



National specific procedures to ensure Old Growth Forest protection **Challenges, achievements & way forward**

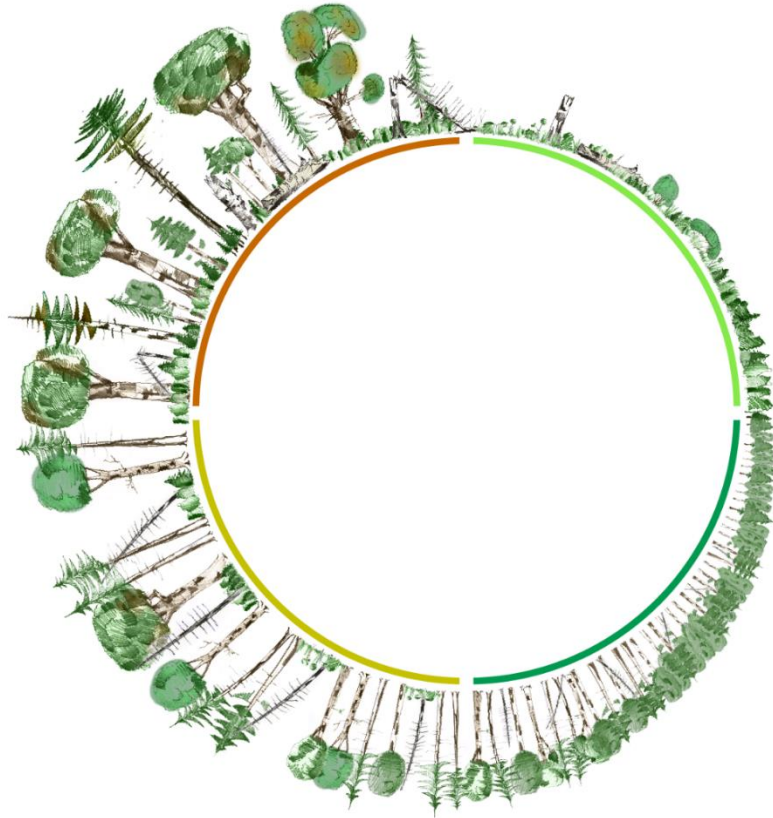
Radu Vlad - WWF Romania



The Naturalness of the Forest ecosystem

- Naturally regenerated forests
- Structure and native tree species
- Natural processes - unique ecological features
- No significant human influence

*very **old forests** that emerged and developed under the influence of **natural factors** where the **structure, diversity and ecosystem processes** have remained untouched by **significant** direct or indirect human influence*



Definition

- Virgin forest
- Cvasi-virgin forest

Criteria & indicators for their rapid assessment:

Criterion Naturalness:

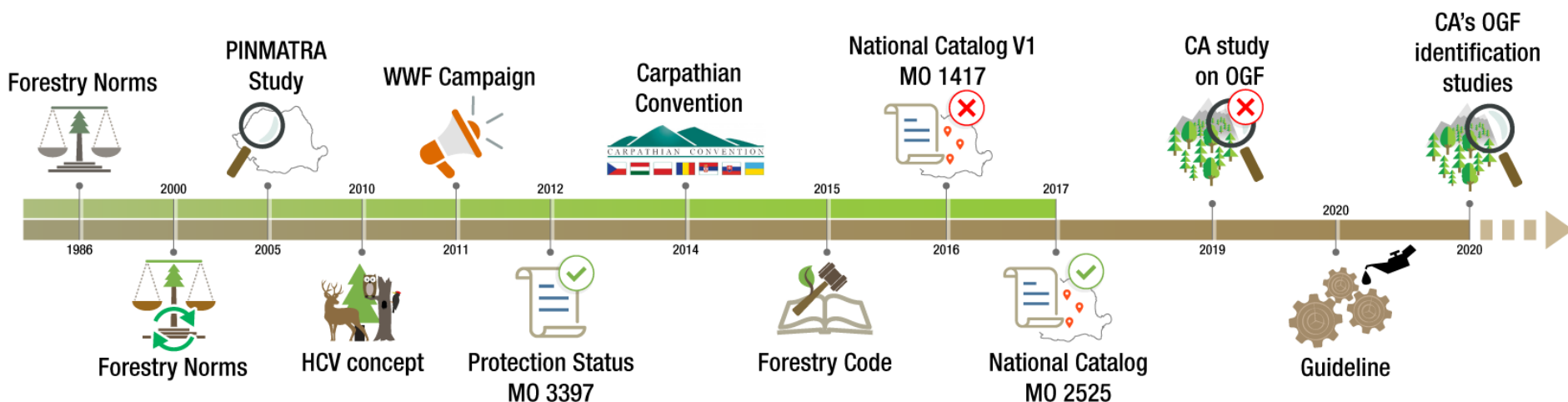
- Species composition;
- Structure;
- Ages;
- Deadwood;
- Quantifying “insignificant” human influence.

Criterion Area & Delimitation

- Area of forest plot stand;
- Shape of forest plot stand and soil;
- Surrounding boundaries



Overview





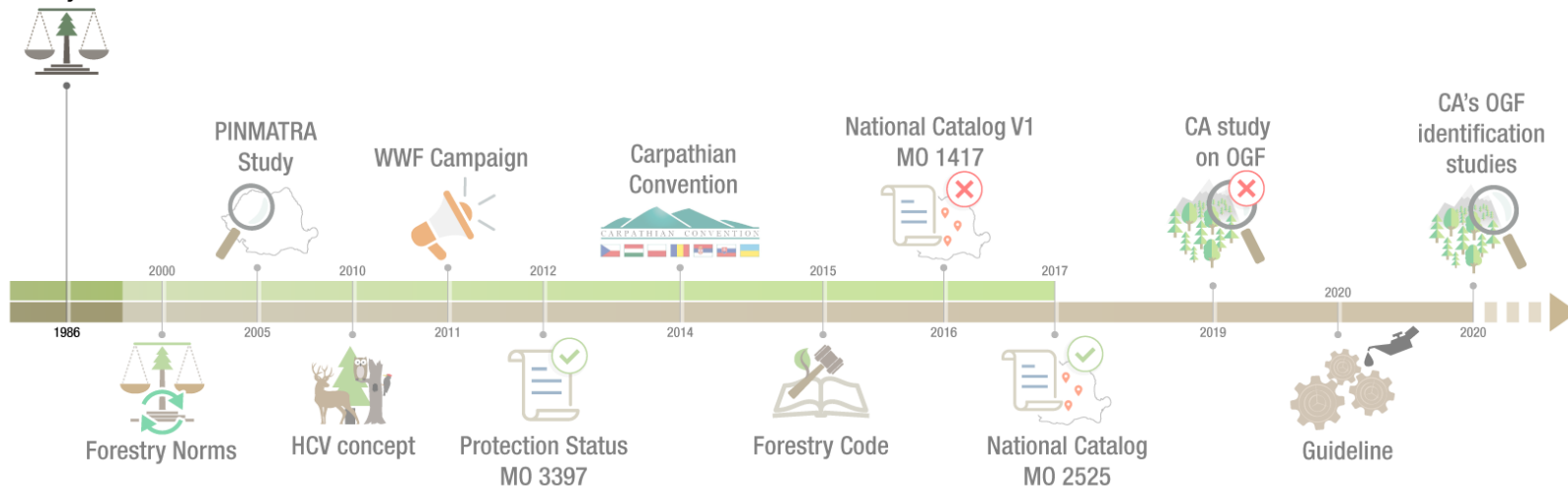
Forestry Norms

1986



- ✓ the academic environment draws attention to their importance
- ✓ formal recognition of OGF importance
- ✓ functional category 1-5J
- ✗ no clear identification criteria
- ✗ no strict protection regime

Forestry Norms

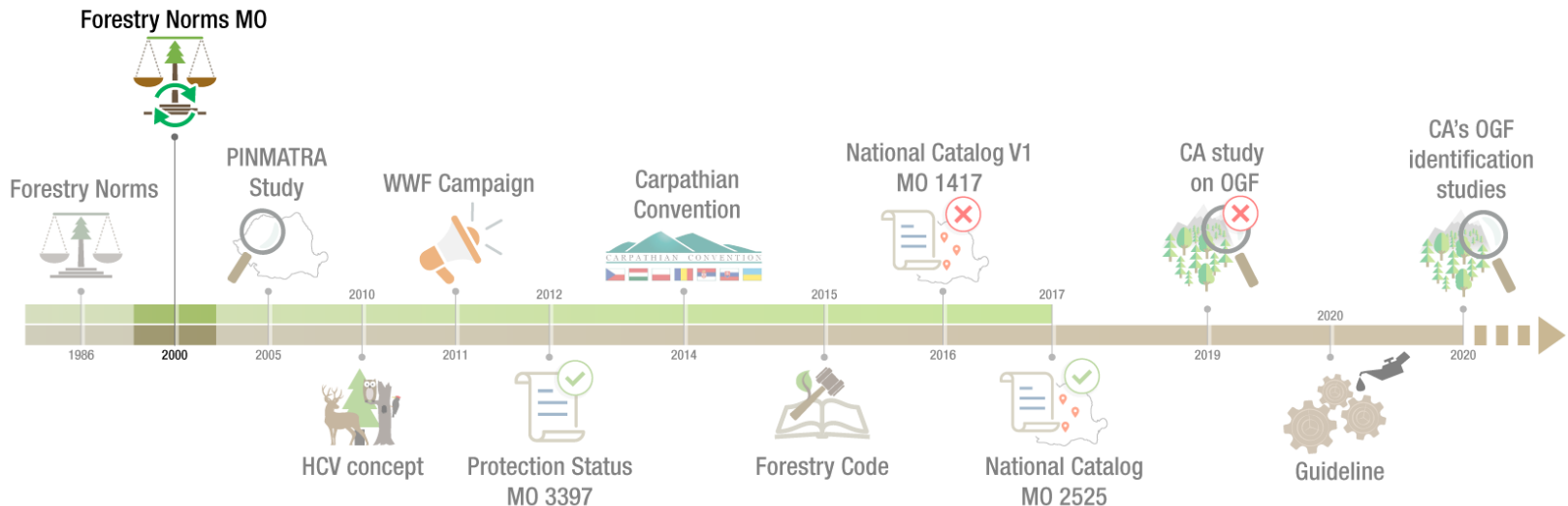




Forestry Norms

2000

- ✓ same functional system;
- ✓ thousands of hectares are already preserved
- ✓ the academic environment draws attention to the importance
- ✗ still no clear identification criteria
- ✗ increasing the risks in light of the chaotic restitution process;

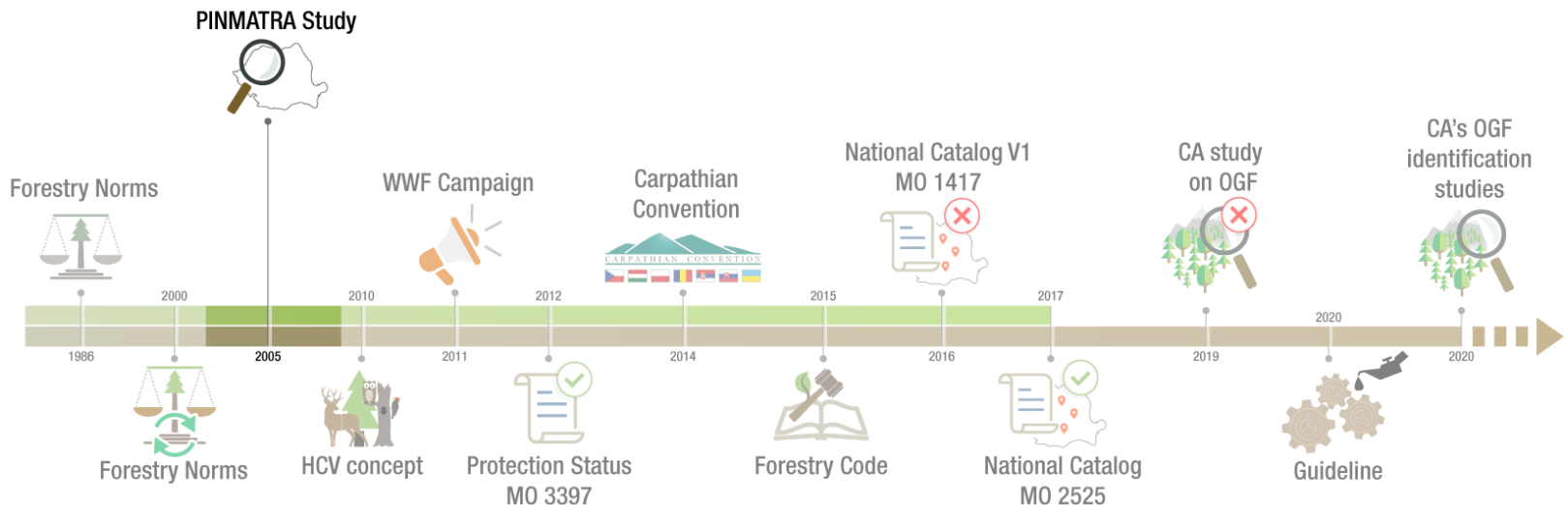
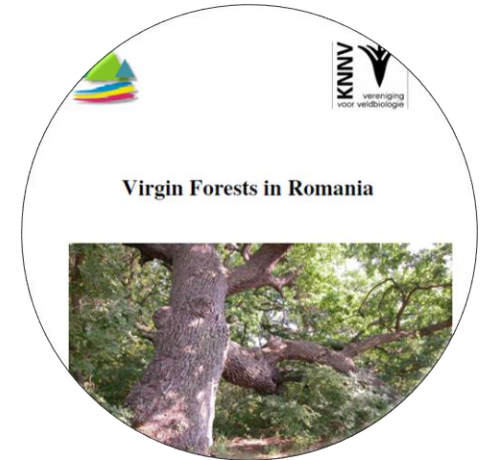




PINMATRA Study

2005

- ✓ detailed identification criteria and indicators;
- ✓ performed using centralized ICAS database on all FMPs
- ✓ designed to support the designation process of Natura 2000 sites (> 80% became part of the Nature 2000).
- ✗ preliminary assessment - the study is more a kind of desktop research
- ✗ final results are not formally approved by the ICAS scientific council;
- ✗ results are not fully transparently publish;
- ✗ decision makers are not informed.

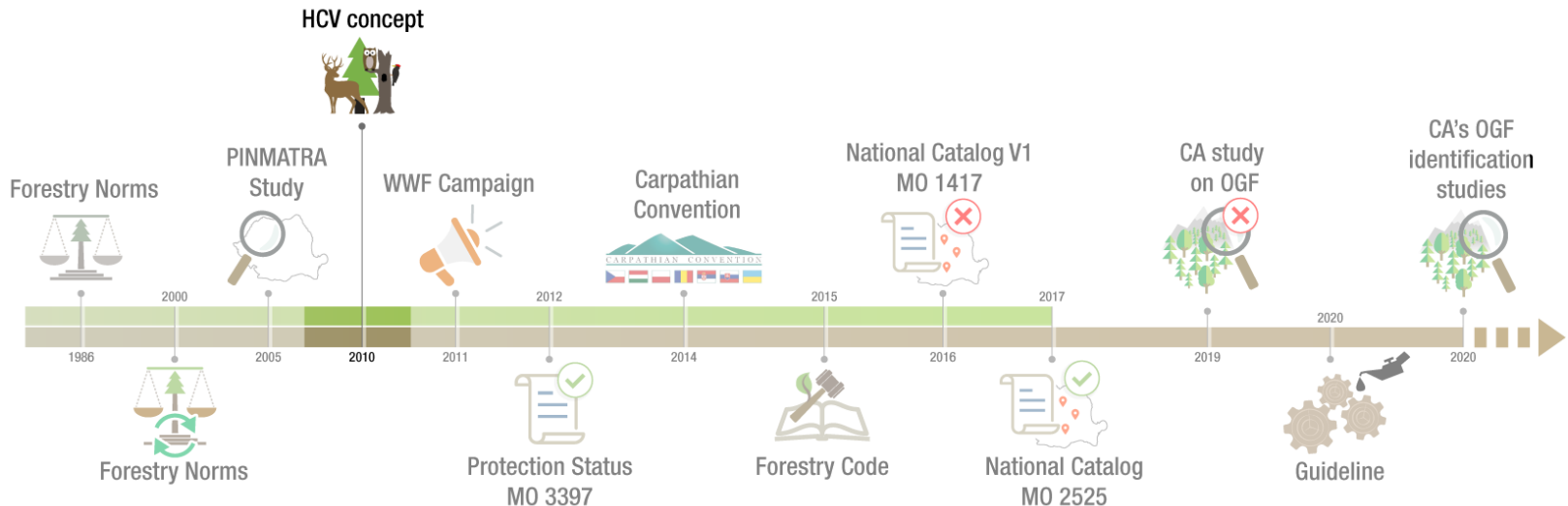




HCV concept 2010



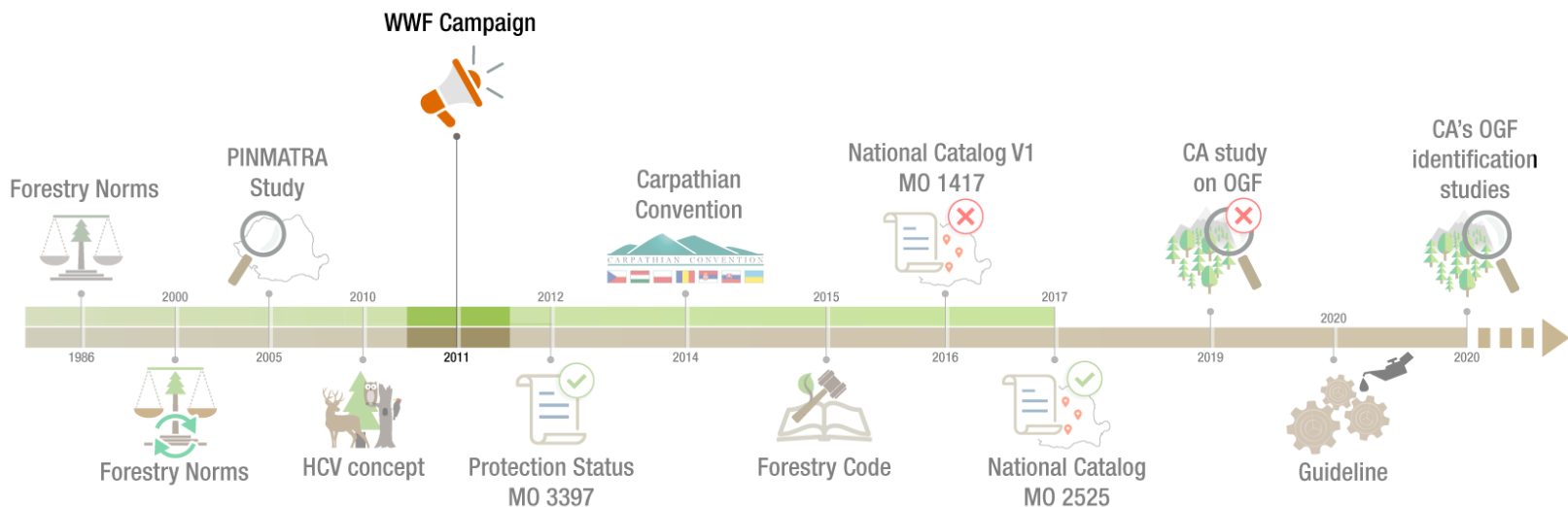
- ✓ criteria and indicators harmonized with the PINMATRA ones;
- ✓ thousand of ha are protected on a voluntary basis through FSC® certification
- ✓ > 3000 only in WWF PCAs;;
- ✗ voluntary mechanism
- ✗ there are few FSC® certified areas





WWF Campaign 2011

- ✓ petition supported by 100.000 signatures in a month;
- ✓ CA assume to amend the Forest Norms to ensure their protection;
- ✓ MoU for establishing the National Catalogue of Virgin and Cvasi-virgin Forests – as an evidence and management tool to protect OGF.
- ✓ Since it was not a clear identification of the OGF the only chance to speed up the process was to make it more transparent and participatory - to allow interested stakeholders to bring their contribution.

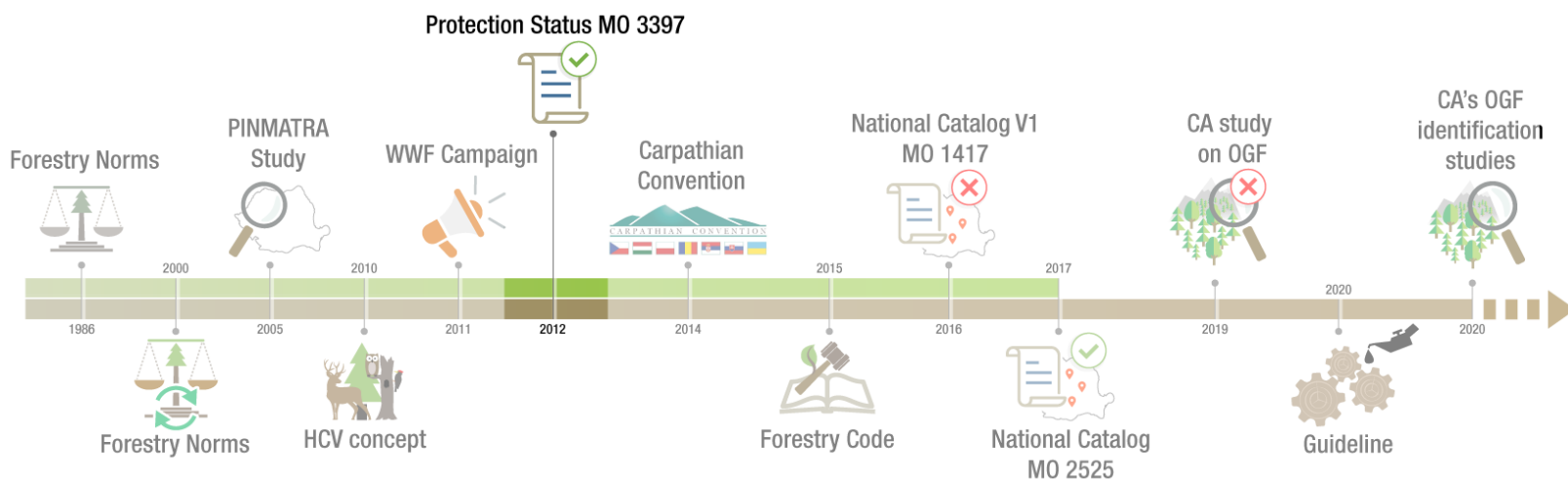




Protection Status – MO 3397

2012

- ✓ Participatory & transparent process for setting up the identif. criteria;
- ✓ Strict protection regime is enforced
- ✓ Criteria and indicators harmonized with PINMATRA
- ✗ FMP revision is the only way to ensure OGF protection
- ✗ A moratorium is established for PINMATRA areas – but only for those with a production role (15%)
- ✗ PINMATRA results are not officially published - moratorium cannot be applied
- ✗ NO functional compensatory mechanism for private owners.

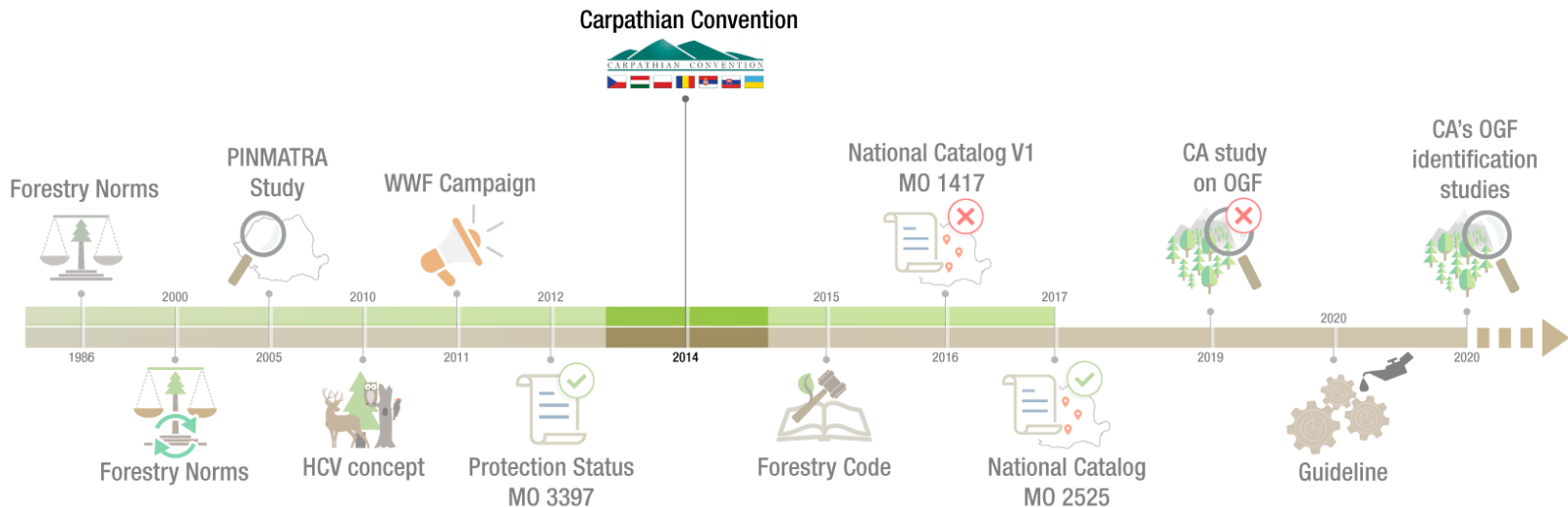




Carpathian Convention

2014

- ✓ identification criteria are established for virgin forest
- ✓ developed by groups of experts
- ✓ finally assumed by the official representatives of the Carpathian countries
- ✓ very much in line with the RO legislation provisions
- ✗ does not have legal levers to speed up the process in Romania.

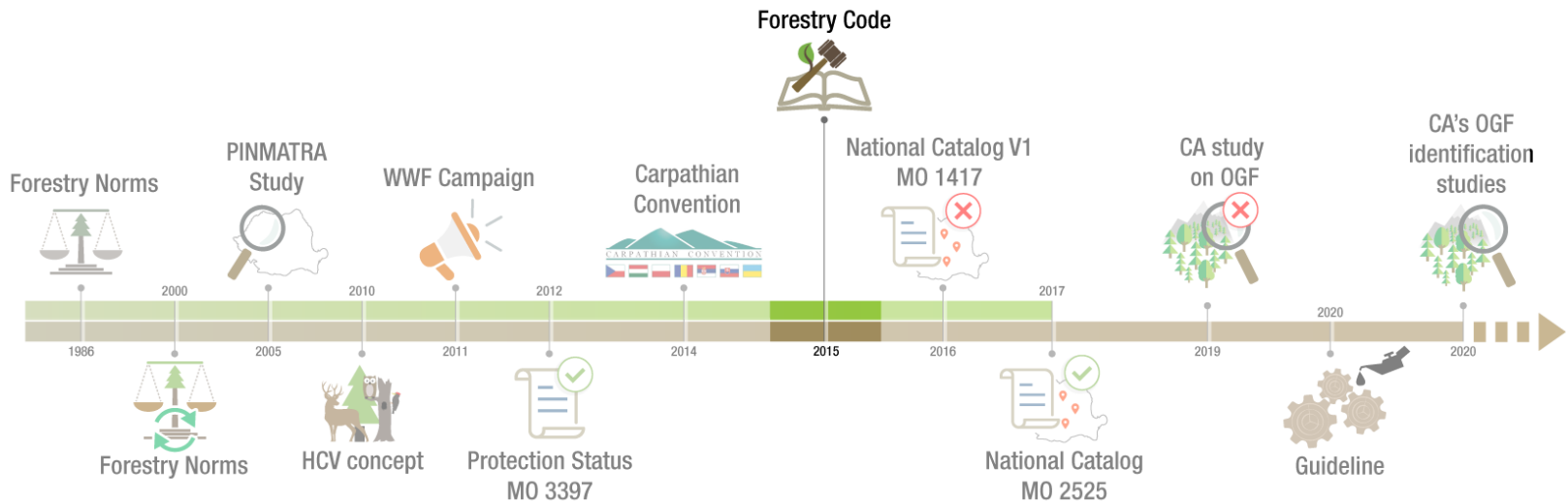




Forestry Code

2015

- ✓ The protection of virgin forests is strengthened by law provisions;
- ✓ Imposes the establishment of the National Catalog as a tool for evidence and management of virgin and quasi-virgin forests.
- ✗ The legal procedures (to make the process more transparent and dynamic) must wait for the elaboration of a Ministerial Order



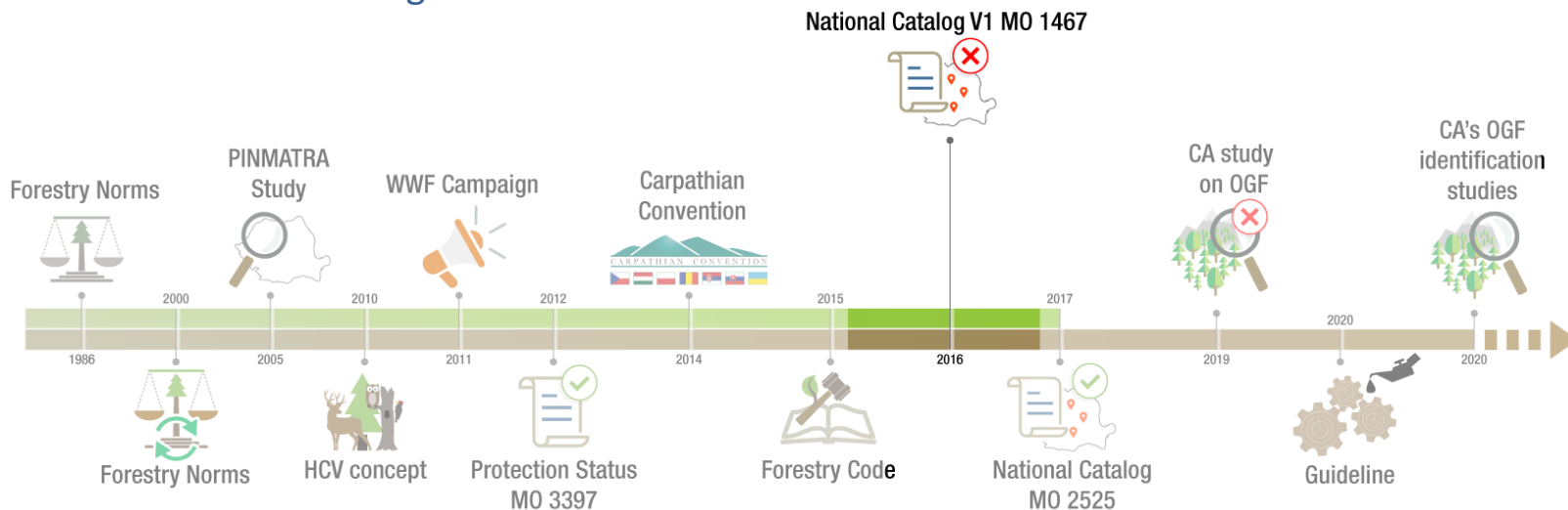


National Catalog V1 MO 1467

2016



- ✓ the PINPATRA results are officially published by CA
- ✓ the moratorium procedures can be formally implemented (relevant only for 15%);
- ✓ forest management design entities can start considering the PINMATRA results
- ✓ a national WG is formed to develop the National Catalogue procedure (NGOs, ICAS, CA, Forest universities, Forest Administrator, Experts).
- ✓ the 1st version of the National Catalog of is published – MO 1417;
- ✗ the MO provisions have loopholes that could undermine its scope;
- ✗ the normative act is being rebuilt

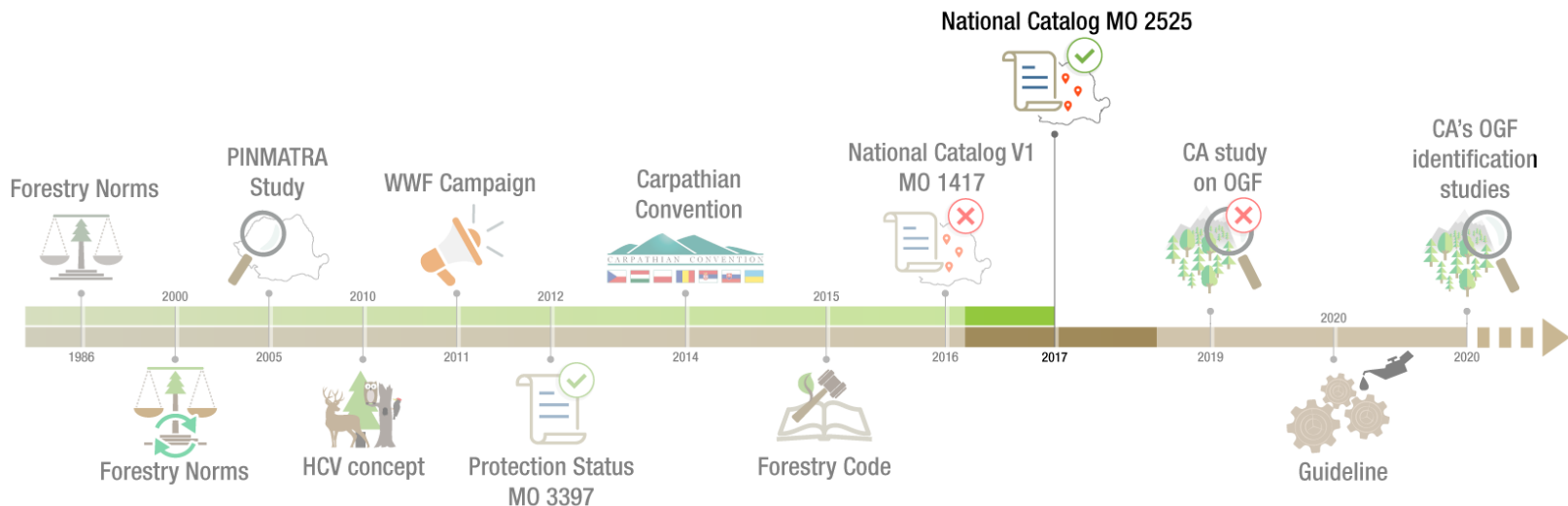




National Catalog MO 2525

2017

- ✓ new participatory and transparent approach - anyone can practically get involved
- ✓ are established 2 moratoriums (all PINMATRA & any formally submitted study)
- ✓ new clarifications for identification criteria
(based from the ones approved by Carpathian Convention)
- ✗ the necessary procedures are quite complex
- ✗ the process is progressing very slowly
- ✗ low capacity of CA for a proper implementation
- ✗ still NO functional compensatory mechanism for private owners.

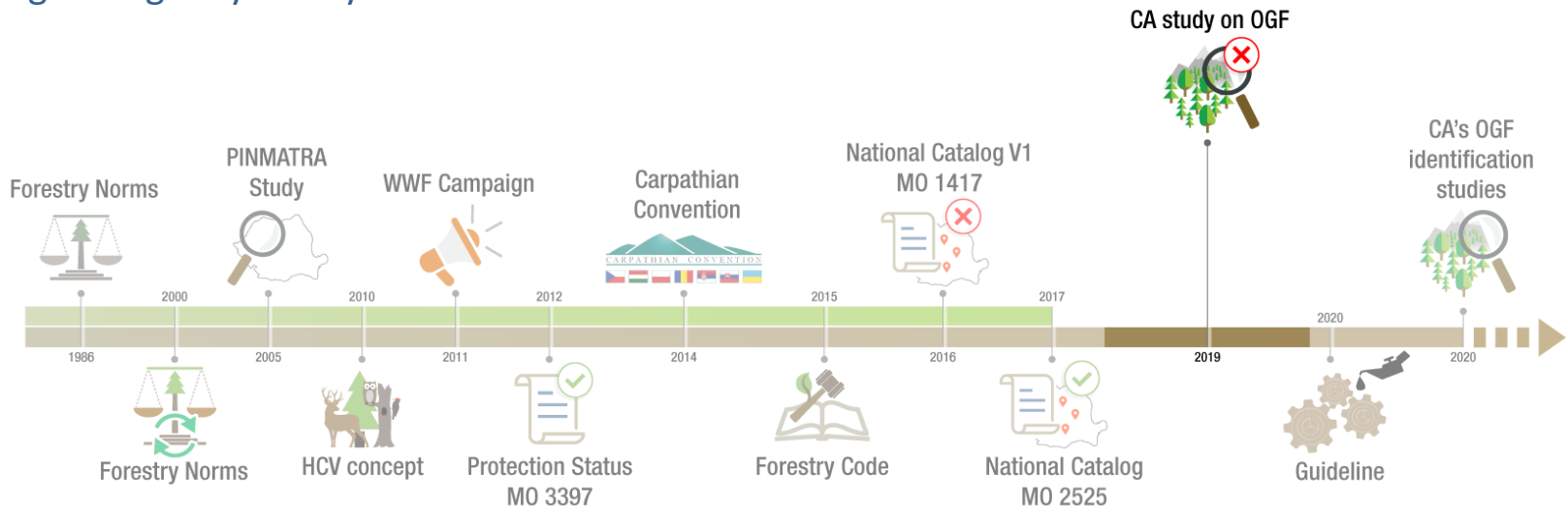




1st attempt - CA study on OGF

2019

- ✓ pre-assessment of over 300,000 ha of potential OGF is coordinated by CA
- ✓ participatory and transparent process
- ✓ public consultation for potential OGF identification - areas to be included in the scope of the field evaluations – coordinated by CA;
- ✓ public tender for the OGF identification is launched
- ✗ no one participates in the auction
- ✗ procedures to ensure protection of the already identified OGF are progressing very slowly

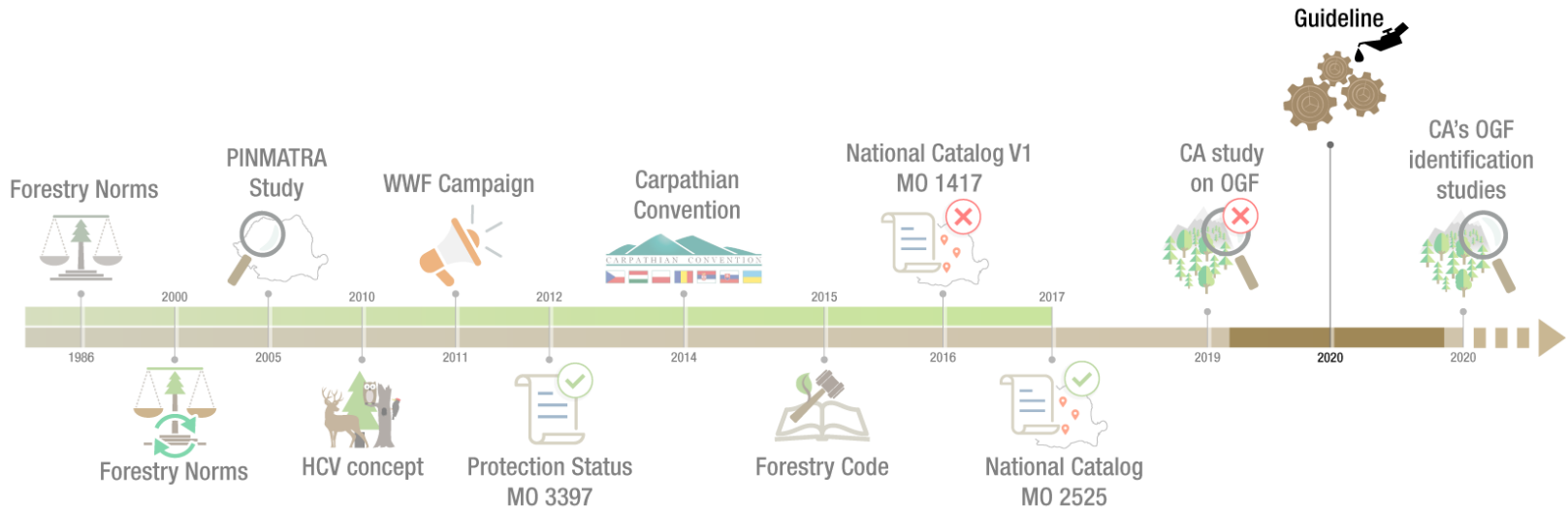




Guideline 2020



- ✓ clarifying procedures aiming to have a harmonized implementation
- ✓ transparent and participatory process
- ✗ cannot be clarified all the terms and procedures – it's finally a matter of assumption
- ✗ COVID context slow down the process

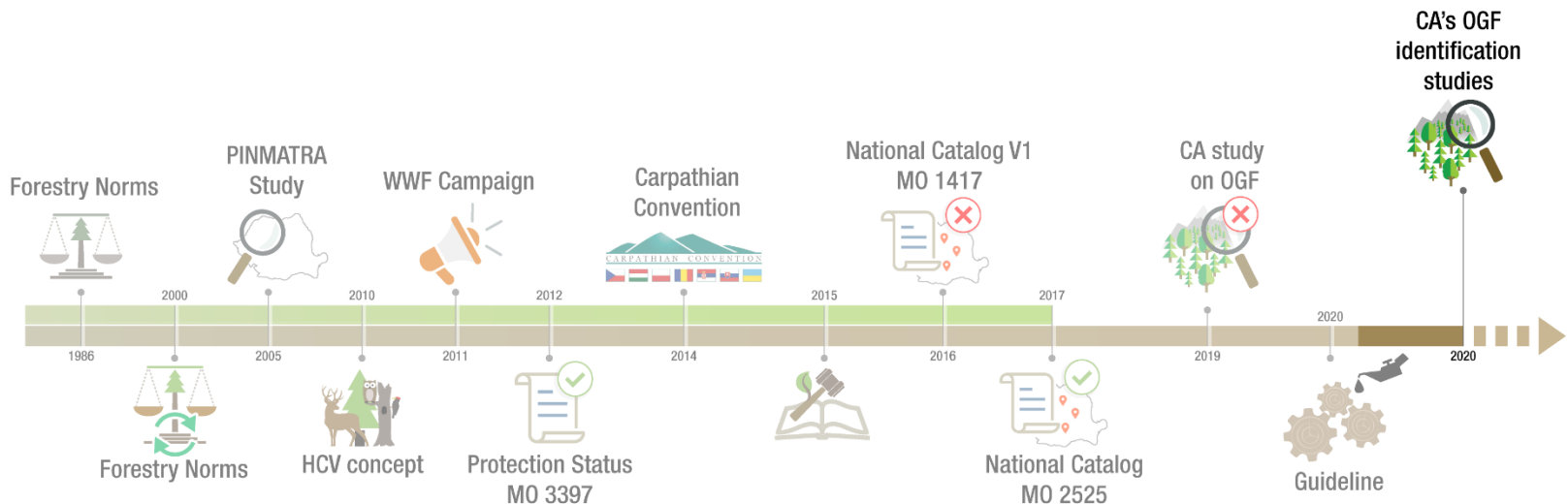




CA's OGF identification studies 2020



- ✓ transparent and participatory process
- ✓ public consultation for identification of potential OGF areas to be included under the scope of the study (40,000 ha)
- ✓ moratorium to put on hold any harvesting authorization
- ✓ teams of specialists
- ✗ according to the ToRs we still need do wait one more year.



National specific procedures to ensure Old Growth Forest protection - challenges & achievements

Actual status - Where we are now?

- OGF in the National Catalogue:

Categorie de ecosistem	Suprafata
Cvasi-virgin forest	36421,38
Virgine forests	7401,98
Total	43823.36 ha

- Ongoing approval procedure: 16.509,18 ha (studies already registered)
- New OGF identified: 6.500 ha (WWF studies not yet registered – WWF)
- Ongoing field identification: 40.000 ha only by the CA
- Still opened procedure for new identifications.

Preliminary assessment	Field evaluated area	OGF identified
600,000 ha	155,000 ha	60,000 ha



Old Growth Forest protection – way forwards



Old Growth Forest protection – way forwards



Competent authorities

- new forest policy vision
- need to speed up the implementation's procedure
- ensure functional compensation mechanisms
- “additionality” needs to be clarified
- in order to be able to support these efforts also from EU funds

Old Growth Forest protection – way forwards



Civil servants

- Must strive to strengthen the “rule of law”
- must believe in the need to protect these values

Old Growth Forest protection – way forwards



Forest owners and forest administrators

- to have a stronger voice - compensation mechanisms derives from EU & National core values
- to understand the importance of these forests and to be more open, more pro-active for enabling their protection
- finally they do it also for themselves and for the local communities they belong to.

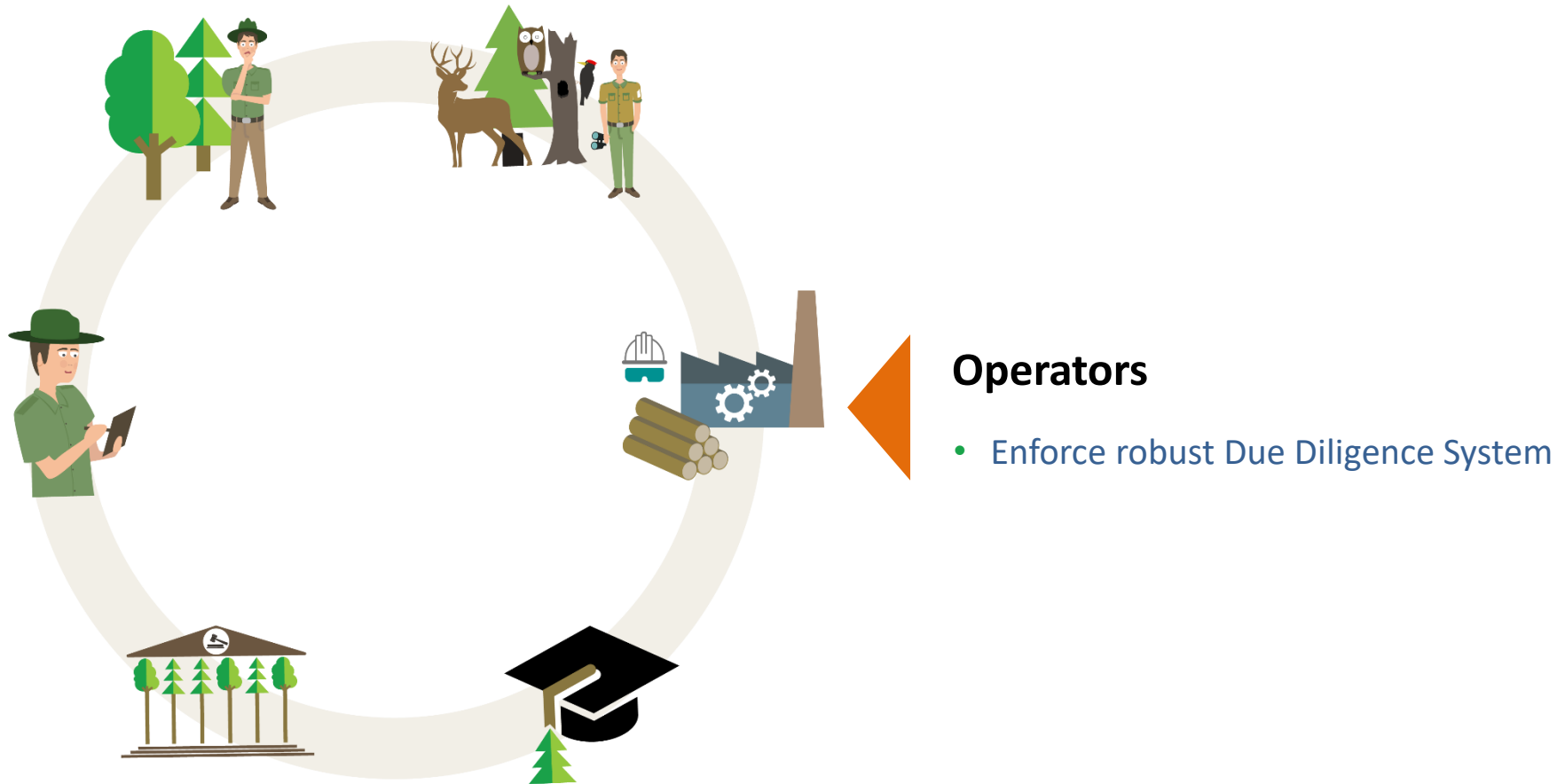
Old Growth Forest protection – way forwards



PA administrator & NGOs

- beside the “Wach Dog” role – which is critical important;
- be proactively involved in OGF identification and following legal procedure to ensure their protection
- it is difficult but still very few have assumed this responsibility.
- apart from the forest administrators who were obliged to protect these forests, very few protected areas administrator or NGOs were proactively involved following the legal procedures (less than 10 entities).
- raising awareness & supporting local green business initiatives – local communities is always the key driver for their long term protection.

Old Growth Forest protection – way forwards



Old Growth Forest protection – way forwards



Academic environment

- To decipher the secrets of the forest universe;
- To emphasize their importance;
- Help us learn how to better manage our forests



Thank you!

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