



BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS IN SLOVAKIA

MEASURES FOR PROTECTING ENDANGERED ECOSYSTEMS



Switzerland is financing two biodiversity projects in Slovakia for the protection of endangered ecosystems. One project is concerned with monitoring and researching forests, while the second aims to preserve and protect natural areas and habitats in the Slovak Carpathian mountains. The Swiss contribution to these two projects totals around CHF 4.2 million.

As a result of climate change and other environmental stress factors, many ecosystems such as forests, natural habitats and protected areas are under threat. However, as they serve as the basis for countless different life forms, these ecosystems fulfil a number of important functions. In many rural areas of Slovakia, large sections of the population work directly or indirectly in tourism or the timber industry. Forests and natural areas are therefore synonymous with jobs. As part of its contribution to reducing economic and social disparities in the enlarged European Union, Switzerland is supporting two projects in Slovakia to protect these areas.

PROJECT 1: MONITORING AND RESEARCH OF FOREST ECOSYSTEMS

Complex data is required to assess as accurately as possible whether a forest has the ecological balance necessary to sustain itself. Gathering this data requires modern measuring instruments. However, these are expensive, and their use requires expertise. The *"Monitoring and research of forest ecosystems"* project helps Slovakia collect and process this data and aids with forestry planning. As a result, the relevant agencies and foresters will be able to assess the state of a forest, and if necessary make targeted interventions quickly and efficiently.

Modern and efficient digital aerial photography to protect forests

This project finances three specific and linked activities that will substantially improve monitoring and research in Slovakian forests: (1) First, existing maps of Slovakian forests will be updated and their range extended. Sustainable cost-effective forest management is only possible with comprehensive and accurate three-dimensional maps. (2) Monitoring will be carried out with the aid of the second project activity: the financing of modern technical equipment to produce cheaper, better quality digital terrain and surface models. (3) Finally, the third project phase in collaboration with the Swiss partner, the Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL), will provide training in the use of the new materials in a selected forest area plus knowledge transfer in the field of remote forest monitoring. The Swiss contribution to this project is just under CHF 2.1 million.

PROJECT 2: SUSTAINABLE IMPROVEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS AND NATURAL HABITATS IN THE CARPATHIANS



The goal of the second project, *Development of nature conservation and of protected areas in the Slovak Carpathians*, is to improve the protection and sustainable usage of natural areas and habitats in the Slovak Carpathians. This project will draw up guidelines for the future development of these areas and promote knowledge transfer. The local population will therefore benefit twice over: along with improving the environment, the tourism infrastructure will be strengthened. The Slovak Carpathians will consequently become more attractive as a tourist region and the local population will benefit from additional income opportunities.

Complementary measures for nature conservation – for the benefit of local people too

In specific terms, the project encompasses a number of complementary activities. The project will first of all define the existing categories and classifications of protected areas in the Carpathians more precisely. This is an important prerequisite for drawing up effective protection guidelines, which will be produced during a subsequent stage of the project. Finally, educational nature trails will be renewed, and films and other promotional material about the areas will be produced and distributed to national information and tourist centres.

Several of the natural areas are in poor condition and, as a result, have been removed from the list of ecosystems worth protecting. The project will therefore also create plans to regenerate these areas so they can be reinstated as natural habitats worthy of protection. Both Swiss and local organisations are participating in the project. Switzerland's contribution to this project is also just under CHF 2.1 million.



Thanks to the availability of a cutting-edge remote sensing technology, we will be far better equipped to address multiple challenges facing the forestry sector today and its contribution to the development and delivery of the policies of the government of Slovakia. The sophisticated technology will significantly enhance our capacity to assess the impact of climate change on the health and vitality of forest ecosystems, whilst improved planning procedures will provide direct benefits to forest owners, local communities and the national economy as a whole. Last but not least, improved public access to an enlarged pool of forest data will create preconditions for better governance and stewardship of forests, thereby benefiting all citizens of Slovakia.

Milan Lalkovic, Director General, National Forest Centre of the Slovak Republic

THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

SUBJECT

Biodiversity
Biological diversity and nature conservation

COUNTRY

Slovakia

PARTNERS

Project 1:
Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL)

Project 2:
Interdisciplinary Research Centre for Development and the Environment of the University of Bern

STARTING POINT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ecosystems fulfil a diverse range of important functions, in both tangible and less tangible ways. However, the existence of many ecosystems in Slovakia is under threat. In many rural areas of Slovakia, large sections of the population work in tourism or the timber industry. Forests and natural areas are therefore synonymous with vital jobs.

PURPOSE

The two projects will help preserve a large number of Slovakian ecosystems and consequently ensure the long-term protection of these endangered natural areas. The population will therefore benefit both directly in the form of jobs, and indirectly as a result of improvements to the environment.

ACTIVITIES

Project 1:
Updating and expanding the existing range of maps of Slovakian forests, financing two complementary monitoring systems and training in their use in practice, plus transferring specialist knowledge in collaboration with the Swiss partner.

Project 2:
Updating the list of endangered animals and plant species plus additional measures to categorise and classify protected areas, regenerating impoverished ecosystems, renewing educational nature trails, and producing informational material on the areas.

TARGET GROUPS

Forest owners and users, forestry industry, forestry researchers, state and local authorities, municipalities, nature conservation agencies, forest and water management organisations, landowners, non-governmental organisations

COSTS

Total project budget of the two projects:

CHF 5.34 million

Swiss contribution to the two projects:

CHF 4.2 million

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Project 1:
National Forest Centre of Slovakia (NFC)

Project 2:
State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic

DURATION

Both projects: 2011 – 2015