

Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe

2020 Conservation Outlook Assessment

SITE INFORMATION

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

Inscribed in: 2007

Criteria: (ix)



This transboundary property stretches over 12 countries. Since the end of the last Ice Age, European Beech spread from a few isolated refuge areas in the Alps, Carpathians, Dinarides, Mediterranean and Pyrenees over a short period of a few thousand years in a process that is still ongoing. The successful expansion across a whole continent is related to the tree's adaptability and tolerance of different climatic, geographical and physical conditions. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2020 Conservation Outlook

Finalised on 07 Dec 2020

SIGNIFICANT CONCERN

This is a serial transboundary site comprised of 78 components located in 12 countries – Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Ukraine. While the values of the site have so far been relatively well preserved, the external pressures are high for some components. While many components are quite large and are located within much larger protected areas, in case of some components, their small size and isolation do not necessarily guarantee their integrity in the long term and preservation of ongoing natural processes which are the essential part of the site's Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage site. In some countries, logging in buffer zones and in very few cases inside components has occurred, which represents a serious threat to the integrity of the site. Multilateral cooperation on this site is advancing since the establishment of a Joint Management Committee and through the work of a coordination office. However, this progress has not yet resulted in consolidated management approaches, particularly with regards to logging and forest management approaches, across the entire World Heritage site that would protect and enhance its integrity. Other threats remain low. Climate change already poses a risk to some components and further impacts can be expected in the future, including changes in species composition and habitat shifting. However, it should be noted that one of the attributes of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage site is its demonstration of the ability of the beech to adapt to different ecological and climatic conditions throughout its range it is expected that natural processes within most of the components will be able to adapt in the changing climatic conditions. Potential future changes need to be monitored and documented in order to better understand these processes.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

Other important biodiversity values

► **Forest flora and fauna**

The site displays an important diversity of flora and fauna. This includes all major plant and animal species normally found in higher-elevation European forests of all tree species, especially those that are rare or dependent on virgin, undisturbed forests, such as black stork. Larger and more well-known species considered rare and unique (brown bear, bison, wolf, wildcat, lynx, elk, etc.) also occupy the area (IUCN, 2007).

► **Beech forest associated habitats and communities**

The phytosociological associations found range from dry to moist, lowland to alpine. Included are montane to altimontane alpine spruce-fir-beech forests Atlantic Acidophilous Beech forest. There are many sub-associations of habitats and communities according to the high landform complexity. There are mixed beech-silver fir stands, complexes of beech, beech-fir, beech-fir-spruce, Swiss pine-spruce and spruce-Swiss pine communities of mountain primeval forests. Mixed stands also include sycamore-beech forests (*Acereto pseudoplatani-Fagetum humile*), in fragments there are distributed sites with Dwarf Beech, sorb-beech and beech-sycamore blackberry coenosis and alluvial forests (IUCN, 2017; States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016).

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

High Threat

Many of the current threats are localized and limited to some of the components only. However, logging in the buffer zones of the Romanian components and reportedly also within the Slovak components of the World Heritage site, as well as the legal possibility of shelterwood and clear-cuts in a number of other buffer zones continues to be a significant threat until all the areas within the World Heritage site and its buffer zones are protected from logging, both formally and in practice. The legal possibility of logging inside a small number of the components is of utmost concern. On the other hand, small size of the components, particularly those added through the 2017 extension of the World Heritage site, and habitat fragmentation are issues that are relevant for the entire World Heritage site. This raises a significant concern with regards to the future integrity of the site.

► **Other Biological Resource Use**

Very Low Threat

(Collection of non-timber forest products)

Inside site, extent of threat not known
Outside site

Collection of non-timber forest products (e.g. mushrooms, wild plants) occurs within the broader protected areas within which some components are located (IUCN, 2017). While the risks exist that this might occur within the components of the World Heritage site as well, overall the level of this threat is very low. In most countries, regulations for collection of non-timber forest products are in place (IUCN Consultation, 2020a).

► **Hunting and trapping**

(Legal and illegal hunting)

Other targeted species names

Balkan lynx

Low Threat

Inside site, extent of threat not known

Outside site

Hunting has previously been reported as an issue within the Slovak components of the World Heritage site (UNESCO, 2013; IUCN, 2014; Council of Europe, 2015). The Vihorlat component in Slovakia has become strictly protected by the regulation of the Government of the Slovak Republic in August 2020. However, some parts of Slovak components are still lacking strict protection. Hunting is not allowed in the Albanian components and in Romania it is prohibited within national parks (UNESCO and IUCN, 2020). In Slovenia, hunting is not permitted in the Krokar component and its buffer zone, but is taking place in the Snežnik-Ždrcle component and its buffer zone for the game management purposes; however, at very low levels (IUCN Consultation, 2020a). Although hunting is not allowed in the Albanian components, there are concerning reports of illegal killing in various protected areas (Ruppert, 2018; PPNEA, 2020).

► **Tourism/ visitors/ recreation**

(Tourism)

Low Threat

Inside site, scattered(5-15%)

Outside site

Some components of the World Heritage site are popular tourism destinations; however, tourism appears to be well managed. Other components form part of strictly protected areas and therefore tourism in those components is limited to guided walks and is strictly controlled (hiking is allowed only on officially marked trails and it is strictly forbidden to walk outside marked trails) (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016). Actual visitation numbers in components as opposed to larger protected areas within which they are located or buffer zones is not systematically documented.

► **Other**

(Small size of the components and fragmentation of habitats)

High Threat

Inside site, not applicable

Outside site

The small size and isolation of some of the components of the World Heritage site were noted by IUCN already in 2011 in its evaluation of the first extension of the site (IUCN, 2011). The 2017 extension also included a number of small components, with the average size of components in the 2017 extension being 871 ha compared to 2,200 ha average of the components inscribed before the extension (IUCN, 2017). Fragmentation of habitat is particularly a problem in Belgium where the components are very small and the forest buffer zone is divided by roads and rail and is in close proximity to the city (IUCN, 2017). There is a particular concern for the ecological viability of components which are less than 50 ha (IUCN, 2017). The small size of some components, makes the World Heritage site vulnerable to disturbance and/or degradation stemming from outside the components (UNESCO and IUCN, 2020). However, it should be noted that many components are quite large and many are located within large protected areas (IUCN Consultation, 2020a and 2020b).

► **Droughts, Temperature extremes**

(Climate change)

Data Deficient

Inside site, throughout(>50%)

Outside site

While no comprehensive data on climate change impacts is available for the entire World Heritage site, climate change is of high concern in some components, for example with regards to declining rainfall particularly during the growing season due to long dry summers. In Spain, particularly in Tejera Negra, climate change is an important risk factor increasing the death rate of old beech trees, particularly on the rocky slopes where the soils are shallow (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016). There are also questions over the ecological viability in the face of climate change of some of the smaller size components added in 2017 (IUCN, 2017). On the other hand, while changes related to climate change are expected throughout the World Heritage site, but to a varying degree, it is assumed that in many components beech as well as other species will be able to cope with the expected changes, at least in the short term (IUCN Consultation, 2020a).

► **Dams/ Water Management or Use**

High Threat

(Hydropower projects)

Outside site

Numerous hydropower projects are planned or being constructed on the Valbona River in Albania. Whilst these are unlikely to directly impact the components of the World Heritage site (UNESCO and IUCN, 2020), potential impacts on hydrology, ecology and social systems are hard to predict (IUCN, 2017). WWF has raised serious concerns regarding a reported total of 14 hydropower development within Valbona Valley National Park and reports that construction has started in late September 2016 on the Dragobia Energy Hydropower Plant (WWF, 2017). There are numerous concerns on record from conservation NGOs concerning this threat (WWF, 2017; Grand Teton Research, 2017; Ecologist, 2016). There are also very recent reports about a planned hydropower plant also at the Gashi River. It is planned outside the component part (although in the buffer zone), but rather close to it and there are concerns that the component Lumi i gashit could be affected directly and may create new threats for the beauty and scientific value of the component's buffer zone (TOKA, 2020). Numerous hydropower facilities located in Domogled National Park (Romania), which serves as buffer zone for three components, may create new threats for natural processes as well as for the beauty and scientific value of the components' buffer zone, if the construction of new facilities and/or the extension of existing facilities would be considered in future (UNESCO and IUCN, 2020).

► **Logging/ Wood Harvesting**

Very High Threat

(Unsustainable and illegal logging)

Inside site, extent of threat not known

Outside site

High demand for timber exists in some areas surrounding some components of the World Heritage site, particularly in Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine (IUCN, 2007; UNESCO and IUCN, 2018, 2020). This represents a threat mainly for buffer zones but has an influence on the natural processes within some of the components as well. According to the information included in various reports of the Council of Europe, the forest management plans of the forest reserves which form the Slovak part of the World Heritage site provide for logging in those areas. The expert mission of the Council of Europe concluded that 93% of the Poloniny National Park in Slovakia was under serious pressure from unsustainable logging, as well as hunting and poaching and these issues were also considered by the World Heritage Committee (UNESCO, 2011). Ongoing logging in all areas except the most strictly protected areas was confirmed by a report of the Council of Europe in 2015. A new management plan for Poloniny National Park (SK) was approved by the responsible authorities but did not fulfill the standard requirements of a management plan (Council of Europe, 2015 and 2017). While recent logging could be detected on satellite images in one of the buffer zones and to a small extent in one component (UNESCO, 2018), the State Party of Slovakia has ensured that no logging was taking place within its components of the World Heritage site through voluntary commitments of concerned entities; however, only parts of the Slovak components of the World Heritage site are legally protected from logging (UNESCO, 2017). Conventional forestry, such as clear-cuts, shelterwood cuttings and other types of interventions, is possible in many of the buffer zones of the transnational serial World Heritage site that are likely to disturb natural processes and to undermine the protective functions of buffer zones. Logging in buffer zones in Romania has had negative effects on the integrity of the site (UNESCO and IUCN, 2020), with concerns being expressed about the existing forestry legislation, which provides for little difference between logging regulations inside and outside national parks (IUCN Consultation, 2020e). In a small number of components it is possible to implement shelterwood and/or clear-cuts with special permission or in specific areas (Coordination Office, 2019), which is of utmost concern and in clear contradiction to the objective of protecting the site's Outstanding Universal Value. However, it must be noted that in many components and their buffer zones logging is prohibited and strictly regulations are strictly enforced (IUCN Consultation, 2020a). Recent satellite image analysis confirms that the logging pressure on many buffer zones of component parts in Romania is still very high (Schickhofer and Schwarz 2019).

Potential Threats

High Threat

A number of potential threats have previously been reported, such as potential infrastructure development in relation to the Slovak and Romanian components of the World Heritage site, including plans for a road crossing a component and associated infrastructure in Romania. Climate change already poses a risk to some components and further impacts can be expected in the future, including changes in species

composition and habitat shifting. However, it should be noted that one of the attributes of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage site is its demonstration of the ability of the beech to adapt to different ecological and climatic conditions throughout its range it is expected that natural processes within most of the components will be able to adapt in the changing climatic conditions. Potential future changes need to be monitored and documented in order to better understand these processes.

► **Commercial/ Industrial Areas**

High Threat

(Infrastructure development)

Outside site

Some infrastructure projects such as an antenna, roads and tourism infrastructure have been reported to be planned in the immediate surroundings of the Slovak components of the World Heritage site (UNESCO, 2013). However, their current status and potential impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the site is unknown, though none of such projects have been implemented in Poloniny National Park.

The 2019 UNESCO World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission was informed of a plan to upgrade a forest track to a road in Domogled National Park (Romania) crossing one of the components and crossing the buffer zone. The mission concluded that the road upgrade would have a negative impact on the site's integrity, potentially affecting its Outstanding Universal Value (UNESCO and IUCN 2020).

► **Habitat Shifting/ Alteration, Temperature extremes**

Low Threat

(Climate change)

Inside site, throughout(>50%)

Outside site

Some forests at lower or higher elevation margins may change species composition as climate change occurs. However, it should be noted that one aspect of these site's Outstanding Universal Value is the ability of the beech to adapt to so many different ecological conditions (and in a number of different and varying forest associations) throughout its range and it is expected that natural processes within most of the components will be able to adapt in the changing climatic conditions (IUCN, 2007; IUCN Consultation, 2020a).

► **Housing/ Urban Areas**

Low Threat

(Close proximity of some components to urban areas)

Outside site

In Belgium, close proximity of the components of the World Heritage site to urban areas is of concern. There is a narrow buffer zone separating some of the components from residential areas and pressures might increase in the future (IUCN, 2017). In Romania, the Domogled-Valea Cernei – Domogled-Coronini-Bedina component is in the close proximity of Baile Herculane and Cozia – Masivul Cozia is in the close proximity of Calimanesti-Caciulata.

► **Fire/ Fire Suppression**

Low Threat

(Forest fires)

Inside site, extent of threat not known

Outside site

Fluctuations in precipitation and periods of drought can lead to increased risk of forest fires caused by human action. This is particularly a concern in the Italian components (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016). There have been forest fires in proximity to the one Albanian and one Romanian component in 2019, which do not appear to have affected the components (UNESCO and IUCN, 2020).

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

► **Management system**

Some Concern

The Integrated Management System (IMS) builds on the Joint Declaration between the States Parties signed after the most recent extension of this serial transnational World Heritage site, which now

includes 78 components in 12 countries (IUCN, 2017). This system includes a Joint Management Committee and a Coordination Office, which plays a critical role in supporting this process and in enhancing technical coordination and exchange between the components and the participating countries.

At the component level, the management is building on existing systems that are fully funded and operational. However, at the level of the entire serial transnational World Heritage site the management requires a great deal of coordination, communication and cooperation at national and supranational scales. Common criteria for the individual management plans as a basis for a transboundary management system could be an avenue for further coordination.

Since the last assessment, a number of new management plans have been adopted for protected areas within which some components are located, for example in Albania (Management Plan of the Shebenik Jabllanica National Park, 2018) and in Austria (a new management plan was in preparation for the Kalkalpen National Park in 2020). In many countries, coordination mechanisms have also been established at national levels (e.g. in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Slovenia) (IUCN Consultation, 2020a and 2020c). In Romania, concerns remain regarding the application of both forestry management plans and protected areas management plans, which results in overlapping management provisions (IUCN Consultation, 2020e).

► **Effectiveness of management system**

Some Concern

As the Integrated Management System has recently been enlarged to include the components added via the recent 2017 extension, it will take time to assess management effectiveness of the new and enlarged system. In this regard the World Heritage Committee requested the States Parties to "ensure that committed funding arrangements are able to safeguard consistent site management at the component level as well as coordinated management across the transnational serial property" (World Heritage Committee, 2017). Concerns also remain over management effectiveness at component level in some cases, as for example in Slovakia (UNESCO, 2013), Romania and Albania (UNESCO and IUCN, 2020). At the level of individual components and the larger protected areas in which they are embedded, management effectiveness varies significantly, largely due to different levels of available financial and human resources.

► **Boundaries**

Serious Concern

The small size and isolation of some of the components of the World Heritage site were noted by IUCN already in 2011 in its evaluation of the first extension (IUCN, 2011). The 2017 extension also included a number of small components, with the average size of components in the 2017 extension being 871 ha compared to 2,200 ha average of previously inscribed components (IUCN, 2017). While in many cases the boundaries of component parts are clear and correspond to existing forest reserves, boundaries of the components and buffer zones do not consistently align with existing protected areas zoning boundaries. Furthermore very different approaches to site configuration have been adopted by different States Parties (IUCN, 2017). Concerns have also been repeatedly expressed over the boundaries design of the Slovak components of the World Heritage site (UNESCO, 2013 and 2015). A potential boundary modification of the Slovak components, as presented to the 2018 World Heritage Centre/IUCN Advisory mission, would result in a higher fragmentation and substantial loss of valuable old forest stands, despite the inclusion of new areas into existing components (UNESCO, 2018). A proposal for a significant boundary modification has been subsequently submitted by the State Party of Slovakia in 2019 and is currently undergoing evaluation.

► **Integration into regional and national planning systems**

Some Concern

Each State Party has the responsibility to coordinate between components at the national level through steering groups these form part of the Integrated Management System. At the time of the 2016 Evaluation not all national steering groups were fully established and functioning (IUCN, 2017). However, further progress in establishing coordination at national level has been achieved in many countries since (IUCN Consultation, 2020a and 2020c). On the other hand, coordination at national level between

different relevant management authorities and agencies remains challenging in many countries (IUCN Consultation, 2020a).

► **Relationships with local people**

Some Concern

The key stakeholders have been identified and most of the land is publicly owned and managed by public administrations or state enterprises in the case of most of the components of the serial site. In the small percentage of privately owned land contractual and legal arrangements have been made to ensure strict protection of the areas. The maintenance of relationships with local people is ensured through the Integrated Management Panels for stakeholder participation. These panels are only planned for several components and need to be fully operationalized. However, in many cases stakeholders are already involved in the management of larger protected areas within which the components of the World Heritage sites are located (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016). Overall, relationship with local stakeholders and effectiveness and degree of their involvement in management varies across the different components.

The new Interreg Central Europe BEECH POWER project is providing a pilot model for active stakeholder involvement, with the intention that the practice will be sustained after the project ends (IUCN Consultation, 2020a).

► **Legal framework**

Some Concern

The serial World Heritage site spans 12 States Parties and 78 components. All components have legally designated protection status e.g. through Ministerial or Presidential Decrees, Acts or other legal declarations. In the small percentage of privately owned land, contractual and legal arrangements have been made to ensure strict protection of the areas (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016). Nevertheless, an inalterability of the components' boundaries is not always guaranteed (e.g. Poloniny National Park, Slovakia). In some countries, components are part of strictly protected areas (corresponding to IUCN category Ia), whereas many buffer zones of this serial transnational World Heritage site are not subject to an appropriate legal framework that would ensure the protection from logging (UNESCO and IUCN, 2020). Since the last assessment, further progress has been achieved in increasing the legal protection regime in some components, for example in Slovenia where the preparation of a Decree that would designate both components as nature reserves has been initiated (IUCN Consultation, 2020a). However, the situation in some countries is still of concern, as is the case in Romania where progressive logging occurs in many buffer zones of component parts, although these buffer zones are legally protected as national parks and Natura 2000 sites. The European Commission started an infringement procedure against Romanian authorities in this respect and announced a reasoned opinion on 2 July 2020 (European Commission, 2020). This situation is also linked to the fact that in Romania forestry management provisions and legislation apply to many protected areas and their buffer zones and the fact that management is undertaken according to the forestry regulations (IUCN Consultation, 2020e).

► **Law enforcement**

Some Concern

The implementation of individual measures is the responsibility of the management bodies at component level. Enforcement occurs through the local management bodies such as through park rangers and wardens (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016). Activities which could have negative impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value of the site, such as for example grazing, in some cases are allowed in the buffer zones (IUCN, 2017) and therefore significant efforts are required to ensure that no such activities would occur within the boundaries of the components. It is acknowledged that enforcement could be further strengthened in many components, which would require better financing and clearer managerial structures (IUCN Consultation, 2020a).

► **Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations**

Serious Concern

A number of requests and recommendations have been made by the World Heritage Committee with regards to some individual components, particularly those in Slovakia and Romania (UNESCO, 2013,

2015, 2017, 2018, 2019) and some of them have not yet been implemented, the most serious being a guarantee of legal protection from logging. In its most recent Decision the World Heritage Committee, while approving the extension of the World Heritage site, has also made a number of recommendations and requests regarding the integrated management of this serial transnational site (World Heritage Committee, 2017). However, it is too early to evaluate the implementation most of these recent Decision. Nevertheless, the results of the 2019 World Heritage Centre/IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission (UNESCO and IUCN, 2020) did not confirm appropriate management and protection within buffer zones that would support undisturbed natural processes, as it was requested in the World Heritage Committee's inscription decision of the 2017 extension (UNESCO, 2017).

► **Sustainable use**

Mostly Effective

No use of biological resources is possible within the components. Limited access is permitted for scientific purposes and tourism in certain components under certain conditions (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016).

► **Sustainable finance**

Some Concern

There is a significant range in funding available to the different components (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016). It is also of some concern how coordination across the multinational serial site will be funded in the long term (IUCN, 2017). Some additional funding has been secured through project funding, for example through the Interreg Beech Power project (IUCN Consultation, 2020a).

► **Staff capacity, training, and development**

Some Concern

Staffing levels and training are currently adequate in most of the components (Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016); however, this varies significantly between different countries. Staff numbers might also become insufficient in the future if visitation increase in the buffer zones or components themselves. The work of the Coordination Office facilitates technical coordination and capacity building.

Some specific staff training dedicated to the management of the World Heritage site has been organised through EU funded projects, such as the BEECH POWER project (IUCN Consultation, 2020a). However, there are concerns that some components are still lacking capacity, particularly what concerns trained biologists and ecologists (IUCN Consultation, 2020d).

► **Education and interpretation programs**

Mostly Effective

Education programmes and activities, including interpretative trails and guided walks, are offered by most of the protected areas within which the components are located (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016); however, in some cases it is not clear how much focus is given to the interpretation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage site. In many components, existing education and interpretation programmes from before inscription are continuing, but adapted programmes with more focus on the Outstanding Universal Value of the site remain to be prepared (IUCN Consultation, 2020a).

► **Tourism and visitation management**

Mostly Effective

Access to some components for tourism purposes is prohibited. Where access to the components is permitted it is via the use of marked trails or paths often requiring guides and prior permission (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016). Visitation in the buffer zones is high for several components and it is in these areas that visitor and tourism management efforts are focused.

► **Monitoring**

Mostly Effective

Key indicators have been established and a thematic transnational working group on research and monitoring has been established (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016); however, it is unclear to what extent this is being

applied consistently across all components.

► **Research**

Mostly Effective

Some of the components of the World Heritage site have a very long history of research (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016). Following the extension of 2017, additional efforts will be required to coordinate research activities across the transnational serial World Heritage site.

Overall assessment of protection and management

► **Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site**

Some Concern

There are direct and indirect pressures on the components from activities in the buffer zones and broader regions. Given the small size of some components and variability in site configuration (IUCN, 2017; UNESCO and IUCN, 2020), their ability to address threats originating from outside their boundaries is of particular concern. In some countries buffer zone management is not supporting the effective protection of the component parts, as impactful activities, such as logging, are happening in very close vicinity to component parts.

State and trend of values

Summary of the Values

► **Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values**

Trend: Stable

► **Assessment of the current state and trend of other important biodiversity values**

**Low Concern
Trend: Stable**

Flora and fauna species associated with beech forests appear to be well preserved. In some cases a lack of connectivity, and disturbance between components, might affect populations of some species in the long term.

Additional information

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

► **Wilderness and iconic features**

Several components are recognized as wilderness areas and have iconic monumental trees valued for their age and size (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016).

Factors negatively affecting provision of this benefit :

- Overexploitation Impact level - Low
- Habitat change Impact level - Low

► **Outdoor recreation and tourism**

Tourism within the components is restricted in most areas due to their strict protection regime. However, there are hiking trails and guided walks are offered in several components.

► **Cultural identity and sense of belonging**

Beech forests in many areas have been valued as part of cultural identity of local communities.

► **Importance for research**

All States Parties have undertaken academic research and have been involved in a number of projects relating to forest ecosystems, biodiversity and specific aspects of old growth ecology. Much of the understanding of ecological change since the last ice age comes from research undertaken in certain components (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016).

► **Carbon sequestration**

The large standing biomass and high productivity ensures ongoing carbon sequestration. This includes in some of the associated wetlands such as montane peat bogs (States Parties of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, 2016).

Factors negatively affecting provision of this benefit :

- Habitat change Impact level - Low, Trend - Continuing

► **Tourism-related income,
Provision of jobs**

The benefits from tourism related income are assumed, but are not fully documented. In many components visitors require a permit or a guide to access the components.

Summary of benefits

As the components of this serial transnational World Heritage site are strictly protected and the management strategy is one of non-intervention, there are few benefits from provisioning services, but cultural, spiritual and recreational values are significant. Scientific research has been extensive in many of the components and research on old growth ecosystems and associated habitats has increased scientific understanding in many fields of research.

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

Nº	Organization	Brief description of Active Projects	Website
1	Interreg Central Europe BEECH POWER	The BEECH POWER project aims to improve the management quality and effectiveness of this site to safeguard the ecosystem integrity of the single parts by improving capacities and active participation of relevant stakeholders.	https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/BEECH-POWER.html

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