MAIN THREATS TO THE HABITATS/SPECIES TARGETED WITHIN THE SITES INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT (NOT FOR NA3)

- **Threat no. 1:**

Name of the threat: **Shortage of accurate data on the target area.**

Description: Retezat Mountains are quite well studied; most of their wildlife is already recorded. In spite of this fact there is little knowledge on most representative habitats from the alpine area where no systematic and synecological analyses were conducted.

Location (if relevant): The whole project site.

Impact on habitats/species (quantify if possible): Unique flora and fauna species are vanishing without even understanding exactly their ecological significance.

- **Threat no. 2:**

Name of the threat: **Overgrazing and biodiversity loss.**

Description: Traditional pastoral practices were subjected to severe alterations during communist regime. Artificial augmentation of sheep flocks, without any objective scientific prior analysis and modification of traditional practices has driven to a swift degradation of alpine pastures and a pauperisation of biological diversity.

Prior 1989 the governmental program for the enhancement of productivity of alpine grassland stated a swift reduction of dwarf-pine habitats and the rapid increase of alpine grasslands. As a consequence important soil creep and erosion phenomena appeared.

In the last 50 years most of alpine habitats were subject to severe anthropic alteration.

Location (if relevant): Important perimeters from the project implementation area.

Location of shepherd-shelter in alpine zones generates a permanent pressure upon large carnivores, and indirectly on the population of herbivorous species and therefore the fragile alpine equilibrium.

Impact on habitats/species (quantify if possible): Characteristic alpine species of flora and fauna are becoming scarce, dwellers of remote areas surviving in exceptional cases.

It is estimated that about 30% of the dwarf-pine habitats from Retezat Mountains were destroyed since ‘70s. These habitats have a particular importance for megacharismatic species such as the bear (*Ursus arctos*), whose number decreased due to a combination of factors, including the reduction of this habitat.

Therefore certain distinctive population of species such as *Rupicapra rupicapra, Aquila chrysaetos, Prunella collaris, Anthus spinoletta, Eremophila alpestris*
declined. For some species such as
Gypaetus barbatus auratus, Gyps fulvus, Aegypius monachus
this process was fatal, leading to their extinction.

- **Threat no. 3:**

Name of the threat: **Tourism and other abusive practices.**

Description: Retezat Mountains represent one of the most desired hollyday destinations, a must for the expert trackers and an eternal appeal for all pristine nature enthusiasts.

Up to 25,000 tourists are visiting these mountains every year, most of them rushing towards unique alpine territories.

Every year more then 10,000 kg of waste are collected from the areas visited by tourists. Important surfaces of dwarf-pine are abusively cut or accidentally/criminally burned.

Glacial lakes and springs are contaminated with leftovers.

But the list of direct and indirect impacts is much more extensive and the effects are difficult to manage.

Along tourism several other abusive practices such as poaching, secondary products foraging, sport events, etc., have an evident detrimental impact.

Location (if relevant): The whole project site and its surroundings.

Impact on habitats/species (quantify if possible): Tourism practices are creating major disturbances on wildlife. Chamois, bears, birds, but also smaller vertebrates and invertebrates are suffering. Also plants, particularly edelweiss, gentians, snowbells, rhododendron, to name only a few species, are systematically collected, in spite of the official interdiction of this practice.

Important natural resources (berries, mushrooms, etc) holding a key role within food chains are steadily harvested. Poaching is responsible for the severe decline of chamois, bears, capercaillie populations as well.

- **Threat no. 4:**

Name of the threat: **Alien species.**

Description: Introduction of some species such as *Marmota marmota*, *Salmo trutta lacustris,* weeds (thistle and bedstraw species) had and still has a major impact on native species, restricting their primary areal by competition or habitat alteration.

Location (if relevant): Most of the project site and its surroundings.

Impact on habitats/species (quantify if possible): Productivity of grasslands is severely reduced, decreasing their support capacity and therefore the whole trophic pyramid being affected, the food-chains turn out to become simplified. Endemic amphibian taxa are directly affected, their population becoming exceptionally rare.

- **Threat no. 5:**

Name of threat: **Unappropriate management practice for the listed habitats and species.**

Description: Lack of a broad perception of all issues related to alpine habitats had

guided to improper decisions and management solutions that led to a swift wildlife decline.

Poisoning measure against predators led to a swift decline of top predators, scavenger species, etc, but led to an important disturbance of trophic chains as well, altering inter-specific relations.

Location (if relevant): The whole project site.

Impact on habitats/species (quantify if possible): about 50% of alpine habitats are degraded within project area and more then 10,000 ha outside project perimeter were affected.

- **Threat no. 6:**

Name of the threat: **Lack of an integrated wildlife monitoring and survey system for the listed habitats and species.**

Description: In order to reveal the effectiveness of the actions, to further enhance the management plan and to correlate future activities, an integrated wildlife monitoring and survey system will be established. The system is supposed to function as an alarming chain, targeting a definite set of bioindicator species as “triggering” elements.

Climate change and trend will be also perceivable subsequent implementation of such a system relying on bioindicator species.

Location (if relevant): The whole project site.

Impact on habitats/species (quantify if possible): an improved, precise and sensitive system of wildlife monitoring and survey will enable a better correlation of long-term conservation efforts.

- **Threat no. 7:**

Name of the threat: **Deficiency in information on damaging practices.**

Description: Lack of proficient and objective information represents one of the major challenges bringing a significant contribution to the persistence of damaging practices.

Location (if relevant): The whole project site and its surroundings.

Impact on habitats/species (quantify if possible): Persistence of numberous wrong practices correlated to the set of traditional impacts such as poaching, trapping, secondary products foraging strongly affects the wildlife and the fragile alpine habitats.