



Strasbourg, 13th February 2024

T-PVS/Inf(2024)02

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Kresna Technical Workshop in line with Recommendation 212 (2021):

“Challenges & opportunities for the conservation of reptiles and large carnivores during linear infrastructure development in South-East Europe: a case study for the Kresna Area, Bulgaria”

22-24 April 2024, Sandanski, Bulgaria

- CONCEPT NOTE AND SCHEDULE -

1. FOREWORD

- i. The workshop is organised according to [Recommendation 212 \(2021\)](#) of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, on the project to build a motorway through the Kresna Gorge (Bulgaria) #10. - “Consider organising a **technical workshop/s** in Kresna focused on best practices relevant for the Kresna Gorge and Struma Motorway case involving all concerned stakeholders, and possibly in collaboration with the Bern Convention, Infrastructure & Ecology Network Europe, or other international bodies”.
- ii. The workshop will follow the initial concept note agreed by the parties and the Bern Secretariat, while the final agenda is expected to be developed by the organisers together with the key stakeholders, having in mind the following key aspects:
 - a. It should follow the [Infrastructure & Ecology Network Europe \(IENE\) guidelines for workshops](#)¹.
 - b. It will be a technical workshop dealing with key species groups, connectivity/fragmentation, best approaches and technical solutions, strategic planning, and engineering and safety matters. The outcomes of the discussions on technical approaches and solutions to defragmentation and species and habitats conservation will inform the planning of new linear infrastructure in the Kresna Gorge. Political aspects will not be a subject of discussion.

¹ https://www.iene.info/content/uploads/20230901_Guidelines_for_IENE-workshops_reviewed-by-the-GB.docx.pdf

- c. While the focus will be on the Kresna local specifics, its regional context and on best practices from Europe, it is important to underline its relevance for the wider SE Europe transport corridors.
- d. Its output should be an official written document (but not another Bern Recommendation) in line with the agreed common aim (see below).

2. CONCEPT NOTE

Aim of the workshop

Technical knowledge exchange helping parties to work together towards solutions to the Kresna case.

Expected outcomes

Joint conclusions (including, e.g. a toolbox, book of abstracts, press release etc.).

Format and language of the workshop

Hybrid, English and Bulgarian (simultaneous interpretation).

Organisation

The Bern Convention Secretariat in collaboration with the **Infrastructure & Ecology Network Europe - IENE**, supported by the independent consultants Lazaros Georgiadis & Radu Mot, will lead the organisation.

Hosts

Bulgarian Parties - authorities and complainant NGOs.

Key Supporters

JASPERS, CEDR, possible others.

Contact persons / Organising Team:

Bern Convention Secretariat

Mikael POUTIERS - Mikael.POUTIERS@coe.int

Eoghan KELLY - Eoghan.KELLY@coe.int

Bern.convention@coe.int - *please note that this e-mail address should be included in all correspondence to make sure that the Secretariat can ensure a follow-up during absences.*

Bulgarian parties – Government

Ms Malina KRUMOVA and Mr Miroslav KALUGEROV

Bulgarian parties – NGOs

Mr Daniel POPOV and Mr Andrey KOVATCHEV

Independent consultants

Mr Lazaros GEORGIADIS and Mr Radu MOT

Expert support

Several key IENE, JASPERS, CEDR experts, e.g. for reptiles, large carnivores, roads, engineering, mitigation measures etc. Specific list of experts to be decided based on the final agenda.

Participants

National/local stakeholders: authorities (e.g. environment & transport), complainant NGOs, other relevant local actors.

From the region/Europe: relevant experts/associations and representatives of fellow Transport/ENV Ministries and possible Bern Standing Committee participants and/or observers.

Jaspers, CEDR, European Commission (DG ENV / DG MOV representatives), possibly other relevant international organisations.

Location & Date

Sandanski, Bulgaria (capacity about 70 people + online meeting capabilities), **22-24 April 2024.**

A preparatory field visit with the key IENE experts shall be carried out on **12-13 March.**

Source of funding and planned budget

The Bern Convention shall finance several independent IENE experts.

The Bulgarian government will kindly provide funding for local logistics (e.g. venue hire, local transportation, Bulgarian-English interpretation).

Other funding sources are welcome, so long as everything is transparent, and the management of the event remains under the control of the organisers (Bern Convention, BG government and complainant NGOs, IENE).

3. Preliminary draft agenda of the Workshop

To be developed along the following proposed structure

Day 1 – 22nd April

- Opening speech/es
- Introduction - logistics
- Brief information on the Kresna area – specifics, importance, existing and foreseen impacts, aims and challenges (common presentation by Bulgarian Parties)
- Reptile species – specifics, conservation challenges, impacts and technical solutions for avoidance – mitigation – compensation / defragmentation, ecological reconstruction; best practices and recommendations relevant for the Kresna area
- Large carnivore species – specifics, conservation challenges, impacts and technical solutions for avoidance – mitigation – compensation / defragmentation, ecological reconstruction; best practices and recommendations relevant for the Kresna area
- Sustainable road infrastructure – challenges, considerations, etc.

Day 2 – 23rd April

- Field visit to the Kresna area and applied discussions

Day 3 – 24th April

- Round table for reptiles – discussions, next steps
- Round table for large carnivores – discussions, next steps
- Overview of main challenges & opportunities, proposing a system of solutions
- Joint conclusions and next steps
- Press release, other / TBD