

ACT: Advancing Transformative Governance through Transboundary Conservation and Collaborative Learning

How do we govern ecosystems that stretch across national borders - and do so in a way that not only protects nature but transforms how societies interact with it? The **ACT** project tackles this question by focusing on *transformative governance* in *Transboundary Conservation Areas* (TBCAs) - regions where ecological systems don't stop at political boundaries. These areas are rich in biodiversity but often suffer from fragmented management, conflicting policies, and competing interests among countries, stakeholders, and communities.

ACT is grounded in the idea that tackling biodiversity loss requires more than just better laws or enforcement - it requires a shift in how decisions are made. *Transformative governance* embraces complexity, fosters inclusive participation, adapts to change, and integrates diverse types of knowledge, from scientific evidence to Indigenous and local perspectives. ACT seeks to catalyse such governance models through both theory and practice.

The project will be implemented in four TBCAs across Europe and South Africa, each characterized by unique ecological, historical, socio-political, and economic dynamics. These case studies will address issues like cross-border forest and water governance, sustainable livelihoods, traditional rights of Indigenous Peoples, and governance in post-conflict landscapes. By doing so, ACT investigates how institutional diversity and social-ecological complexity shape governance outcomes.

ACT combines rigorous scientific methods with participatory approaches. Tools include the IUCN WCPA Diagnostic Tool for transboundary planning, behavioural science-informed workshops, and an innovative social science *toolkit* designed to operationalize and measure abstract governance concepts like trust, legitimacy, equity, and resilience. Data will be collected using qualitative and quantitative methods, enabling both site-specific analysis and cross-case comparison.

Outcomes will include not only practical recommendations and site-based strategies to enhance conservation outcomes, but also broader insights into how governance systems can shift toward more sustainable, equitable, and biodiversity-friendly futures. Comparative analysis across cases will inform a framework for replicability and scalability, supported by policy briefs, governance guidelines, and resilience strategies.

ACT is led by an interdisciplinary consortium from Hungary, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and South Africa. Drawing from social, natural, and political sciences, the project aligns with the goals of the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework** - contributing to a global movement to halt and reverse biodiversity loss through deep, systemic change.