



Ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss increase the risk of emerging and spreading infectious diseases affecting wildlife, domestic animals, and humans. Land-use change transforms diverse habitats into homogeneous and impoverished landscapes, where generalist species and vectors of zoonotic diseases thrive.

The interdisciplinary **EU-project ZOE**, with 7 European and 4 Latin American partners, aims to understand how deforestation and biodiversity loss influence the emergence of zoonoses and vector-borne diseases, while highlighting the protective role of forest ecosystem restoration. The consortium follows a **One Health** approach, integrating human, animal, and environmental health.

WP2: Social sciences and zoonoses

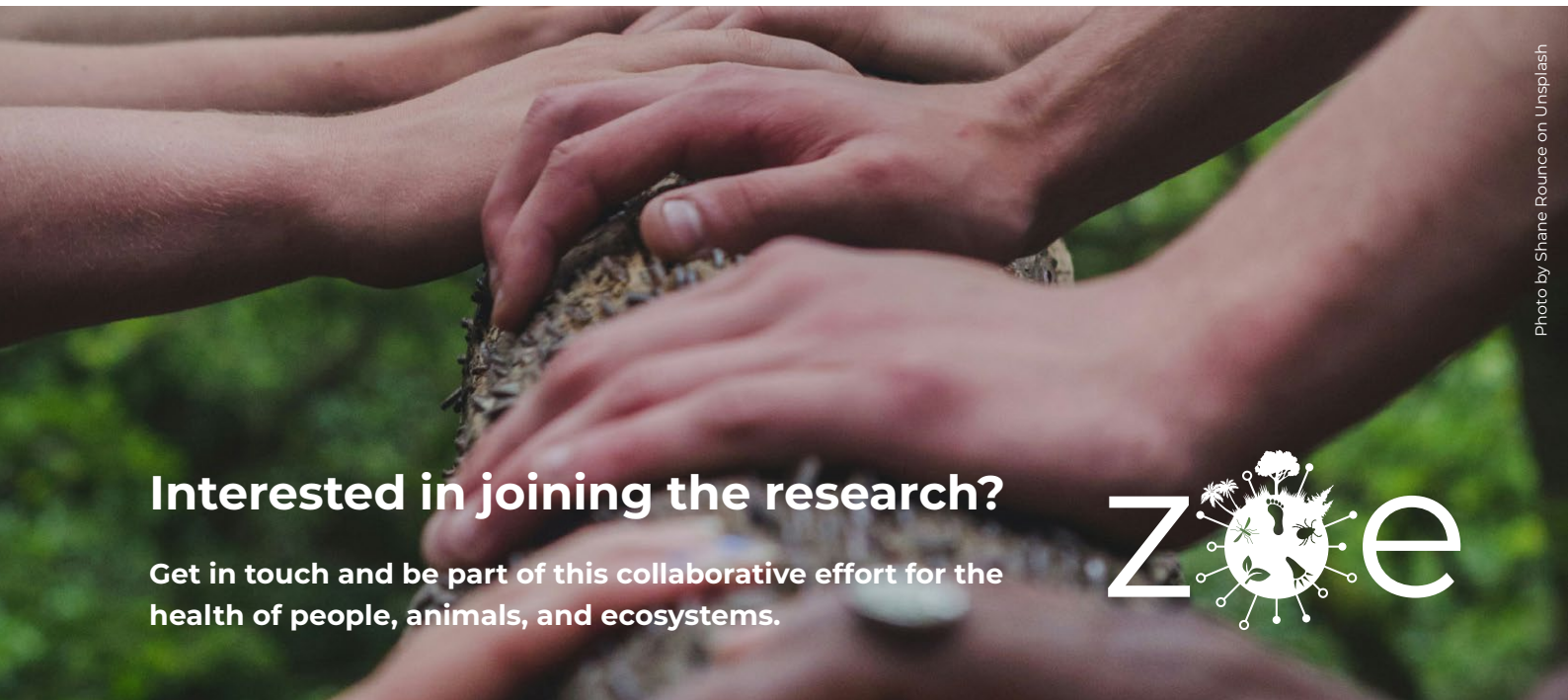
WP2 investigates the social, cultural, and economic factors influencing the emergence, spread, and prevention of diseases in communities located near forest areas. The team, led by **Adina Dumitru (Universidade da Coruña)** and **Kerstin Krellenberg (Wien University)**, includes experts in psychology, geography, sociology, and anthropology. Multiple methodologies will be applied to explore **knowledge, perceptions, and behaviors** around zoonotic diseases and their links to environmental change.

Case studies:

- Petén National Park, Tikal (Guatemala)
- El Rodeo Protected Reserve, Cantón de Mora (Costa Rica)
- Puuc Biocultural Reserve, Yucatán Peninsula (Mexico)
- Zahorské Pomoravie Protected Area (Slovakia)
- Green Karst Protected Area (Slovenia)

Research stages (2025–2027)

- 2025** ● **Workshops with experts and key informants**
Identifying social, cultural, and behavioral factors that drive environmental degradation and zoonotic risk.
- 2026** ● **Surveys and observations**
Fieldwork in productive and forest areas to assess local perceptions, practices, and strategies to cope with disease risks.
- 2027** ● **Workshops with communities and local stakeholders**
Sharing and discussing preliminary results. Co-developing strategies to strengthen livelihoods and reduce risks.
- 2027** ● **International stakeholder conference**
Gathering representatives from public institutions, NGOs, communities, academia, and nature-based enterprises. Goal: **disseminate results and build networks for biodiversity–health action.**



Interested in joining the research?

Get in touch and be part of this collaborative effort for the health of people, animals, and ecosystems.



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