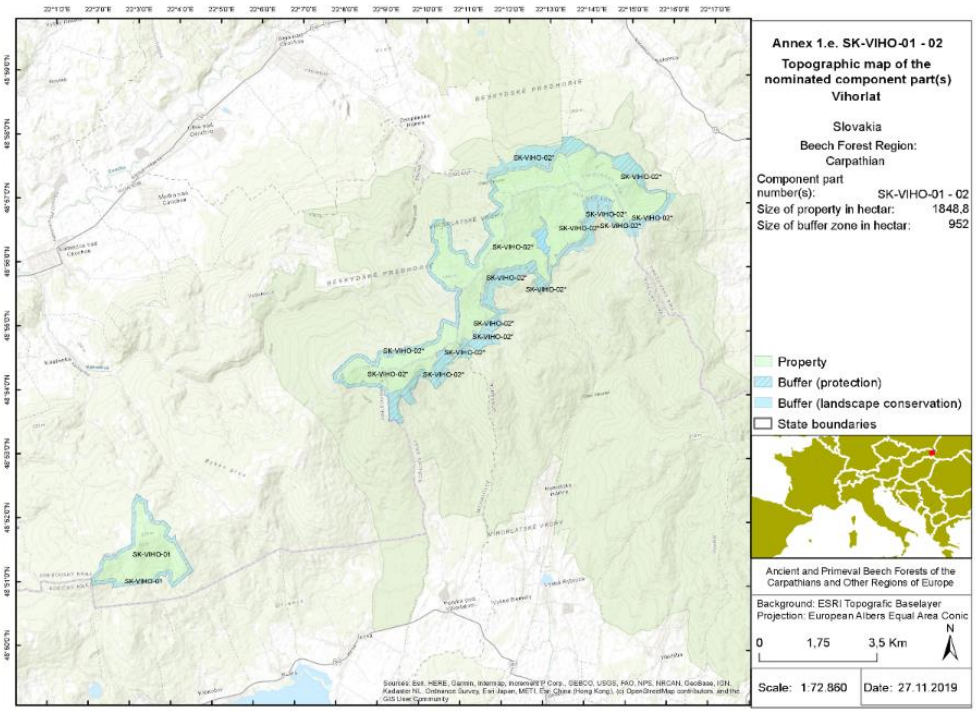

Figure 5: Proposed boundary modifications of the Vihorlat cluster (SK).

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Additional information

Two digital maps attached on the mapping of natural forest in the wider area of the Slovak component parts:

- map of the forest naturality and delineation of WH inscribed 2007: SPD_All_Prir_Verzia2007_A3.pdf
- map of the forest naturality and delineation of WH proposal 2019: /2019 files: and SPD_All_Prir_Verzia20191014_A3.pdf

2.14 Decision on proposed corrections of the boundaries of two Croatian components (43 COM 7B.13 – 12)

Decision 43 COM 7B.13 - 12. Further noting the proposed corrections of the boundaries of two Croatian components and their buffer zone, requests furthermore the State Party of Croatia to provide more detailed information on this potential boundary modification to the World Heritage Centre and IUCN for future follow-up through the appropriate procedures;

Proposal for a minor boundary modification.

Area of the property (in hectares):

- Area of the property inscribed

Component part	Area of the component part (ha)	Area of the Buffer zone (ha)
Paklenica National Park - Suva draga-Klimenta	1,241.04	414.76
Paklenica National Park - Oglavinovac-Javornik	790.74	395.35

- Area of the buffer zone proposed to be modified

Component part	Area of the component part (ha)	Area of the Buffer zone (ha)
Paklenica National Park - Suva draga-Klimenta	1,241.18	802.12
Paklenica National Park - Oglavinovac-Javornik	790.84	

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Description of the modification:

The two component parts are completely surrounded by buffer zones. The protection sub-zone is adjacent to the component parts and surrounds them completely ensuring the obligatory protective function. The better precision of the zonation was achieved after consulting the latest available maps; hence the proposed corrections were made.

Additionally, some technical corrections were made with the protection buffer sub-zone of component part, due to the fact that on a larger scale it was noticed the p-buffer sub-zone extended beyond the boundaries of the National Park, which if not corrected, might have caused managing problems in the future. During the nomination process, different spatial references used to establish the borders of the property and the buffer zones than in the final maps, resulting in a shift outside the National Park. After considering the possible solutions for the corrections of the buffer zone location, it was placed to fit inside the National Park borders. The previously disconnected buffer zones, separated by a rock ridge, are now connected with the inclusion of the ridge in the joint buffer zone. In order to fit the minimum management regulations regarding the protection buffer sub-zone, small modification of the protection buffer sub-zone was made. Namely, the area of the small hamlet where locals had restored their old houses and use them as guest houses and the mountain hut in the vicinity, has been excluded from the protective buffer sub-zone. The modifications resulted in a slightly smaller surface of the buffer zone, approximately 8 ha, which should not affect its protective role since the whole area surrounding the protection buffer sub-zone is managed according the IUCN Category II.

Justification for the modification:

The protection sub-zone is slightly narrow in some segments of the area due to the National Park border which limits the extension of the sub-zone. It was necessary to align the zonation with the existing border in order to guarantee the functionality of the buffer zone since the National Park is under the direct control of the management authority in charge of the component parts.

The whole area of the National Park including the component parts and buffer zone has been designated as a Natura 2000 site important for species and habitat types. The beech forests within the National Park (to which the beech forests of the two component parts belong) are Natura 2000 target habitat for this Site, so that the monitoring and management of the component parts is additionally ensured.

Connectivity between the two components is ensured through the protective buffer sub-zone which is a part of the National Park (IUCN II) and thus protected on national level. The National Park is managed in a way that natural processes are ensured and only minimal or no human intervention and restricted forest use is permitted (hiking trails maintenance).

In the proposed protection buffer sub-zone, only small-scaled interventions are in place, such as hiking trails maintenance and eventual single tree removal for phytosanitary purposes. Since there is no forest management in the National Park, there is more than 6500 ha of area surrounding the component parts and the protection buffer sub-zone with no threats of any kind of forest management which supports and empowers the protection function of the protection buffer sub-zone.

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The previously disconnected buffer zones, separated by a rock ridge, are now connected with the inclusion of the ridge in the joint buffer zone. The included area comprises several different habitats and natural landscapes (subalpine zone and rock and scree slopes). Overall, the protection buffer sub-zone comprises habitats with chasmophytic vegetation and sub-alpine grasslands. All of the included habitats are Natura 2000 target habitat types for this protected area, including the beech forest of the two component parts.

Contribution to the maintenance of the Outstanding Universal Value:

As stated in the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the WH Convention, properties proposed under criterion (ix) should have sufficient size and contain the necessary elements to demonstrate the key aspects of processes that are essential for the long-term conservation of the ecosystems and the biological diversity they contain. They should include other adjacent ecosystems that regulate nutrient inputs. As the Public Institution in charge of the management of the Property is currently developing the Visitor Management Plan and in the nearest future the new Protected Area Management Plan, the integrated management plans will ensure a non-intervention management approach for the component parts while the buffer zone with protective function will be managed to avoid negative impacts on the OUV of the property including its conditions of integrity.

Implications for legal protection:

Legal protection of a national park is established through the Nature Protection Law (NN 80/13, 15/18/14/19) which defines the protected area category of a national park, its functions, restrictions, rules and regulations as well as the management of the protected area. The fundamental nature protection document is the Strategy and Action Plan for Nature Protection of the Republic of Croatia. The obligation of the development of the Strategy is proscribed by the Article 10 of the Nature Protection Law. The Strategy sets long-term goals and guidelines for biodiversity and geodiversity conservation and it is developed by the Ministry in charge for protected areas and nature protection. Since the proposed change of the inscribed buffer zone covers the area of the National Park, legal protection in place for the National Park is implied also for the buffer zone.

Implications for management arrangements:

The proposed area of the buffer zone falls inside the boundaries of the protected area designated as a national park. National parks in Croatia are managed by public institutions. The two component parts and the proposed buffer zone fall under the management of the Public Institution Paklenica National Park. The National park, and therefore the buffer zone within, is managed according to the IUCN Category II and the management is based on the Annual Work Programme which consists of activities distributed under five topics (Conservation of natural values; Protection and conservation of cultural heritage; Visitation management, Interpretation and education; Cooperation with the local community; Public Institution capacity building). The Public Institution has developed the Management plan for the National Park and the habitats within are managed accordingly. The

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Management Plan was developed for the ten years period and the Public Institution is currently in the process of development of the new management plan which would be developed as part of the national project KK.06.5.2.03. 'Development of the framework for the management of the Natura 2000 ecological network' coordinated by the Ministry of Environment and Energy. The new Management Plan will integrate the National Park management, Natura 2000 site goals and conservation measures and the UNESCO World Heritage Property (component parts and buffer zone management). Furthermore, the Public Institution is developing the Visitor Management Plan for the National Park area which will be integrated in the Management Plan. The development of new management documents provides the opportunity for ensuring the inclusion of the new designations such as the UNESCO World Heritage.

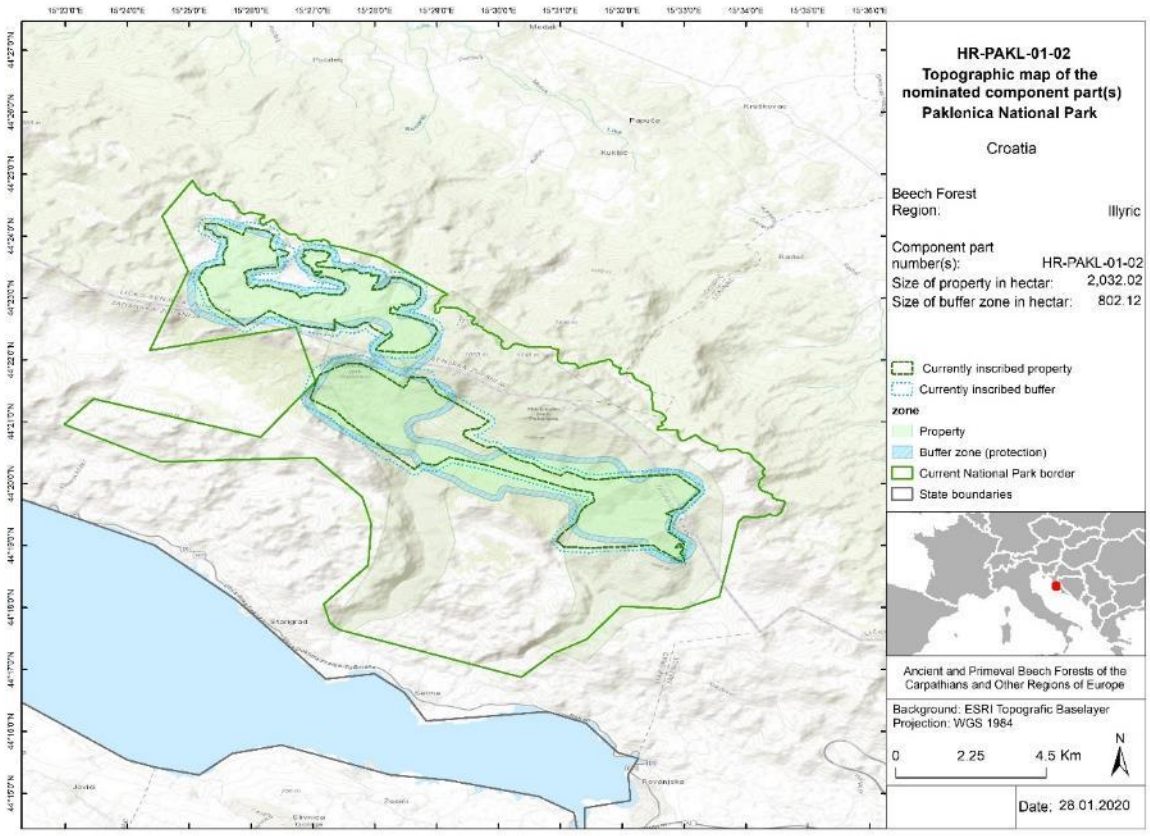

Figure 6: Map of boundary modification of Paklenica component parts (Croatia) with currently inscribed and new boundaries.

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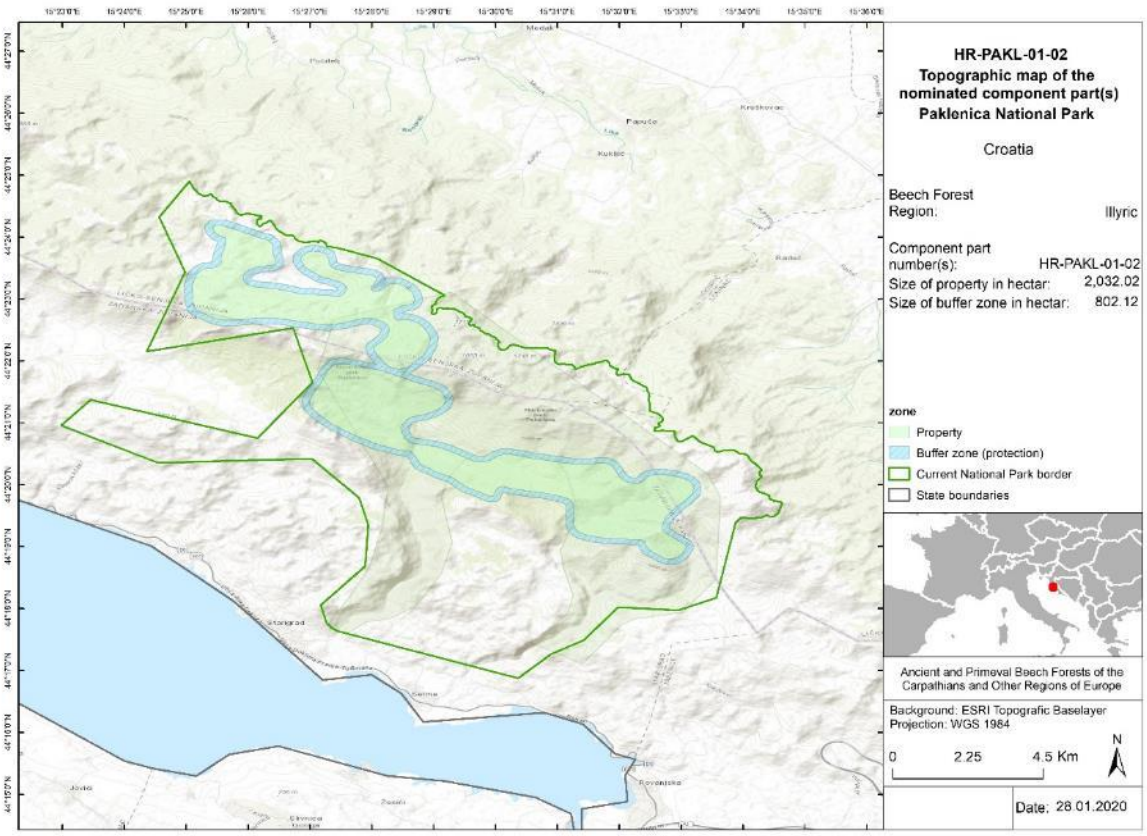

Figure 7: Map of boundary modification of Paklenica component parts (Croatia).

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3 Other current conservation issues identified by the States Parties which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

3.1 Albania

As stated in the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the WH Convention, properties proposed under criterion (ix) should have sufficient size and contain the necessary elements to demonstrate the key aspects of processes that are essential for the long-term conservation of the ecosystems and the biological diversity they contain. This is well stated in the management plan of the area, as well as under the legal framework, both from biodiversity perspective and protected areas. There are no hunting activities, as Albania has put moratorium on hunting **Law no. 61, date 2.6.2016 "on hunting ban in the republic of Albania" until 2021.**

3.2 Austria

The Wilderness Area of Dürrenstein in Austria is in the process of extension by 2-4 thousand hectares into the neighbouring province of Styria. The extension is still subject to discussions and final contracts and to the adaptation of bylaws. The procedure at national level should be ready in 2020. The extension of the Wilderness Area will add a significant number of old growth beech and spruce-fir-beech forests with new added value to the existing component part and therefore an extension of the World Heritage component part is envisaged (in regards to the decision 41COM 8B.7 point 6 'enlargement of component parts'. A proposal of the extension will be submitted to UNESCO and IUCN for evaluation as soon the national procedure is finished.

3.3 Belgium

The cluster of Sonian Forest consists of 5 component parts, all of them are strict forest reserves embedded into a forest ecosystem, which is managed under different protected areas categories in the 3 regions (Brussels, Flanders, Wallonia).

The Sonian forest has two types of buffer zones. There is a strict zone of 50 m around each reserve where only security measures can be taken, while the entire forest acts as a less strict buffer zone where the sustainable and multifunctional forest management ensures its protection. Within the buffer zone, Brussels and Flanders have additionally delimited set-aside-zones where no forest management interventions are undertaken. The forest as a whole, component parts and buffer zones are FSC (Brussels and Flanders) or PEFC (Wallonia) labelled.

In the workshops on the buffer zone management, the case of Sonian was presented as an interesting example, as the management plan has defined several set-aside-zones and senescence islands within the landscape buffer zone. The management plan of Brussels provides for 117 hectares of set-aside-zones and senescence islets in addition to the component parts. In Flanders about 330 hectares have been delignated as set-aside-areas and senescence islets. Both categories built an ecological network of old forest without human intervention in the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone. The figure below demonstrates this principle.

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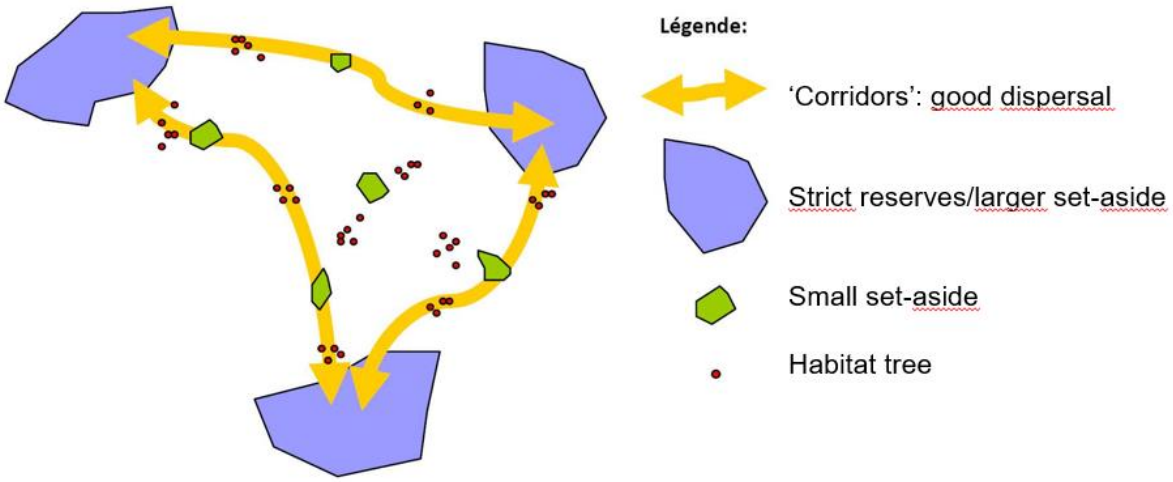
(Lachat & Bütler, 2007 : Altholzvernetzung).



Since 2019, the regions have been working on a new interregional declaration of intent regarding the UNESCO WH property. The declaration of intent includes the following important commitments

- Commitment towards the implementation of the Committees decisions and recommendations
- Integration of the guidance documents into the management plans
- Governance of a National Steering group
- Commitment towards the series regarding permanent secretary and the organisation of the Joint Management Committee 2020.

In 2019, the Sonian Foundation was founded by the three regions to coordinate transregional issues concerning the Sonian forest. The Sonian Foundation will host the permanent secretary of the WH series for the 4 years starting in 2020.

3.4 Bulgaria

No current conservation issues have been identified.

3.5 Croatia

The proposed boundary modification of the Paklenica component parts has been discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

3.6 Germany

No current conservation issues have been identified.

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3.7 Italy

The proposed boundary modification of the Cozzo Ferriero (Pollino National Park) and Foresta Umbra (Gargano National Park) component parts has been discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

3.8 Romania

Domogled – Valea Cernei (Romania 044, 045, 046), with a total area of 61,193.54 ha, of which 9,732.26 ha are UNESCO World Heritage Property and 51,461.28 ha are buffer zones, is the largest UNESCO site among the 2017 nominated areas, and due to its size, the most complex cluster related to human activities and anthropic pressures.
In addition to the forestry activities carried out in the buffer zone, the park administration must manage a series of pressures that have existed for decades (before the national park was declared in 2000), so that they do not significantly affect the natural values of the area. Below are some of the existing pressures, as follows:
- small-scale agriculture, sheep and cattle grazing (outside the forest), hay making, fruit-growing;
- infrastructure – settlements (11 local communities), artificial accumulation lakes (Prisaca and Cerna – for electricity and water supply), hydro-electric power plant, trout farm in Cerna village, public roads (national roads 66A and 67D), forest huts, forest roads, touristic trails;
- tourism and recreation activities – 35 touristic trails are crossing the buffer zone and the property, used mainly for hiking;
According to the national legislation, any plan, programme, project or activity that could have a significant potential impact on the environment and/or the natural protected areas are, from an environmental point of view, subject to approval/authorisation, according to the regulatory procedures carried out by the competent environmental authorities. In this regard, it is necessary to elaborate an environmental impact assessment for each investment, that is first of all subject to the park administration approvals, and after that to other institutions with responsibilities in this field.

The national road 66A crosses the Ciucevele Cernei property (a length of about 1 km), through the forest plots 159 and 161 (protection zone according to the national park zonation) and for more than 15 km in its buffer zone. The length that crosses the property was mistakenly introduced in the property. This happened due to the fact that in the forest management plan, this road is still classified as a forest road and the forest plots were totally included in the property, without taking into account the already affected area of the existing forest road and the future projects for its modernisation and enlargement.

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By the Government Decision no. 856/1999 regarding the classification of some forest road sectors, which are state-owned and in the administration of Romsilva, the road section was classified as a national road. Currently, the road it is still in Romsilva's administration as a forest road. It was not handed over by Mehedinți Forestry Directorate of Romsilva to the National Roads Administration.

Government Decision no. 233/2019 approves the technical-economic indicators related to the investment and the National Company for the Management of the Road Infrastructure (CNAIR) started the public procurement for the design and execution of the road. No one participated at the public procurement and then the procurement was suspended.

The widening of the road will have a direct negative impact on the property due to the necessary deforestations. With this project the state is looking for solutions, involving the responsible and affected institutions in the process.

Also, it should be mentioned that several hundred hectares of grassland are included in the UNESCO World Natural Heritage component (protection zone). The lands are private property, and at the moment the grazing activity is carried out with a small number of animals.

Cheile Nerei – Beușnița (Romania 039)

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Around 200 ha of grassland and agriculture land are included in the UNESCO World Natural Heritage component (protection zone). There are also some households with temporary use during the summer. The lands are private property.

3.9 Slovakia

The proposed boundary modification of the component parts in the Poloniny and Vihorlat component cluster has been discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

3.10 Slovenia

Some important steps have been taken to provide additional legal protection for the two components also as nature reserves under the nature protection legislation in Slovenia, in order to strengthen the protection and management of the components and buffer zones. Slovenia Forest Service, Regional Unit Kočevsko proposed the enlargement of the buffer zone for Krokar from 48 ha to 234 ha. According to the Nature Conservation Act Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation prepared technical proposal regarding protection of Krokar including the proposed enlargement of the buffer zone which was formally submitted to the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning in September 2019. After receiving the technical proposal for Snežnik – Ždrocle (expected in January 2020) the Ministry will start the preparation of the protection act for both UNESCO world heritage beech forest sites in Slovenia, which is planned to be adopted by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia in 2020. The outcome of the process regarding the enlargement of the buffer zone is not clear yet.

While the official process of public engagement in the procedures for the approval of the Decree on the establishment of nature reserves has not yet started, there have been a number of workshops organised through the Interreg Central Europe project BEECH POWER (CE 1340). Slovenia Forest Service, as project partner, organised one workshop for each of the Slovenian component parts, where the proposed extensions of the buffer zones were presented to local stakeholders and discussed in November 2019 (Krokar – 16.11.2019, Snežnik – 30.11.2019). Moreover, an additional international workshop on threats, risks, and vulnerabilities was organised for both component parts with domestic and international experts and national-level expert institutions (Ljubljana – 18.-19.11.2019).

3.11 Spain

A draft version of the Master Management Plan of the 'Picos de Europa' National Park, where the components 'Hayedos de Picos de Europa' lie, was made public as part of the public information procedure. It should be officially approved by the end of 2020. This Plan reassures conservation status of both components and it definitely assigns them to a restricted use zone, ensuring that no harmful activities can damage its natural values.

3.12 Ukraine

No current conservation issues have been identified.

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3.13 Extension 2020

The States Parties of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia and Switzerland submit 30 additional component parts and propose a modification of the boundaries of 7 existing component parts/5 component clusters to strengthen the Outstanding Universal Value and to improve the integrity as well as protection and management of the existing property. The zonation reflects the ecological situation (location of primeval and/or ancient beech forest without human forest management), the spatial responsibility of the management organisation in place (e.g. national park, strict forest reserve), local and regional stakeholders (landowners, neighbouring communities, responsible authorities and ministries etc.) and legal constraints (status of strict protection is guaranteed by law or equivalent regulations). The area of the new or modified component parts is 19,039 ha and their buffer zones cover 72,160 ha. The extension nomination dossier was submitted to the World Heritage Centre by the State Party of Switzerland on the 1st of February 2020.

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LE 14-20

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4 In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operation Guidelines, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.

4.1 Albania

No such plans or activities have been identified. As stated in the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the WH Convention, properties proposed under criterion (ix) should have sufficient size and contain the necessary elements to demonstrate the key aspects of processes that are essential for the long-term conservation of the ecosystems and the biological diversity they contain. This is well stated in the management plan of the area, as well as under the legal and institutional framework, both from biodiversity perspective and protected areas.

4.2 Austria

In the Kalkalpen National Park several measures of natural hazard protection were applied or are planned to be applied in the next 15 years (Oberlaussa avalanche protection project). Some of these measures are placed in the buffer zone but are located more than 500 m apart from the nearest component parts. The measures are addressed to protect a local road at the outer boundary of the National Park. Six lines of avalanches in the south of the park are affected with minor technical interventions within the next 15 years.

4.3 Belgium

No such plans or activities have been identified.

4.4 Bulgaria

No such plans or activities have been identified.

4.5 Croatia

No such plans or activities have been identified.

4.6 Germany

No such plans or activities have been identified.

4.7 Italy

The Italian components of the Serial Site, with the scientific supervision of the Università della Tuscia, are currently developing a management plan to describe the current State of Conservation of each

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LE 14-20

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component – both core and buffer area – and aer assessing the potential risks connected to the conservation of the OUV in accordance with the guidelines of UNESCO and the Joint Management Committee.

4.8 Romania

No such plans or activities have been identified.

4.9 Slovakia

No such plans or activities have been identified.

4.10 Slovenia

No new major alterations are currently planned for either of the Slovenian component parts (Snežnik and Krokar) with their buffer zones.

However, during a series of workshops conducted through the Interreg CE 1340 BEECH POWER project, a number of (potential) stresses and threats were identified and are summarised below.

Both component parts and their buffer zones are experiencing increased number of visitors since the inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list (estimated in a few hundred annual visitors more). While the marketing campaigns and intense use of the UNESCO brand has been avoided for now, new challenges have still arisen.

- Visiting the component part of Snežnik is allowed on the marked hiking trails which lead to the summit of Snežnik Mountain. However, since the official name of the reserve and component part is Snežnik-Ždrocle, a larger interest was detected for visiting also the Ždrocle part of the reserve, where marked paths do not exist, and therefore visits are prohibited. Due to lacking demarcation of the area, control, and information infrastructure, the vast majority of visitors are not aware of these regulations. It was also discovered that there are also unmarked trails that hikers use to reach even the summit of Snežnik Mountain (i.e. hunting trails). The managers of the mountaineering hut on the summit of Snežnik (buffer zone, but access through component part) and other associations outside the reserve from time to time organise events that further increase the number of visitors. The need to equip the existing trails was stated. This would be done on the border of the component part with informational interpretation tables and to create new thematic paths and visitor centres outside of the component part and its buffer zone (e.g. at Sviščaki or Mašun).

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- The component part Virgin Forest Krokar has a stricter protection regime, where no visits are allowed, with visitors being instructed to use the Borovška Nature Trail leading through the buffer zone. However, it has been discovered that the illegal paths above the cliffs of the Kolpa Valley to the summit of Krokar Mountain (within component part) and from there back to Borovška Trail and to the summit of Cerk (within the buffer zone) are more frequently used than previously thought. The paths are well-worn, with the summit clearly marked with a concrete cairn built decades ago. With the onset of adventure tourism and the attractiveness of both the virgin forest and the UNESCO brand, instances of illegal camping, camping fires and adventure sports in the component part (freestyle and cross-country skiing, biking) were reported. To deter visitors from visiting the component part and direct them to less sensitive areas, a new circular trail is planned at the western edge of the component part, through the buffer zone. Also some improvements of the road and parking infrastructure in the surroundings of the component part and the buffer zone are already being implemented, as reported in October 2019 (Report on the Management Activities in the Buffer Zones that took place since the inscription) to make the site more accessible to visitors (road widening, arrangement of parking areas). New interpretation tables are also planned along the trails and near main access points. Ideas for constructing an observational tower at the Cerk summit on the edge between the buffer zone and component part have been aired, which could constitute a major new construction.

Following a de-escalation of the 2015 refugee crises, Slovenia has recently been noting an increase in the number of illegal border crossings by migrants and smugglers. Groups are smaller than in 2015 (range 10 – 100 persons), however, the border crossings are now mostly illegal and not recorded, as they were during the first refugee wave in 2015. Both Slovenian component parts lie close to the border with Croatia and therefore could or already do feel the effects of this crisis.

- The Snežnik component part is particularly affected, as it is close to the green border with Croatia, and newly worn paths have been discovered both around and within the forest reserve, alongside piles of trash and discarded clothes, which are then further dispersed by animals. Around the reserves, break-ins and fireplaces were also found. Because of the presence of illegal migrants, there is increased presence of police and military in the area. There were also plans to construct a new telecommunications repeater on the summit of Snežnik Mountain, as it is the highest position in a wider region. The repeater would be positioned on the existing mountain hut in the buffer zone at the summit of Snežnik Mountain. The construction has not happened yet, as the existing infrastructure outside the reserve has been deemed sufficient for now. However, the Institute for Nature Conservation issued a prior expert opinion according to the Nature Conservation Act regarding the potential construction of the telecommunication repeater where it was stated that major constructions are not allowed at the summit of Snežnik Mountain.

- While the migrants are also present around Krokar, the component part and its buffer zone are protected by a cliff that makes the sites hardly accessible and alternative routes are better. Furthermore, much of the border with Croatia in this region is equipped with border fences, which limits the number of migrants, but also restricts cross-border animal movement.

Specifically, for the summit of Snežnik Mountain and some of the freezing depressions within the component part, a nature conservation dilemma exists. The grasslands at the summit of Snežnik are relicts of past transhumance, which was discontinued at the end of 19th century. Due to the specific geomorphological, geographic, and geological conditions, these grasslands feature a unique floristic

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diversity, combining Dinaric and Alpine species in the same area. This feature was the reason for this area getting the status of a botanical reserve. However, with the prevalence of natural processes, the summit is overgrowing with shrubs (*Pinus mugo, Salix*). There are some nature conservation proposals to cut the encroaching dwarf pines and artificially maintain the grasslands (both in the component part and in the buffer zone). A similar case is the *Cerrastium dinaricum*, a Dinaric endemic plant, which only has one occurrence site in Slovenia in one of the Snežnik's freezing depressions (in the component part), where it is threatened by the expansion of the dwarf pine. Similar conservation measures for stopping the spread of dwarf pine and reintroduction of plants have been proposed (on 0.24 ha).

4.11 Spain

There is no new infrastructure or project subject to environmental assessment in development close to the 'Hayedos de Picos de Europa' component. The only works projected in the buffer zone consist of the pavement widening of an existing local road that is far enough from core areas of the component.

4.12 Ukraine

No such plans or activities have been identified.

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5 Public access to the state of conservation report

[Note: this report will be uploaded for public access on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information System (http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc). Should your State Party request that the full report should not be uploaded, only the 1-page executive summary provided in point (1) above will be uploaded for public access]

Table 3: Indication of acknowledgement of public access to the report by the States Parties

Country	agree to full public access	refuse public access
Albania	yes	no
Austria	yes	no
Belgium	yes	no
Bulgaria	yes	no
Croatia	yes	no
Germany	yes	no
Italy	yes	no
Romania	yes	no
Slovakia	yes	no
Slovenia	yes	no
Spain	yes	no
Ukraine	yes	no

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6 Signature of the submitting authority

Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Climate Action, Environment,
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Innovation and Technology

Viktoria Hasler

Deputy Director

Directorate VII/7 – National Parks, Nature Conservation and Species Protection

Stubenbastei 5, 1010 Vienna

Vienna, 30 January 2020

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7 Annex

7.1 Draft Guidance Document: 'Management of the property and buffer zone zonation'

This guidance document is addressed to harmonise the management approaches in the property and the buffer zone. While the component parts of the property are under strict non-intervention management, the buffer zone management addresses the three functions of the buffer zone: protection, connection and landscape conservation. The document points out how these functions are understood in the regard to beech forest ecosystems. The complexity of the functions leads to the decision to separate two sub-zones within the buffer zone. Table 4 on page 70 gives the overview on regulations and limitations for the property and the buffer (sub-) zones.

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7.1.1 Introduction

The 78 component parts are located in more than 42 protected areas in 12 European countries and 10 different Beech Forest Regions under various ecological, economic or legal conditions. This led to different designs of the property and the respective zonation of the buffer zones. In its decision 41 COM 8B.7 and 43 COM 7b.13, the World Heritage Committee addressed this issue with a specific focus on the buffer zone management:

Decision 41 COM 8B.7 (8.): *'Further requests that special emphasis shall be given to appropriate buffer zone management in order to support undisturbed natural processes with special emphasis on dead and decaying wood, including ongoing monitoring of threats and risks, making effective use of the expertise and institutional capacity in management of the property;'*

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7.1.2 Decision on appropriate buffer zone management (43 COM 7B.13 – 7)

*Decision 43 COM 7B.13 - 7. Considering that Decision **41 COM 8B.7** requested all States Parties of this property to give special emphasis to appropriate buffer zone management in order to support undisturbed natural processes, urges the States Parties to define a clear and strict approach to buffer zone design and management which will allow for the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property and to seek further guidance from the World Heritage Centre and IUCN on this issue;*

After a phase of review on scientific papers and expert meetings, this document was developed to come up with a proposed standardised management approach in the property as well as the buffer zones.

The zonation process should reflect the ecological situation (location of primeval and/or ancient beech forest without forest management), the responsibility of the management organisation in place (national park, strict forest reserve,…), local and regional stakeholders (landowners, local communities, responsible authorities and ministries, …) and legal implications of the respective protection status (status of strict protection has to be guaranteed by law or equivalent regulations).

As the property is located in 42 different protected areas within 12 different countries, the ownership, spatial design, legal protection status and management regulation of the buffer zones was and is very divers. To ensure the functionality of the buffer zone for each component part of the property and to harmonise the management approach, a process to develop a joint guidance document was started. The following activities have been met (or are planned):

2018 (May-Aug.)	Literature research on threats and functionality of buffer zones (Coordination office)
2018 (Aug-Sept.)	Online questionnaire on rating of threads for all component parts (clusters) by all States Parties
2018 (Aug.-Oct.)	Development of a draft guidance document on buffer zone design and management (Coordination Office)
2018 (Nov.)	Evaluation and feedback from States Parties on the draft guidance document.
2018 (Dec.)	Submission of the approved version of the guidance document in the States Parties Report on 1st of Dec. 2018 to UNESCO.
2019 (March)	Technical workshop on the guidance document in Sibiu (RO) (States Parties & Coordination Office).
2019 (May)	Presentation of the draft regulations for buffer zones to IUCN experts in Bern in the course of the preparation of the next extension.
2019 (May)	Discussion of the current version of the guidance document at the Joint Committee Meeting (JMC) in Suceava (RO) (States Parties & Coordination

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	Office). Another technical workshop was planned, and the final decision was postponed to the JMC meeting in April 2020
2019 (June-Sep.)	Online questionnaire on the current rules and regulations within all component parts (States Parties).
2019 (Oct.)	International technical workshop on buffer zone management for the beech forest WH (experts from States Parties, IUCN, Coordination Office).
2019 (Nov.-Dec.)	Update of the guidance document according to the workshop outcomes.
2020 (Jan)	Submission on the updated draft guidance document for feedback to the States Parties. Inclusion of the draft document into the States Parties Report (submitted by 1st of Feb. 2020).

Planned:

2020 (April)	Decision on the new updated version of the guidance document between all 12 States Parties at the JMC-meeting in Belgium.

The draft guidance document developed in 2018 was presented and discussed with IUCN experts in Bern in May 2019 was also used as the basis for the preparation process for the ongoing extension process (States Parties and component parts according the submission of tentative submission formats in Feb. 2019).

This current version includes the results of the technical workshop including IUCN expertise in October 2019 in Vienna. This new version is also aligned with the proposed extension nomination envisaged for February 2020. As the development of this guidance document and the preparation of the extension nomination are two independent parallel processes, they are, by now, not totally synchronised. This guidance document is addressed to the States Parties and responsible management units of the inscribe WH Property and is proposed to be approved by the Joint Management Committee (JMC).

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7.1.3 Property

The components parts of the World Heritage contain those ancient and/or primeval beech forests that have a significant contribution to the Outstanding Universal Value of the whole property. The minimum size of each separate polygon aims to be larger than 50 ha and has to be under a strict protection regime (non-intervention management, see regulations in Table 4 on page 70).

Only the best of the best examples of ancient and/or primeval beech forests within a Beech Forest Region (BFR) have been selected. In some cases, within one protected area only a single world heritage component part (one polygon) is located. But in those cases, where the ancient/primeval beech forest is fragmented, it was necessary to split up the property into several separated polygons which form a component cluster.

The component parts need to be under strict non-intervention management (strict forest reserve, core zone of a biosphere reserve or national park or another PA categories equivalent to IUCN Category I or II). As 'non-intervention' management has no standard definition, Table 4 on page 70 gives an overview on the recommended (target) regulations and limitations for human activities in the component parts.

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7.1.4 Buffer zones

The Operational Guidelines of the UNESCO deal with buffer zones as follows:

- 103. Wherever necessary for the proper protection of the property, an adequate buffer zone should be provided.
- 104. For the purposes of effective protection of the nominated property, a buffer zone is an area surrounding the nominated property, which has complementary legal and/or customary restrictions placed on its use and development to give an added layer of protection to the property. This should include the immediate setting of the nominated property, important views and other areas or attributes that are functionally important as a support to the property and its protection. The area constituting the buffer zone should be determined in each case through appropriate mechanisms. Details on the size, characteristics and authorized uses of a buffer zone, as well as a map indicating the precise boundaries of the property and its buffer zone, should be provided in the nomination.
- 105. A clear explanation of how the buffer zone protects the property should also be provided.
- 106. Where no buffer zone is proposed, the nomination should include a statement as to why a buffer zone is not required.

UNESCO has published in 2009 a World Heritage Paper 25 on World Heritage and Buffer Zones (MARTIN & PIATTI (Ed.) 2009). This document includes an IUCN Position Paper (p51-57). In this important document, IUCN considers that the following functions are required within an effective buffer zone:

1. The effective management of buffer zone lands to maximize the protection of the values of the protected area (including the outstanding universal value of a World Heritage property) and their resilience to change.
2. To maximize the connectivity of the World Heritage property/protected area with other natural lands in a landscape as a basis for responding to climate change caused biome shifts of fauna, flora and habitats - and to maximize landscape connectivity; habitat connectivity, ecological connectivity and evolutionary process connectivity (WORBOYS et al. 2008).
3. To integrate the World Heritage property/protected area within landscape scale conservation with community initiatives for sustainable use practices including catchment protection, the conservation of healthy environments and the realization of sustainable livelihoods.

To guarantee the functionality of the buffer zone, all of the buffer zones have to be located on land that is under direct or indirect control of the management authority in charge of the component part(s) or is under direct control of the State Party (e.g. state-owned forest areas). In the case that a strictly protected forest reserve is directly bordering to private forest without legal regulation, the buffer zone needs to be located inside the strict reserve to guarantee full control on the buffer zone management.

Not all functions have to be realised in the buffer zones of each component part. Obligatory is the protective function of the buffer zone that is to be implemented for all component parts.

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To provide the different functions, the buffer zone might need different management approaches. To avoid confusion and to be clear, which management regulation has to applied to which part of the buffer zone, it is necessary to spatially separate two different sub-zones of buffer zones (see detailed description below):

1. Buffer zone with protective function (protection buffer sub-zone or p-buffer)
2. Buffer zone with landscape conservation and connectivity function (landscape conservation buffer sub-zone or l-buffer)

It is important to understand that there is only ONE buffer zone according to the UNESCO operational guidelines and in the understanding of this guidance document. The sub-zoning is only necessary for these buffer zones, where different management regimes are applied. Component parts or clusters with a buffer zone of sufficient size and sufficient regulation regime according to the regulations of the protection buffer sub-zone in Table 1 on page 12 (e.g. core areas of National Parks according to IUCN PA Category II) do not need to establish separate sub zones.

While the protection buffer sub-zone serves the protective function, the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone serves connectivity function as well as landscape conservation and sustainable use function. As different management approaches need to be applied, these functional buffer sub-zones may need individual zonation and clear delineation in the field, so that rangers, site managers and land users can realise the borders of each sub-zone in the field.
An analysis of threats shows that not all of them can be avoided or reduced by buffer zones. Climatic change or negative impact through human-introduced emissions are beyond the protective function of buffer zones. However, buffer zones and adequate management of these buffer zones can mitigate negative impact caused by human land use practice in adjacent areas.

Protection buffer sub-zone

The protection buffer sub-zone has a rather strict protection regime and located around the component part. The protective function is closely related to the threats that have local origin and short distance effect.

If the component parts are close to agricultural lands, buffer zones can protect from the impact of pesticides or fertilisers. In cases where the property is bordering economically managed forests, the most likely negative impact on the property is caused by forest activities leading to a significant reduction of the canopy of adjacent forest stands. Clear-cuts and shelter wood cutting may cause these reductions of the canopy, which has impacts on the microclimatic regime in a forest stand. The opening of the canopy of adjacent stands leads to a change in light regime, microclimate and wind exposure. This might have direct negative impacts on trees inside the property by sunburn, wind throws or unnatural changes in regeneration and herbal plant layer.

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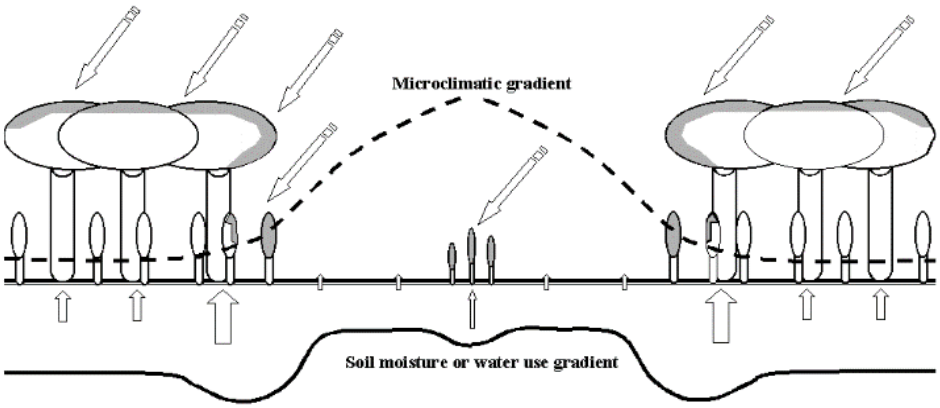

Figure 8: Opening the canopy has effects on microclimate and soil moisture (source: R. Sluiter & N. Smit 2001).

This micro-climatic impact is well documented by several studies: Matlack (1993) describes microclimatic effects up to 50 m from the forest edge. Jemali et al. (2017) document the impact on temperature up to 50 m and humidity 40-60 m. Schmidt et al. 2017 expect altered conditions in soils of transition zones from the forest edge to be 10–20 m with a maximum of 50 m, and 25–50 m for above-ground space with a maximum of 125 m. Davies-Colley et al. (2000) have observed changes in temperature up to 50 m inside the forest stand. Gehlahusen et al. (2000) document edge effects on microclimate 40-80 m into the forest stand and observe invasion of exotic species up to 25 m into the forest. These studies give important information on the minimum distance between the property and human introduced canopy openings.

Spittlehouse et al. (2004) show that openings of less than one tree height in diameter have no significant impact on the microclimate of the surrounding forest stands.

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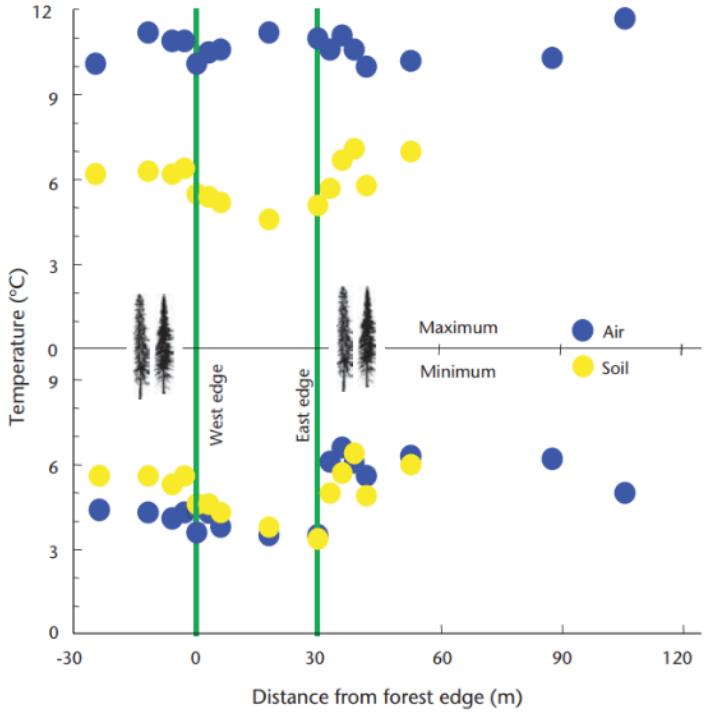

Figure 9: Small forest gaps do not show sever impact on stand climate in neighbouring stands (source Spittelhouse et al. 2004)

This provides important information on the maximum size of human-introduced gaps in buffer zones near the property to avoid negative microclimatic effects.

Based on these scientific studies, recommendations on the management of the protection buffer subzone were developed.

Figure 10: Clear cuts closer to the property than 50-80m can have effects on the microclimate inside the property.

To protect the beech forests in the component parts from these negative, man-made influences by forest management, generally a buffer zone with protective function with a minimum width of 100 m was established towards economically managed forests and agricultural lands. To protect from other threats, larger buffer zones have been established depending on the requirements.

The management in the protection buffer sub-zone is limited to very small-scaled interventions. Single trees might be removed for phytosanitary purposes to protect the property from invasion of foreign pests. Gaps created by management must not exceed the size of the height of a tree in diameter.

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Human activities must not bring the crown cover below the minimum of 80% compared to the natural tree cover.

A protection buffer sub-zone is obligatory for each component part and is only missing if no negative impacts are to be expected from adjacent areas. This may be the case if the border is located on the steep ridge of a mountain and if it is very unlikely that negative impacts will occur in the forest of the component part beyond the ridge. When a river/lake forms the border and there is no evidence of potential negative impacts across the river, protection buffer sub-zones might not need to be established.

The geomorphology must be taken into consideration in the design of the protective buffer. Disturbances have a wider reach in the downhill direction of a slope (release of nutrients, human-induced avalanches caused by removing forest stands etc.). Therefore, the buffer zone on the uphill side of the property should be wider than on the downhill side.

In some exceptions, a protection buffer sub-zone less than 100 m was established because of specific local site configurations. Such cases are described and argued in the nomination dossier description of the component parts.

Landscape conservation buffer sub-zone

While the protection buffer sub-zone is designed to protect from direct local threats like microclimatic impacts, pesticides or fertilisers, the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone is addressed to protect the forest landscape of the surrounding area as an important buffer of the meso-climatic situation and to provide good connectivity between component parts included in the same buffer zone as well as to the surrounding ecosystems.

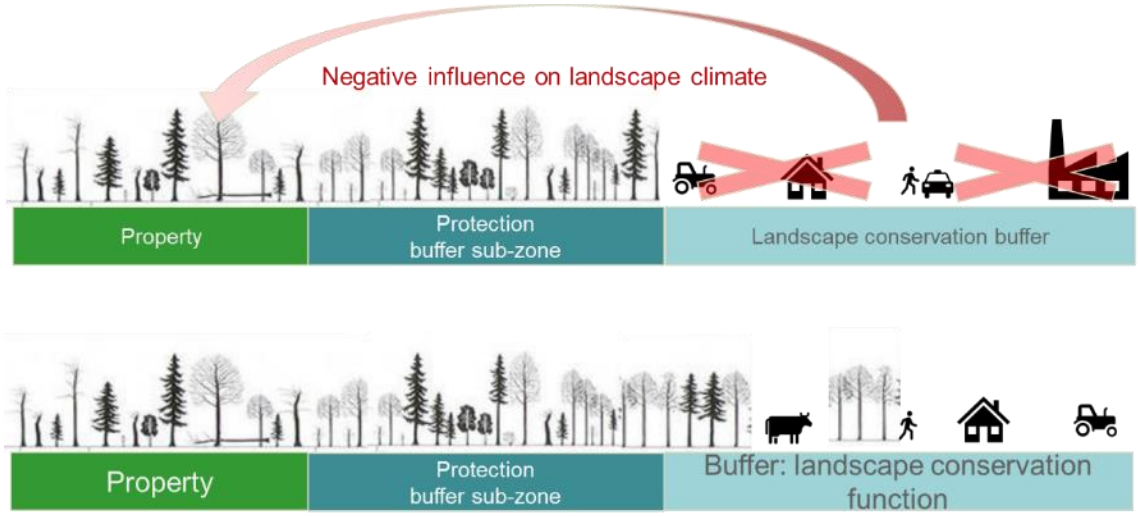

Figure 11: The Landscape conservation buffer sub-zone should protect the wider landscape from negative developments.

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Landscape conservation function

The more forest cover can be found in the surrounding of the component parts and the higher the biomass of these forest, the higher is the buffer capacity against climatic changes inside the forest and at a landscape level. The management need to ensure that the micro- and meso-climate in the forests in the component parts is not disturbed by human activities outside the component part.

To enhance this meso-climatic buffer function, it is important to protect the adjacent landscapes from negative developments. This includes:

- Conserve or decrease the extent of settlements, industrial zones, tourism and traffic infrastructures
- Conserve or decrease the extent of extraction of minerals or infrastructures of the energy sector (wind parks, dams, powerlines, pipelines etc.)
- Decrease the intensive industrial agricultural land use and promote organic agriculture
- Decrease intensive forest management and replace by close-to-nature, extensive forest management (e.g. selective logging) or new forest reserves.
- Increase protected areas and protection status

Details on the regulations of land use are found in Table 4 .

It is recommended to integrate this sub-zone into the legal framework of spatial planning on the national and local level.

It is not obligatory for a component part to have a landscape conservation and sustainable use buffer sub-zone.

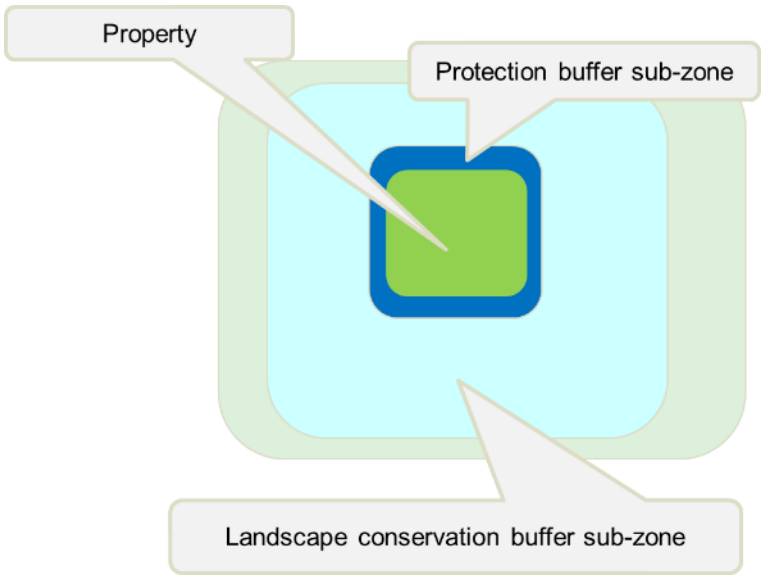

Figure 12: Schematic design of a world heritage component part with different buffer sub-zones

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Connective function

Since only the oldest and undisturbed forest stands within a protected area are selected for the component parts, several of these stands need to be connected by buffer zones. In many cases the buffer zone covers the entire protected area in which the component parts are located. It connects the beech forests with other ecosystems within the protected area.

This extension nomination and boundary modification includes 9 cluster with 2-4 component parts. To ensure connectivity between these component parts with the cluster, the connective function of the buffer zone is of high importance.

Buffer zones that will provide a connective function should contain (in descendent priority):

- Ancient and/or primeval beech forests
- Managed beech forests
- Other natural forests ecosystems
- Other managed forests ecosystems
- Natural landscapes (alpine, subalpine zone, natural grass/shrubland, rock and scree fields …)

To enhance the connective function, the forest habitats shall be managed in a way to preserve and promote the natural structure and tree composition of forest ecosystems specific to the local site conditions. The management should strive to preserving a quantity of dead wood, preserving or developing uneven-aged stands, maintaining natural gap structure or disturbance dynamic, natural regeneration of all tree species of the potential natural forest type. In the case of managed forests, the average biomass (living and dead) should be increased to come closer to natural biomass levels.

Management regulations

In Table 4 an overview on the proposed regulations for the property (component part) and the two sub-zones of buffer zone are given. The regulations are seen as target setting for a minimum requirement and the national regulations can be more restrictive based on the national policy or regulations. In many cases the protection buffer sub-zone is part of the strict forest reserve and has the same strict protection status as the component part.

The process to establish the spatial division into sub-zones (if needed) and the adaptation of the rules and regulations from the existing legal framework and management plan towards the new target setting given in the following table is long time process which needs intense involvement of stakeholders and site managers. After the approval of this guidance document we assume a period of 5 years to map the spatial boundaries of the sub-zones. To integrate the management targets in the management plans even longer periods are needed, as many management plans have legal time frames of 10 years until the next renewal. In a few cases the traditional land use practices (e.g. shelterwood cuttings 1-4ha in size) have to be shifted step by step into new selective logging schemata, which might take even 2-3 decades, if local stakeholders should be part of this integrative development process.

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Table 4: Target settings for minimum management regulations for different (sub) zones

Land use	Property (WH component part)	Protection buffer sub-zone	Landscape conservation buffer sub-zone
Agriculture			
Arable fields	not allowed	not allowed	possible (expansion is limited)
Hay making, meadows	not allowed	not allowed	possible (expansion is limited)
Pastures, cattle grazing	not allowed	not allowed	possible (expansion is limited)
The amount of arable fields/meadows/pastures should not increase compared to the time of inscription significantly (e.g. more than 10%); All agricultural land (if exist) should be located in the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone)			
Forestry			
Tendering operations in young stands	not allowed	not allowed	only with special permission and on restricted areas
Phyto-Sanitary cuts (pest control)	not allowed	only with special permission and on restricted areas	only with special permission and on restricted areas
A separation of protection and landscape conservation sub-zone should help to solve conflicts with bark beetle management or control of invading pests.			
Selective logging (cuttings < 0.3 ha, with a harvested volume in 10 years < 10% of standing trees volume; including firewood to local communities)	not allowed	not allowed	only with special permission and on restricted areas
Shelterwood cuttings > 0.3 ha	not allowed	not allowed	not allowed
Clear cuts >0.3 ha	not allowed	not allowed	not allowed
The long-term target in landscape conservation buffer sub- zone is to reduce the impact area below 0.3 ha. Shelterwood cuttings are rated the same as clear cuts as the result is the same: even aged stand with low diversity of diameters and crown structure.			
Artificial restoration (regeneration)	not allowed	not allowed	only with special permission and on restricted areas
If natural regeneration is not possible because of game browsing and/or grazing these negative impacts have to be solved (as a negative impact from game/livestock on the property is very likely). Artificial regeneration by seedlings from tree nursery has the risk to bring pests into the protection buffer sub-zone			

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Collecting mushrooms, berries, medical herbs (only by local communities, limitation of amount), other commercial use general not allowed	not allowed	not allowed	possible
The long-term target is to avoid collection of mushrooms, berries, medical herbs in the property and protection buffer sub-zone			
Security management along hiking trails	possible with special permission and, dead wood remains on site	possible with special permission and, dead wood remains on site	only with special permission and on restricted areas
Trees that are obvious endangering passengers of hiking/riding/biking trails can be cut for safety reasons, but dead wood should remain on the site. Trees crossing the path can be cut and put aside.			
Hunting and fishing			
Game management by protected area management (to safeguard OUV)	possible, but reduced to minimum intervention	possible	possible
Main activities for regulation of game (if needed) should be applied in the buffer zone. Monitoring of game impact is strongly recommended. Game management should only be applied if game density is increase by anthropogenic factors like feeding, agricultural areas near by etc.			
Fishing	not of significant relevance to the OUV		
Management of invasive species and pests			
Active management (e.g. removal) of invasive species and human introduces pests to protect the OUV and integrity inside the property	only with special permission and on restricted areas	only with special permission and on restricted areas	possible
Construction of **new** infrastructure			
Local supply of electricity (< 20KV) and water, telephone lines,	not allowed	not allowed	not allowed
Large infrastructure (electrical lines > 20KV, cellular phone towers)	not allowed	not allowed	not allowed
Forest huts, shelters	not allowed	not allowed	not allowed
If possible, forest huts and shelters should be moved to the buffer zone			
Trails (hiking, riding, biking)	not allowed (only if integrity of the site can be increase be re-	only with special permission and on restricted areas	only with special permission

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	design of trail network)		
Removal of dead trees from the path (or parts of these) is possible even inside the property as long the cut parts stay on the site.			
Border control infrastructure	only with special permission (only in few cases relevant)	only with special permission (only in few cases relevant)	only with special permission and on restricted areas
Hunting infrastructure	not allowed	not allowed	not allowed
Hotels, motels, guest houses, restaurants	not allowed	not allowed	not allowed
The amount of area used by hard touristic infrastructure should not increase significantly compared to the state at the time of inscription (e.g. not more than 10%)			
Industrial buildings	not allowed	not allowed	not allowed
The amount of area used by industrial infrastructure should not increase significantly compared to the state at the time of inscription (e.g. not more than 10%). Industrial buildings should be located in the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone.			
Forest roads	not allowed	new constructions not allowed, maintenance of existing possible	only with special permission
Areas that need new forest roads should be placed in the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone. Construction of new forest roads in protection buffer sub-zone should only be possible when re-directing existing roads to new corridors to improve the conservation status of the property			
Public roads, railway	not allowed	not allowed	not allowed
Unpaved roads may be integrated into the component part (property). Paved roads, especially when connecting to permanent settlements have to be outside the component part. The total number and length of roads should not increase significantly in comparison to the amount at the time of inscription.			
Settlements	not allowed	not allowed	not allowed
The settlement area in the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone should not increase significantly (e.g. not more than 10% compared to the time of inscription)			
Ski slopes, cable cars, snow machines	not allowed	not allowed	not allowed
Watch towers, look-outs	not allowed	not allowed	only with special permission
Natural hazard management (water management, protection from avalanches, rock fall …)	possible as long as natural processes in the beech	possible as long as natural processes in the beech forest of the component	possible, as long as natural processes in the beech forest of the

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	forest are not disturbed	part are not disturbed	component part are not disturbed
Whenever possible, tourism infrastructure and natural hazard management should be located outside the property.			
Maintenance of existing infrastructure			
Beside of hiking trails, there is hardly any significant infrastructure inside the component parts. If possible, existing infrastructure should be moved outside the component part and the protection buffer-sub zone on the long-term perspective. Only visitor infrastructure (e.g. trails, info-boards) or natural hazard management infrastructure can be maintained with special permission in the property or protection buffer sub-zone. In the landscape conservation buffer sub-zone, the maintenance of existing infrastructure is allowed with special permission. Maintenance of visitor infrastructure in this sub-zone is generally allowed.			
Scientific research			
a. destructive scientific research (e.g. removing trees for measures)	not allowed	not allowed	possible
b. not destructive research	possible	possible	possible
Taking a core for age/growth analysis or collecting small samples for genetic assessment is regarded not as destructive.			
Tourism and recreation			
Expedition to caves	not of significant relevance to the OUV		
Extreme sports (paragliding, climbing, rafting)	not allowed	not allowed	possible
Paragliding, climbing and rafting is unlikely to have a negative impact on the integrity of the beech forest ecosystem, especially when it is applied outside the property.			
Hiking on trails	possible	possible	possible
Hiking beside trails	not allowed	not allowed	possible
Riding, biking on trails	not allowed	not allowed	possible
It is proved, that legal restrictions are not as successful as visitor guidance by proper and attractive trail systems and awareness rising measures (info boards, leaflets, ranger talks …)			

These regulations reflect the minimum standards. Whenever possible, more strict regulations should be established to minimise human influence on the property.

On many sites, most of these standards are already implemented. For sites, which need to separate a protection and landscape conservation sub zone, a time frame of 5 years is envisaged to agree with local site managers and stakeholders on the sub-zoning. The implementation of the new regulations in the management plan could take up to 10 years. To establish a new protection status and to change traditional land management might take up to 20 years.

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