



Conservation Fees

Objective: Increase the contribution of conservation fees paid by sustainable enterprises

Carpathian Mountains
status: improving



Problem: For the restoration work carried out by Foundation Conservation Carpathia to be financially sustainable in the long term, funding mechanisms will be needed to realise value from the natural landscape.

Action: Conservation fees were introduced for local businesses participating in the project, following the principle that businesses benefiting from the natural environment recognise its value and contribute to its conservation and restoration.

Indicator: The total amount of funds raised through conservation fees indicates sustainable financial support for ongoing conservation and restoration.

Methods

Conservation fees were introduced on group bookings made through Travel Carpathia, a subsidiary of Foundation Conservation Carpathia. The conservation fee formula is a 10% fee charged on top of the total booking, for stays of two or more nights in Foundation Conservation Carpathia-incubated tourism businesses. The value raised through these fees was recorded in each year following their introduction in 2022.



Eco-tourism activities. Photo:
Foundation Conservation
Carpathia.

Cobor biodiversity farm
guesthouse. Photo: Jack Wolfskin.

Eco-tourism activities. Photo:
Georgiana Cațan.

Results

Between 2022 and 2024, a total of €29,365.59 was raised in conservation fees through Travel Carpathia, and annual fees increased year-on-year. These fees were reinvested into the Carpathia Fund, which provides grants for local conservation-related enterprises, leading to job creation. A breakdown of the fees raised in each year is shown in Figure 1.

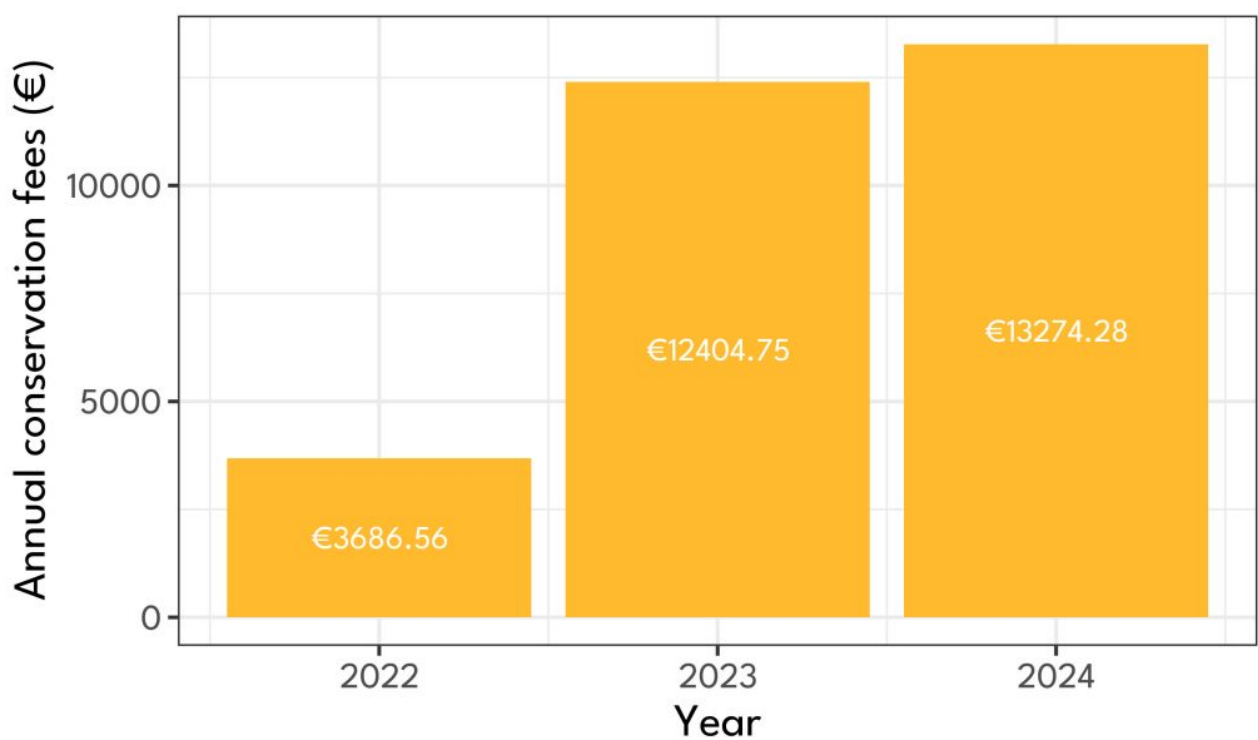


Figure 1: Total annual conservation fees raised through Travel Carpathia.

Interpretation

The conservation fees raised through Travel Carpathia are directly linked to Foundation Conservation Carpathia’s conservation work. It is expected that the value of conservation fees collected through Travel Carpathia will continue to increase with [growth of nature-based tourism](#) in the region

Moreover, the principle of businesses recognising the value derived from nature and contributing towards conservation – whether through a direct financial contribution by the business, education and awareness, or optimising their operations to reduce impacts on nature – is understood, and has been integrated into the selection criteria for grants awarded under the Carpathia Fund.

Lessons learned

The introduction of conservation fees was initially also envisaged for situations where businesses enter into concession arrangements to operate on or have access to land owned by Foundation Conservation Carpathia, and for [businesses receiving financial support through the Conservation Enterprise Programme](#).

However, there are currently no third-party owned businesses that operate on Foundation Conservation Carpathia land. This may change over time, and adding this source would increase the value of conservation fees.

The application of conservation fees to local businesses supported by the Conservation Enterprise Programme was also limited due to complications in the application of tax law in Romania, which makes levying a discretionary and intangible fee administratively difficult, even if the concept has gained traction among businesses.

Despite this, the concept of business contributions to nature is being implemented in various ways. For example, enterprises supported by the Carpathia Fund that are interacting directly with customers are developing promotional content to educate guests about Foundation Conservation Carpathia's work in the region and encourage voluntary donations towards conservation activities.



Selling locally-produced food at the annual Făgăraș Fest. Photo: Foundation Conservation Carpathia.

Partners

