

LIFE SAFE-CROSSING

ACTION D2. EVALUATION OF PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS BY KEY ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT ACTIONS

BRIEF REPORT OF PROJECT EVALUATION BY STAKEHOLDERS – DEADLINE August 2023



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1. INTRODUCTION

The LIFE SAFE-CROSSING (LIFE17NAT/IT/464) project aimed at implementing actions to reduce the impact of roads on some priority species in four European countries: Apennine brown bear (*Ursus arctos marsicanus*) and wolf (*Canis lupus*) in Italy, Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) in Spain, and Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) in Greece and Romania. The main actions carried out were:

- Installation of Animal-Vehicle Collision Prevention Systems on most critical road segments;
- Adaptation of crossing structures to enhance connectivity for the target species;
- Development of activities to increase the attention of drivers about the risk of collisions with the target species.

The goal of Action D2 was the evaluation of the project by the key involved actors and stakeholders to assess whether the implemented activities were considered effective in addressing the impact of linear transport infrastructure on biodiversity.

The evaluation of the project was made through a questionnaire, which was submitted to the main actors involved in the project as well as people from other countries dealing with this issue. Totally 97 replies were collected from stakeholders from 10 countries (Belgium, Croatia, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Romania, and Slovakia). The people interviewed were: researchers, tourism actors, NGOs, local and road authorities, national park employees, and the staff of private companies.

This deliverable summarizes the main results of the survey carried for the evaluation of the project by the key stakeholders.

2. THE SURVEY

The survey to assess the evaluation of the project by stakeholders was made through the use of a questionnaire, which was submitted to people during the meeting and events organized by the project. Besides this, it was distributed online to specifically selected stakeholders. For the online survey a specific online format was developed to collect the replies and in order to facilitate data analysis.

The survey lasted from January until June 2023.

The questionnaire (Annex 1) was composed by 7 closed-ended questions and ended 2 open questions. The closed-ended questions were based on a Likert scale 1 to 5.

The first two questions were related to how the people judged the importance of the issue of wildlife road mortality and the one of habitat fragmentation. The following questions were specifically related to the LIFE SAFE-CROSSING project, in order to evaluate how significant the project was considered in order to face the problem of the impact of linear infrastructures on biodiversity, and which actions were considered the most successful.

Another important question was about which action(s) the respondents would be interested to implement in their territories, and which are considered to be the main obstacles for the implementation of the selected LIFE SAFE-CROSSING actions.

The last question asked what other actions were considered important to face the issue of the impact of roads on biodiversity.

Information on the institution and country of origin was also collected for each respondent.

3. THE SAMPLE

Totally 97 replies were collected from 10 countries (Belgium, Croatia, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Spain Netherlands, Romania, and Slovakia). The people interviewed were: researchers, tourism actors, NGOs, local and road authorities, national park employees, and the staff of private companies. The survey involved also people from 6 countries outside the project area (Belgium, Croatia, France, Ireland, Netherlands, and Slovakia) in order to have a more comprehensive evaluation of the activities carried out. All the people interviewed outside project area were always persons involved in various forms in the management of the issue of the impact of road on biodiversity.

4. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

The issue of the impact of linear infrastructures on biodiversity was recognized as a relevant one by almost all respondents. 97% of the responses ranked as important or very important the problem of animals getting killed on roads (fig. 1), and a similar percentage (89%) considered in the same way habitat fragmentation by roads (fig. 2).

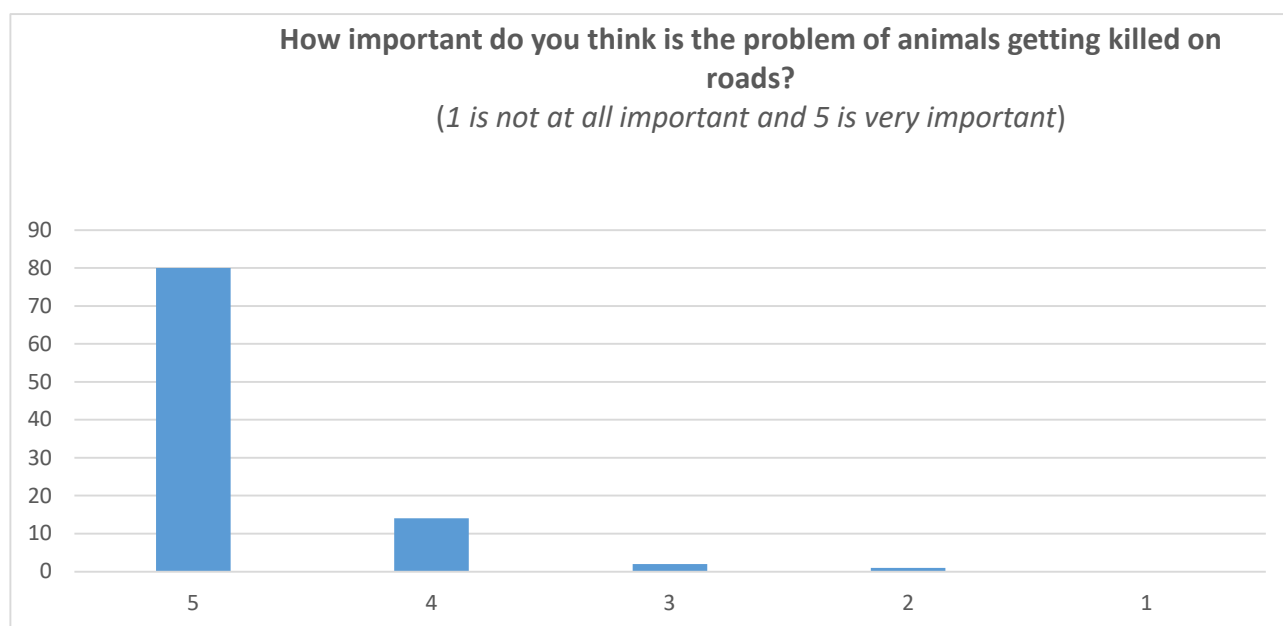


Figure 1. Replies of the respondents to the question “How important do you think is the problem of animals getting killed on roads?” (1 is not at all important and 5 is very important).

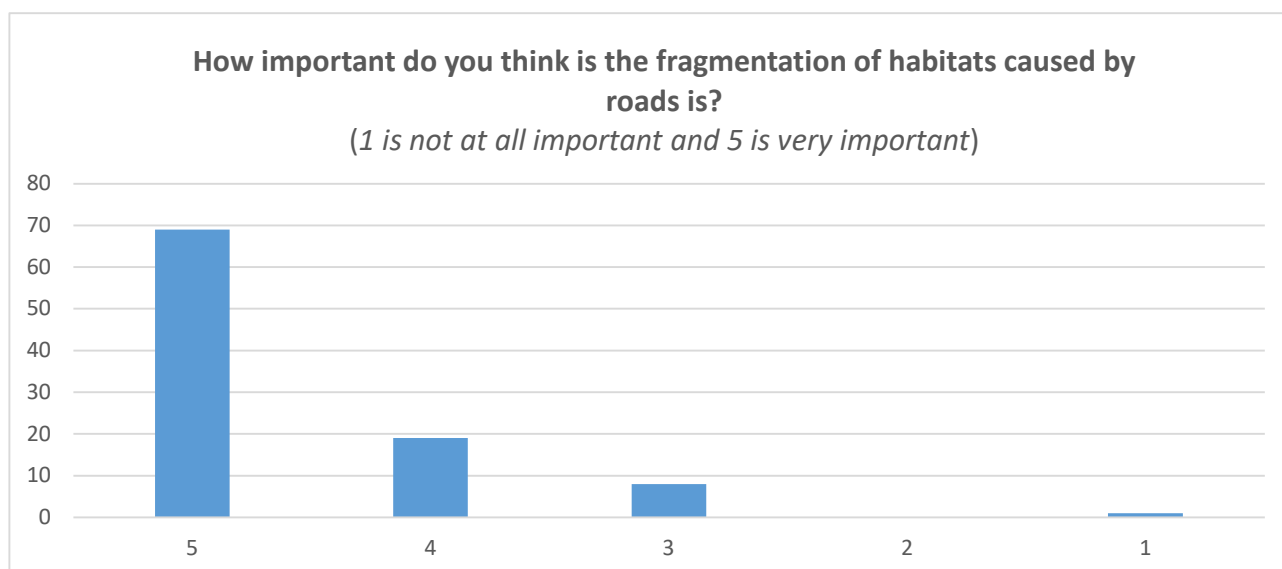


Figure 2. Replies of the respondents to the question “How important do you think is the fragmentation of habitats caused by roads is?” (1 is not at all important and 5 is very important).

The LIFE SAFE-CROSSING project was positively or very positively judged by the 95% of the people (fig. 3), and among the actions implemented we obtained the following results (fig. 4):

Monitoring actions reached the highest value with 89% of the replies, followed by the installation of the AVC-PS (84%), the adaptation of crossing structures (83%) and the awareness raising activities (82%). The lowest scores were obtained by the installation of the virtual fence (73%) and the installation of the road panels developed through the application of the neuromarketing technique (68%); in any case also these two actions were considered important or very important by the vast majority of the people.

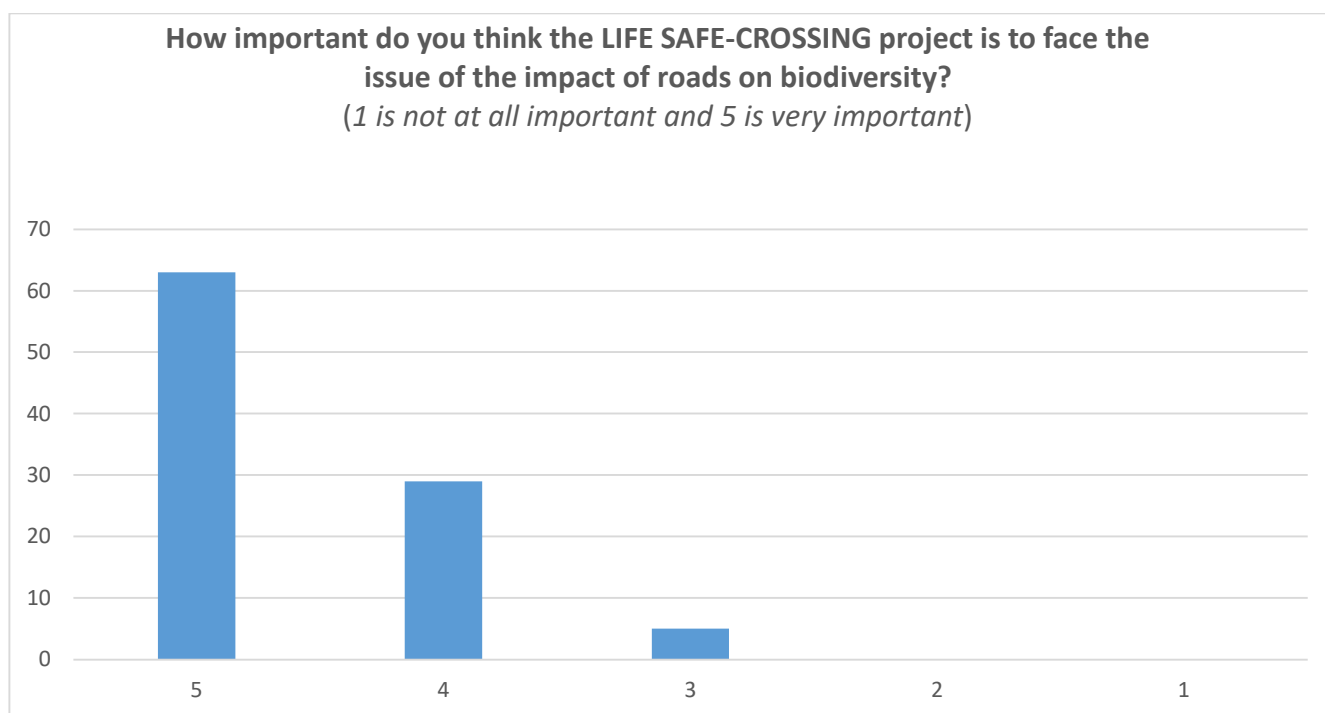


Figure 3. Replies of the respondents to the question “How important do you think the LIFE SAFE-CROSSING project is to face the issue of the impact of roads on biodiversity?” (1 is not at all important and 5 is very important)

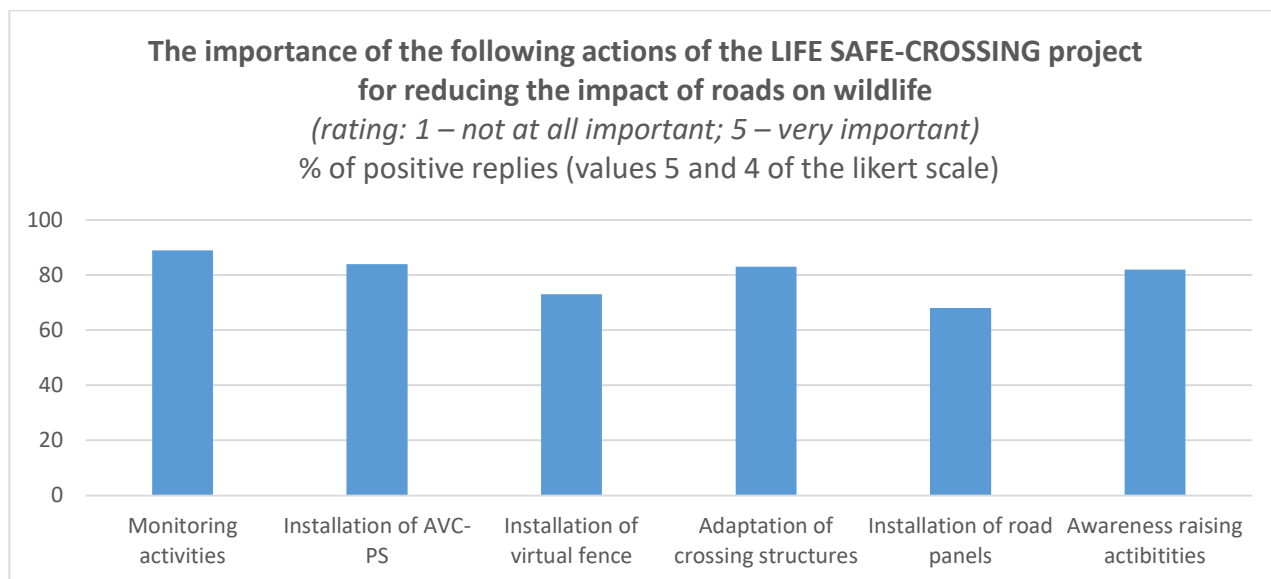


Figure 4. Replies to the question: “Please rate the importance of the following actions of the LIFE SAFE-CROSSING project for reducing the impact of roads on wildlife”(rating: 1 – not at all important; 5 – very important). The bars are the percentages of the replies indicating values 4 or 5.

Overall, 81% of the respondents considered the LIFE SAFE-CROSSING project successful or very successful to reduce the impact of roads on wildlife.

Considering the reply to the question about which actions of the project respondents would consider useful in their own respective areas, it is interesting to underline that 72% of people selected the adaptation of existing crossing structures, 67% awareness raising activities, 62% the monitoring activities and the installation of of the Animal-Vehicle Collision Prevention System, 52% the installation of road panels, and 32% indicated the installation of virtual fences to be considered in their area.

The main obstacles for the implementation of the activities of the LIFE SAFE-CROSSING project in its own area, 50% of the respondents indicated the lack of financial resources as the most relevant hindering factors, followed by lack of political willingness (23%), difficulties in permit processes (17%) and inapt staff (12%). A number of respondents (13%) additionally noted lack of awareness, lack of involvement, lack of complex planning approaches and lack of communication actions as the main obstacles.

The last question was an open ended one related to what other actions the respondents thought should be done to face the issue of the impact of roads on biodiversity. A variety of aspects were mentioned by the respondents, ranging from the construction of overpasses, a better control of the road safety (speed limit) and the need of cooperation among public authorities to integrate biodiversity conservation in planning and maintenance of linear infrastructures. Once again information campaigns and awareness raising activities were considered important to promote a more responsible driving behavior. A consistent theme throughout the above noted efforts was the importance of persistence and long-term commitment.

5. General considerations

The results of the survey clearly showed that the LIFE SAFE-CROSSING project was considered an important initiative to face the issue of the impact of linear infrastructures on biodiversity. It was generally recognized that the project activities covered the main important aspects of this problem, and the solution implemented have a great potentiality to be replicated outside project area.

The experience gained in each country of the project can be considered a sort of starting point to go head in order to continue working to reduce wildlife road mortality and to reduce habitat fragmentation cause by roads. This means to implement practical solutions, like the installation of the AVC-PS and the virtual fence, but also to invest more effort and resources in education and information campaigns to raise awareness among citizens and interest groups about the importance of the issue of the impact of linear infrastructure and vehicle traffic on biodiversity. The future challenge is to plan a mobility system that is compatible with the needs of nature conservation.

ANNEX 1

Questionnaire used to evaluate the project

Survey for Stakeholders of the LIFE Safe Crossing project

We are conducting a survey about the socio-economic impact of the LIFE SAFE CROSSING project, and we would like to ask for your contribution to this research.

The survey should take less than 10 minutes to fill out.

Data policy: All relevant data will only be displayed in a cumulative form. The collected data will only be used for research purposes within the LIFE SAFE CROSSING project. For using the data you provided we will ask for your consent at the end of the survey. Should you have any questions about the research and data collection, please contact Annette Mertens: mertens.annette@gmail.com

Thank you for your help and contribution!

1. How important do you think is the problem of animals getting killed on roads? (1 is not at all important and 5 is very important)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. How important do you think is the fragmentation of habitats caused by roads? (1 is not at all important and 5 is very important)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. How important do you think is the LIFE SAFE-CROSSING project to face the issue of the impact of roads on biodiversity? (1 is not at all important and 5 is very important)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. Please rate the importance of the following actions of the LIFE SAFE-CROSSING project for reducing the impact of roads on wildlife (*rating: 1 – not at all important; 5 – very important*)

	1	2	3	4	5
Monitoring activities (e.g road mortality, crossing structures)					
Installation of Animal-Vehicle Collision prevention Systems					
Installation of virtual fence					
Adaptation of underpasses					
Installation of road panels					
Road-side interventions (only for Spain, other countries please delete this!)					
Awareness raising activities (production of info materials, public meetings, activity with driving schools...)					

5. How successful do you consider the LIFE SAFE-CROSSING project to reduce the impact of roads on wildlife? (*1 is not at all successful and 5 is very successful*)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. What other benefits of the project do you consider important? Please add these below: _____

7. Which actions of the LIFE SAFE-CROSSING project would you like to implement in your territory?

8. Which are the main obstacles for implementing the activities of the LIFE SAFE-CROSSING project you would be interested in? (*you can tick more than one option*)

- ☐ Lack of financial availability
- ☐ Lack of competent staff
- ☐ Difficulty to achieve relevant permits
- ☐ Lack of political willingness inside your organization

Other: _____

9. What other actions do you think should be done to face the issue of the impact of roads on biodiversity?

10. Your organization (optional):

Consent

The information derived from this survey is purely used for the impact assessment study of the project. The data will only be available in a cumulative format, however, in some cases information per country/organization will be demonstrated in which case you/your organization responses may be identifiable. In case you do not consent, data however will not be displayed in the assessment study in this format. Identifiable data will be safely stored in password protected storage/devices until it is purged until the end of the project. In case you would like to withdraw your survey responses (you can do so before 31 July 2023) or have any questions or concerns in terms of using the data or displaying it, please contact us by writing an email to: mertens.annette@gmail.com

Please check the boxes of the below statements if you agree with them.

I understand the purpose of the survey and its data usage (solely for the project's impact assessment purpose).

☐ Yes

If you provided your organization - I understand that by filling out the organization information, I may be identifiable (if understood, please tick the box below).

☐ Yes

If you provided your organization - I consent this data to be used in the impact assessment study by listing the organization (if agreed, please tick the box below).

☐ Yes