



**Memorandum of Cooperation
DANUBEPARKS Newt Conservation Partnership**

signed 30th May 2023, Văleni, Republic of Moldova

in the frame of the first Danube-wide Newt Conservation Workshop co-funded by the EU Central European Initiative (CEI)

We, the undersigned representatives of **DANUBEPARKS - Danube River Network of Protected Areas** and **Societas Europaea Herpetologica (European Herpetological Society)**,

Considering the unfavourable conservation status of the Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) Species Complex and other amphibian species in the Danube River Basin, their fast response to conservation measures and their potential to act as excellent indicators and umbrella species of healthy riparian ecosystems;

Stressing the mutual obligation of the Danube countries to preserve and improve the state of their populations and habitats through Danube-wide cooperation;

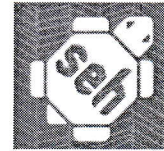
Recognizing the unique ecological, scenic, scientific, and cultural significance of the Danube River and its protected areas;

Emphasizing the need for cross-border cooperation to address the conservation challenges posed by climate change throughout the entire Danube River Basin;

Aligned with the objectives of the Global Sustainable Development Goals (especially Goals 13, 14, 15), the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the goal to Halt the Loss of Biodiversity until 2050, the Ramsar Convention's broad aims "to halt the worldwide loss of wetlands and to conserve, through wise use and management", and the targets of the EU Flora Fauna Habitats Directive to ensure a good conservation status;

hereby declare our commitment

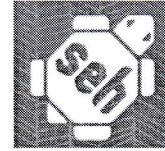
to build a closer cooperation among our organizations in their leading role for wetland conservation and amphibian conservation in the Danube River Basin, in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss, aiming to achieve the following objectives:



- 1. Establish a non-formal Newt Conservation Working Group for mutual capacity building:**
 - comprising experts and practitioners from across the Danube region – in order to join the efforts of Protected Area managers (DANUBE PARKS) and scientists and researchers (SEH)
 - aiming to build the capacity of the partner organizations, to prioritize and plan actions for preserving and restoring wetlands as tools for increasing climate resilience using amphibians as target and flagship species
 - ensuring the best scientific approaches, networking and experience exchange and strategic cooperation, aiming to promote Danube-wide conservation strategies and actions for Danube Crested Newt, amphibians and wetland and riparian islands conservation on a transnational, regional and national scale.

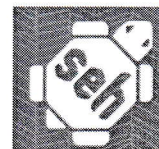
- 2. Exchange of Experience and practical Restoration of Wetlands to respond to terrestrial and aquatic habitats loss, improve climate resilience and support the survival of rare species:**
 - exchanging experiences, best practices, and scientific knowledge among experts and representatives from Protected Areas in all Danube countries.
 - exploring innovative approaches and conservation efforts, tailored to local circumstances and environmental conditions with a focus on wetland restoration as carbon sinks for climate resilience,.
 - strengthening the ecological connectivity, promoting river dynamics, and encouraging cross-sector and cross-border cooperation for the protection of rare species and restoration of their habitats;

- 3. Joint Elaboration of Conservation Strategies and adaptation of the "Action Plan for the Conservation of the Crested Newt (Triturus cristatus) Species Complex in Europe" for the Danube Region:**
 - developing comprehensive joint concepts, action plans and strategies dedicated to the conservation of newts and amphibians are jointly developed, building upon the collective knowledge and expertise of the consortium;
 - committing to work jointly on cross-border and transnational conservation strategies, taking into consideration the specific requirements in the Danube region as the world's most international river ecosystem.
 - Recognizing the unique characteristics and needs of the Danube River Basin, adapting the existing "Action Plan for the Conservation of the Crested Newt (Triturus cristatus) Species Complex in Europe" to suit the specific context of the Danube region.



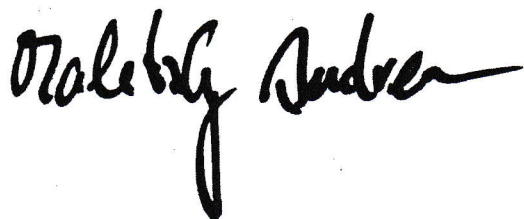
- adapting the action plan so that it serves to guide and prioritize the joint conservation efforts, providing a roadmap for the conservation and management of newts and their habitats in the upcoming years.
- 4. Joint Elaboration, Preparation and implementation of Projects:**
- developing this cooperation to serve as a strategic framework for addressing climate change impacts, protecting habitats, and promoting the long-term resilience of amphibian and newt populations within the Danube River Basin through concrete projects and actions.
 - Leveraging the expertise and experiences of the consortium members by sharing best practices, pilot measures and experiences, the development of innovative projects that combat the negative impacts on wetlands and biodiversity with a special focus on amphibians.
 - increasing the capacity of the partner organizations through this cooperation to prepare and manage EU-funded and other projects, aiming to make additional funding resources available for the wide range of actions defined within this memorandum, with a special focus on fostering climate change resilience and biodiversity conservation.
- 5. Raising Awareness for Amphibian and Biodiversity Conservation:**
- anchoring the conservation of wetlands and amphibians as flagship species also among the general public, joint communication actions and cooperations addressing locals and youth generations in particular.
 - communicating the joint conservation efforts within the counterparts media, and mutual press work and public relations.
 - developing citizen science projects as a concrete example for combining the work of the scientific sector with protected area managers on the spot and promoting the shared objective to fascinate the general public by involving them into concrete conservation and monitoring actions.

By signing this Memorandum of Cooperation, we commit ourselves to collaboration, knowledge sharing, and joint decision-making to achieve our shared objectives. We recognize that this partnership requires transparency, accountability, and mutual respect among the signatory parties.



We declare that the launch of the first Danube-wide Newt Expert Working Group during the CEI Cooperation Activity: Conference "DANUBEPARKS Newt Conservation Partnership & Climate Change" on 30th May 2023 in Văleni, Republic of Moldova, serves as a milestone in our collective commitment to amphibian and newt conservation and improving climate resilience in the Danube River Basin.

Signed on 30th of May, 2023, in Văleni, Republic of Moldova.



Andreas Maletzy, President

Societas Europaea Herpetologica



Vlatko Rožac, President

**DANUBEPARKS - Danube River Network
of Protected Areas**