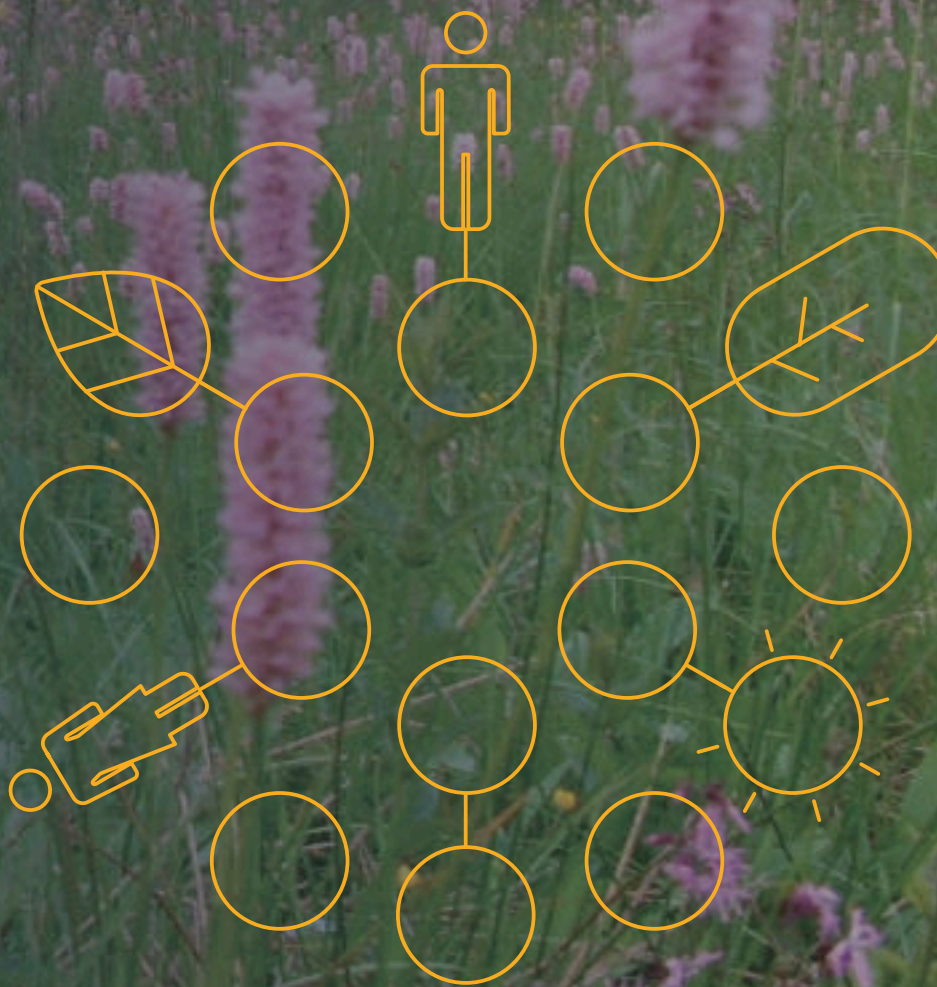
CIRCULAR BIOECONOMY ALLIANCE

Living Labs for Nature, People and Planet

The Romanian Carpathian mountains **Romania**



A Living Lab for Nature, People and the Planet
in the Romanian Carpathian mountains

Project at a glance

Main species planted
- European beech (Fagus sylvatica)
- Silver fir (Abies alba)
- Swiss stone pine (Pinus cembra)
- Alder (Alnus sp.)

Project launch
2021

Partners
- Carpathia
- EFI
- Villa Abbatis Cultural Association

Location
Romanian Carpathians

Key activities
- Protection and restoration of old-growth forests (2,500 ha)
- Protection and restoration of wildflower meadows and traditional orchards (50 ha)
- Communication and capacity building

Objectives
Restoring ancient orchards and wildflower meadows while providing new economic opportunities to local communities

Why?

The Carpathian Mountains form some of the largest contiguous forests on the European continent with the highest percentage of still virgin woodlands. **They contain an extraordinary high number of species**, amongst them many native species; and they are home to the largest European populations of large carnivores. Starting in 2005, formerly nationalised forests have been given back to private people in Romania. This process triggered massive clear-cuts and many thousands of hectares of forests were illegally logged, posing a severe threat to the integrity of the Carpathian ecosystem. **Pressure from large agri-business companies to buy land and industrialize agriculture is putting at risk traditional farming practices** as well as the mosaic-like landscapes, including meadows, orchards and forests that are one of Europe's most unique cultural and natural heritage.
The project will protect and connect old growth forest fragments in Romanian Carpathians, as well as restore ancient orchards and wildflower meadows while providing new economic opportunities to local communities.

CIRCULAR BIOECONOMY ALLIANCE

What?

Action on the ground

This 5-year project in the Romanian Carpathians will restore around 2,500 hectares of old growth forests and around 50 hectares of ancient orchards and wildflower meadows to protect the biodiversity typical of Southern Transylvania and explore new business opportunities for local communities.

Protecting and restoring of old-growth forests

The project will protect and connect old growth forest fragments with a focus on the Upper Dambovita Valley. To accelerate the development of climate-resilient natural forest habitats, and enhance the function of buffer zones, the project aims to transform spruce monocultures into natural mixed forests, introducing missing species.

Protecting and restoring wildflower meadows and traditional orchards

The Living Lab aims to restore around 50 hectares of wildflower meadows and ancient orchards and establish a nursery to preserve historical varieties of apple and pear trees in the village of Apos in Sibiu County, Central Transylvania. This will result in a "genetic reservoir" of these varieties to reintroduce them back into other parts of Romania. The project will also help to preserve the historic man-made landscape around the Medieval Saxon and Romanian villages and will become an important part of preserving the rich local biodiversity and cultural landscapes. The restoration work includes 25 hectares strategically located between forests and meadows, acting as a perfect habitat for local species, a larder for bears, and a buffer zone between forest and meadows.

Building capacity and communication

The project will engage with local communities on the importance of restoring biodiversity and transitioning to sustainable forestry and regenerative agriculture practices, as well as on the potential for eco-cultural tourism for the local economy. This will include a series of events and publications, as well as capacity building and training.

Expected benefits

The project directly contributes to the achievement of 4 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, which provide a roadmap to a better and more sustainable future.

What is a Living Lab?

The Circular Bioeconomy Alliance (CBA) is building a global network of Living Labs for Nature, People and Planet.

They demonstrate how harmony can be achieved by empowering nature and people in a concrete territorial context, integrating traditional knowledge, capitalizing on new research and innovation and based on public-private partnerships that place local communities at their centre.

Each Lab uses a landscape restoration project as the starting point to catalyse the development of circular bioeconomy value chains while restoring biodiversity and local livelihoods. They are the start of a journey towards more resilient communities and landscapes.

circularbioeconomyalliance.org

Facilitated by

EFI