



2020  
2021

INTERNATIONAL UNION  
FOR CONSERVATION  
OF NATURE

EASTERN EUROPE  
AND CENTRAL ASIA  
REGIONAL OFFICE  
BI-ANNUAL REPORT 2020–2021



Bjelašnica, Bosnia and Herzegovina © Boris Erg

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# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Boris Erg, Director of the IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia

The outburst of a global pandemic beginning of 2020 has affected our lives on all levels, as a stark reminder of the fragility of our societies and persistent environmental crisis. Coupled with biodiversity loss and climate change it has threatened the very fabric of our life, our health and security. The pandemic is a stark reminder of how unsustainably we use natural resources and a loud call to action to **place nature at the core of our recovery and development strategies going forward.**

The COVID-19 has brought us a global human tragedy with severe consequences especially for those who are already suffering the effects of environmental degradation – many with limited access to adequate healthcare or sanitation. It has also significantly impacted nature conservation around the globe, including job losses among protected area managers, reduced anti-poaching patrols and environmental protection rollbacks, as concluded by PARKS's issue 27.

Today more than ever, it is clear that our practices have caused ecological disruption, be it the direct destruction of ecosystems or the unsustainable management of natural resources. As a single approach would not bring the solution we are looking for, we should think wider. We need to keep intact more of the nature we have, manage more sustainably the resources we use, and restore more of the ecosystems we have lost. **Let us opt for stronger regional cooperation and harness the potential of multi-country initiatives while applying Nature-based Solutions for community and landscape resilience.**

Our Union remained fully committed to the health and safety of its employees and constituencies. We had to adapt our operations and project activities to this new reality, and once again, we would like to thank our donors and partners for their understanding and continuous support.

In continuation, you can find our bi-annual report that highlights 2020 and 2021 achievements.

In Central Asia, we have worked with partners on stepping up their global commitments and delivering conservation action on the ground. Broad consultations resulted in the publication of the **IUCN Thematic Report on World Heritage in Central Asia**. Living Buna and SOS Central Asia grant mechanisms resulted in the civil society and community-led conservation action on the ground, through the funding made available to carefully selected projects. Through the **Global Partnership on Aichi Target 11 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia**, we have managed to mobilise a broad network of partners and facilitate updates of the World Database of Protected Areas thus significantly contributing to achieving the global target of 17% of terrestrial protected areas in 2020. We would like to congratulate several governments for making big steps forward to this end.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 placed nature much higher as a priority in EU policy and development plans. It paved the road for the **Green Agenda for the Western Balkans**, adopted by the Western Balkans' leaders at the Sofia Summit in November 2020. In October 2021, the EU and the regional leaders endorsed the relevant Action Plan for its implementation. Together with the **Biodiversity Task Force of South East Europe**, we have been requested by the Regional Cooperation Council to develop its nature and biodiversity pillar, once again confirming the critical role regional cooperation has in achieving conservation goals.

The ADAPT, a regional initiative aimed at mitigating the negative impacts of climate change and reducing disaster risks through **Nature-based Solutions in the Western Balkans** is unfolding through numerous regional and local activities and events. The IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions is framing our work, and helping us scale up these solutions from local to global. Key steps were made in 2021 to prepare the baseline assessments for the pilot NbS projects in Serbia and Albania and move on to the on-ground implementation phase. A strong focus has been given to policy mainstreaming and capacity development.

We have worked with environmental media and civil society representatives in Albania to build their capacities when it comes to awareness raising and law enforcement. We have applied IUCN protected area standards to support the designation of Shar Mountain National Park in North Macedonia and the development of the valorisation study for Lake Ohrid and the protection study for the Vjosa River Valley in Albania. Exploring innovative approaches, we have looked into ways to use European Earth Observation capacities for environmental law enforcement. The last months of 2021 saw the launch of a project aimed at drought management in Georgia, and the start of activities related to the assessment of eco-tourism development potential in the Tajik National Park and World Heritage site, amongst others.

Our Members actively contributed to the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille. The IUCN Congress **called for a post-pandemic recovery based on nature and urged governments to invest at least 10% of global recovery funds in nature**. More than 1,500 IUCN Members adopted the Marseille Manifesto and a series of resolutions and commitments to urgently address the interlinked climate and biodiversity

crises. Among these, a resolution for IUCN to create a Climate Crisis Commission. At the COP26, for the first time, world leaders clearly recognised the interlinked relationship between global biodiversity and climate crises. IUCN welcomed this recognition, however still calling for more ambition when it comes to action.

We are proud to say that our membership network in Eastern Europe and Central Asia continues to grow at pace. We welcome Uzbekistan as a State Member joining in 2021, along with eight new non-governmental organisations as IUCN Members. We take this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank all our Members for their continued trust in IUCN's values and mission. We also recognize and thank all our partners and donors who have contributed to our work and results. **Let us jointly continue raising the bar on sustainability, with nature at the heart of all our considerations.**

Looking forward, let us hope 2022 will bring us an opportunity to rebuild better and wiser. We look forward to the first IUCN Leaders Forum, a high-level event that will convene global leaders to discuss how to build nature-positive economies and societies. We also have great expectations from a series of global conferences in 2022, in particular the CBD COP15, a long-awaited milestone that will help us define a new agreement for our planet – the post-2020 biodiversity framework, and guide our collective action in the years to come.

Yours, Boris



# IUCN AT A GLANCE

IUCN is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development, and nature conservation to take place together.

Created in 1948, IUCN has evolved into the world's largest and most diverse environmental network. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its 1,400 Member organisations, and the input of some 15,000 experts. IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. Our experts are organised into six Commissions dedicated to species survival, environmental law, protected areas, social and economic policy, ecosystem management, and education and communication.

The ability to bring together a wide range of stakeholders and present them with the latest science, objective recommendations and on-the-ground expertise drives IUCN's mission of informing and empowering conservation efforts worldwide. We provide a neutral forum in which governments, NGOs, scientists, businesses, local communities, indigenous peoples groups, faith-based organisations, and others can work together to forge and implement solutions to environmental challenges.

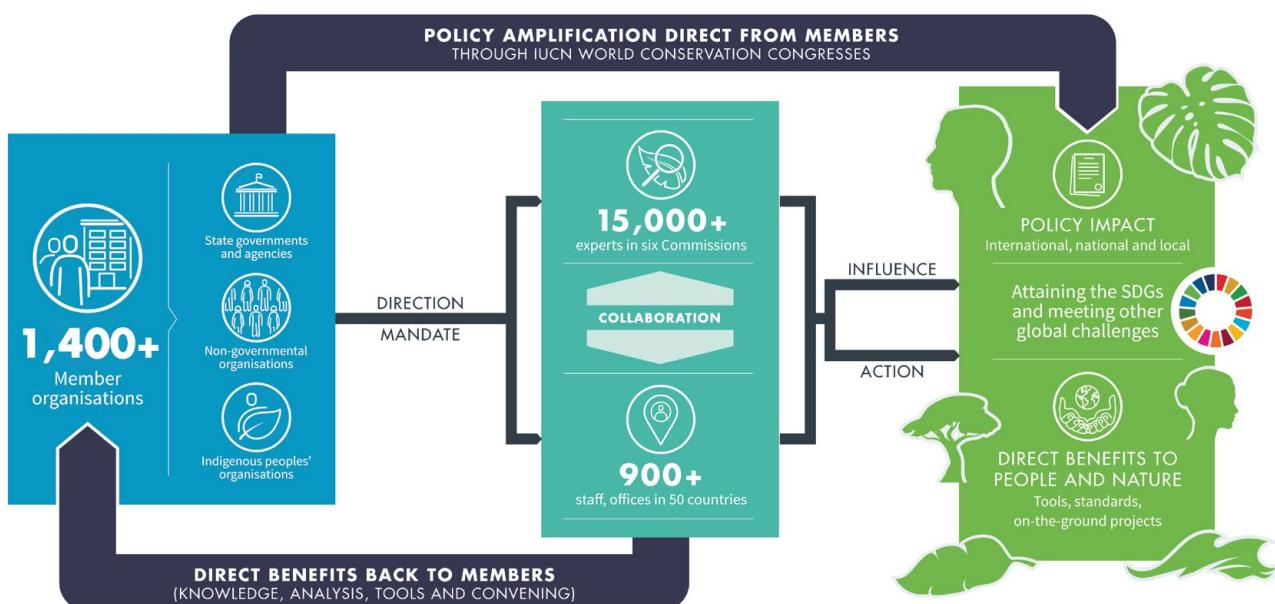
By facilitating these solutions, IUCN provides governments and institutions at all levels with the impetus to achieve universal goals, including on biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable development, which IUCN was instrumental in defining.

Our knowledge base and diverse membership combine to make IUCN an incubator and trusted repository of best practices, conservation tools, and international guidelines and standards. With its official United Nations Observer Status, IUCN ensures that nature conservation has a voice at the highest level of international governance.

IUCN's expertise and extensive network underpin a large and varied portfolio of conservation projects around the world. Combining the latest science with the traditional knowledge of local communities, these projects work to reverse habitat loss, restore ecosystems and improve people's well-being. They also produce a wealth of data and information that feeds into IUCN's analytical work.



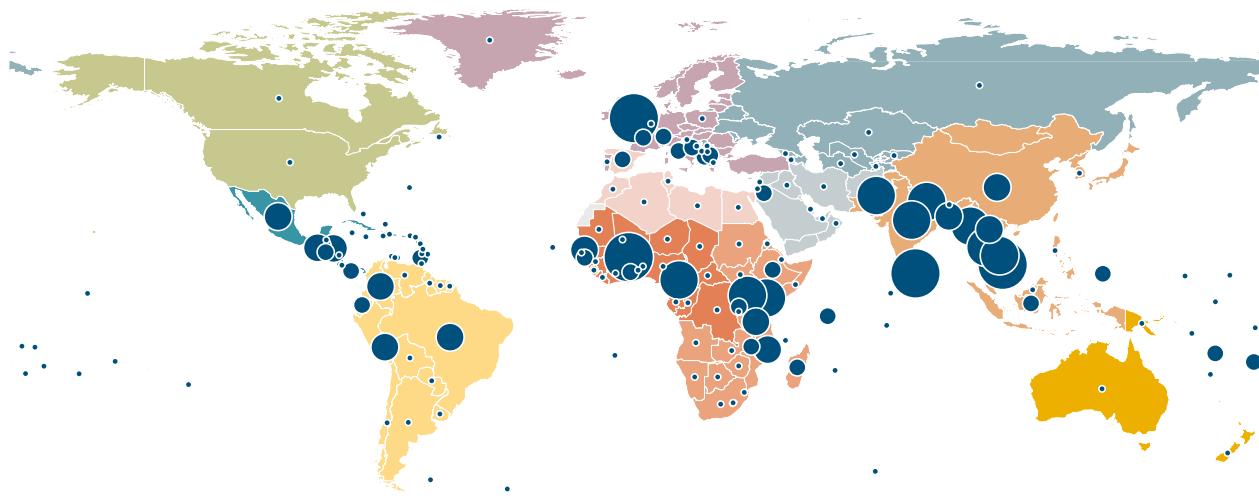
## UNITED FOR LIFE AND LIVELIHOODS



Through their affiliation with IUCN, Member organisations are part of a democratic process, passing Resolutions that drive the global conservation agenda. They meet every four years at the IUCN World Conservation Congress to set priorities and agree on the Union's Programme of Work. IUCN congresses have produced several key international environmental agreements including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the World Heritage Convention, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. We continue to help these conventions strengthen and evolve so that they can respond to emerging challenges.

Our Member organisations are represented by the IUCN Council – IUCN's principle governing body. Headquartered in Switzerland, the IUCN Secretariat comprises around 900 committed staff in more than 60 countries. Our knowledge base and diverse membership combine to make IUCN an incubator and trusted repository of best practices, conservation tools, and international guidelines and standards. With its official United Nations Observer Status, IUCN ensures that nature conservation has a voice at the highest level of international governance.

The IUCN Council, Unions' the governing body, represents our Member organisations. With its headquarters in Switzerland, IUCN Secretariat comprises around 900 staff in more than 50 countries.



### IUCN Operational Regions

North America (Washington DC office)	Mediterranean	West Asia
Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean	West and Central Africa	Asia
South America	East and South Africa	Oceania
Europe	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	No Status

Disclaimer: Names, frontiers, boundaries and other designations of geographical entities used and shown on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion, official endorsement or acceptance by IUCN.

# STRATEGIC ORIENTATION

IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) is active in the IUCN Statutory Region East Europe, North and Central Asia as outlined in the Annex to the IUCN Regulations<sup>1</sup> and covers Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

Spanning the North Pacific, the Arctic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, encompassing the steppes, deserts and mountains of Central Asia, the lush forests of South Caucasus and the karst ecosystems, underground freshwater and wetlands of the Western Balkans – this vast region hosts an exceptional array of globally important and threatened species.

Today, some of the main challenges hampering the long-term conservation of the region's unique biodiversity are the lack of coherent policies and resilient institutions,

weak enforcement of laws, insufficient finances, under capacitated civil society, and low awareness. To address these, IUCN advocates diverse partnerships and dialogue, linking science, policy and action at the regional and national levels. In ECA, we focus on good governance, protection of biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources.

[Read more in our leaflet](#)



<sup>1</sup> Article 5(a) of the IUCN Statutes and Regulations stipulates that States shall be those which are Members of the United Nations or any of its Specialized Agencies, or of the International Atomic Energy Agency, or parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice". The list is regularly updated in function of the membership of the United Nations, of its Specialized Agencies, of the International Atomic Energy Agency or the parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice and with the names as published on the respective websites of these institutions.

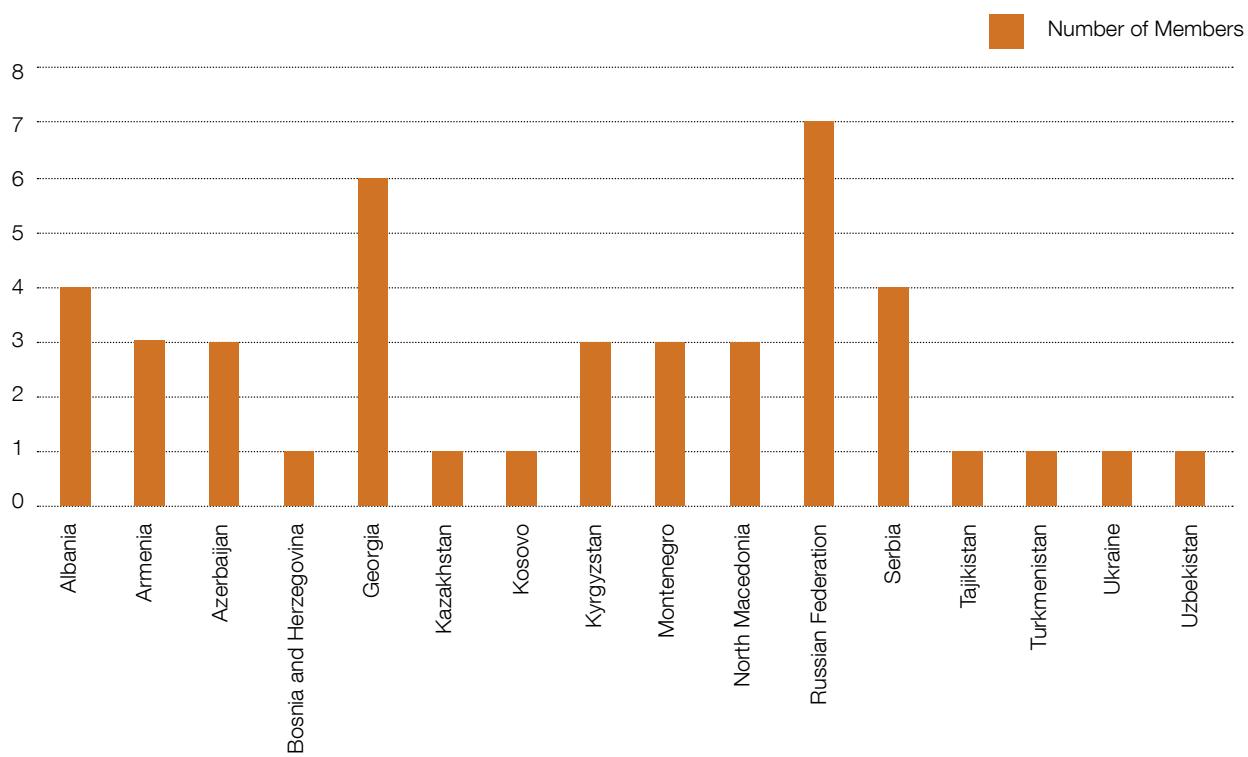
# IUCN ECARO MEMBERS

Within the Programme Region of East Europe and Central Asia, IUCN has 43 Members. There were nine newly admitted Members in 2020 and 2021 (indicated with \* in the table)

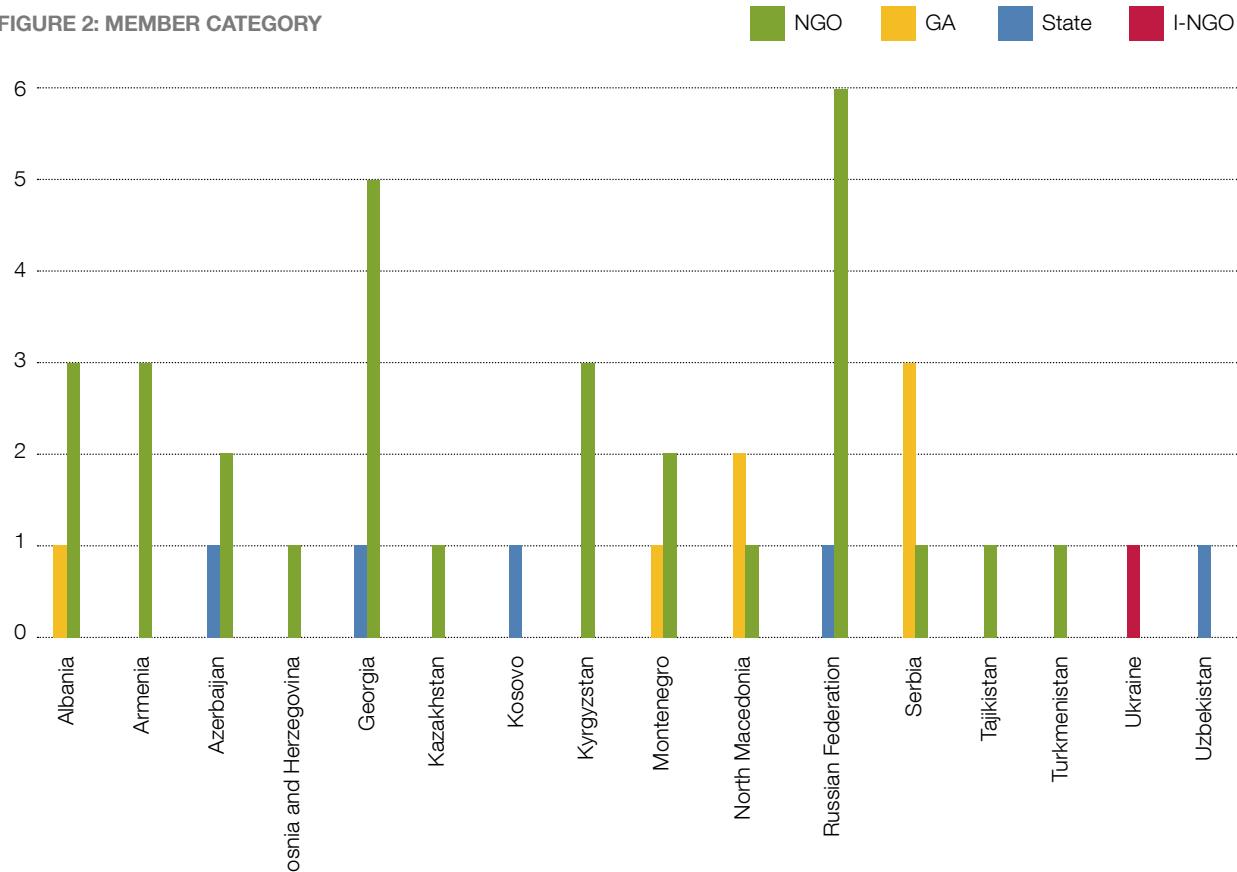
COUNTRY	MEMBER INSTITUTION
<b>Albania</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA)</li><li>Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania (INCA)</li><li>Preservation and Protection of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA)</li><li>Urban Research Institute (URI)*</li></ul>
<b>Armenia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC)</li><li>Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds</li><li>ArAves*</li></ul>
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan</li><li>Azerbaijan Ornithological Society (AOS)</li><li>International Dialogue for Environmental Action (IDEA)</li></ul>
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Dinarica Association*</li></ul>
<b>Georgia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN)</li><li>Centre for Biodiversity Conservation &amp; Research (NACRES)</li><li>Field researchers' Union – CAMPESTER</li><li>Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia</li><li>Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (RECC)*</li><li>Society for nature conservation (Sabuko)*</li></ul>
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Tethys Scientific Society</li></ul>
<b>Kosovo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure</li></ul>
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Public Foundation CAMP Alatoo</li><li>The Association of Forest and Land Users of Kyrgyzstan (KAFLU)*</li><li>Youth Ecological Movement (BIOM)</li></ul>
<b>Montenegro</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism</li><li>Public Enterprise for National Parks of Montenegro</li><li>Centre for the Protection and Research of Birds of Montenegro</li></ul>
<b>North Macedonia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning</li><li>Macedonian Ecological Society (MES)</li><li>Stichting Connecting Natural Values and People Foundation (CNVP)</li></ul>
<b>Russian Federation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment</li><li>European Centre for Saving Far Eastern Leopards (ANO)</li><li>Biodiversity Conservation Centre</li><li>Environmental Education Centre Zapovedniks</li><li>Biologists for Nature Conservation</li><li>World Wide Fund for Nature – Russian Federation</li><li>All-Russian Society of Nature Protection*</li></ul>
<b>Serbia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia</li><li>Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia</li><li>Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province</li><li>Lovacki savez Srbije - Hunting Association of Serbia (LSS)*</li></ul>
<b>Tajikistan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Association of Nature Conservation Organisations of Tajikistan</li></ul>
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Turkmenian Society for Conservation of Nature</li></ul>
<b>Ukraine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Environment-People-Law</li></ul>
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>State committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on ecology and environmental protection (SCEEP)*</li></ul>

The only officially recognised National Committee of IUCN Members in the ECA region is the National Committee of Russian Federation.

**FIGURE 1: MEMBERSHIP IN NUMBERS**



**FIGURE 2: MEMBER CATEGORY**



# IUCN COMMISSIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

IUCN has six expert Commissions covering a range of thematic issues relevant to nature conservation, with around 15,000 experts globally:

**Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM);**

**Commission on Education and Communication (CEC);**

**Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP);**

**Species Survival Commission (SSC);**

**World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL);**

**World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA).**

The six Commissions constitute the knowledge base of IUCN and help generate knowledge products, shape policies and implement the IUCN Programme. They play an important role in establishing and maintaining the knowledge-policy-action axis. IUCN ECARO helps the mobilization and recruitment of new Commission members in the region, and facilitates their engagement and provision of expertise in the region. The total number of Commission members in the ECA region is currently 287 (dynamic number).



## THE NUMBER OF COMMISSION MEMBERS

Country	CEM	CEC	CEESP	SSC	WCEL	WCPA	Total per Country
Albania	1	3	1	6	1	7	<b>19</b>
Armenia	0	0	0	7	1	4	<b>12</b>
Azerbaijan	0	0	0	3	0	1	<b>4</b>
Belarus	0	0	0	5	1	2	<b>8</b>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	1	0	3	0	1	<b>6</b>
Georgia	1	1	1	13	2	5	<b>23</b>
Kazakhstan	1	0	0	5	3	3	<b>12</b>
Kosovo	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Kyrgyzstan	0	1	1	4	1	0	<b>7</b>
Republic of Moldova	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Montenegro	0	1	0	5	0	2	<b>8</b>
North Macedonia	0	1	0	6	2	1	<b>10</b>
Russian Federation	6	7	2	76	4	22	<b>117</b>
Serbia	0	3	1	14	1	5	<b>24</b>
Tajikistan	0	0	0	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
Turkmenistan	0	0	1	3	0	1	<b>5</b>
Ukraine	1	0	1	15	2	3	<b>22</b>
Uzbekistan	0	0	0	4	1	2	<b>7</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>287</b>

# IUCN CONGRESS

The IUCN World Conservation Congress was held in September 2021 in Marseille, France, as a hybrid event, bringing together experts and leaders from government, civil society, Indigenous peoples' organisations, business, and youth representatives to tackle the world's most pressing environmental and sustainability issues. **The participants called for a post-pandemic recovery based on nature and urged governments to invest at least 10% of global recovery funds in nature.** More than 1,500 IUCN Members adopted the Marseille Manifesto and a series of resolutions and commitments to urgently address the interlinked climate and biodiversity crises. They also adopted **Nature 2030: IUCN Programme 2021–2024**, that for the first time, sets its ambition over ten years, aligning with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

IUCN ECARO has organised and supported various sessions at the IUCN Congress. In continuation, we are summarising key takeaways, while also informing on the IUCN Congress outcomes particularly relevant for our region.

**IUCN Resolutions and Recommendations filtered by geographical scope Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia** (1) Transboundary cooperation for conservation of big cats in Northeast Asia; and (2) Strengthening the protection of primary and old-growth forests in Europe and facilitating their restoration where possible.

The new IUCN President and the Council were elected at IUCN Congress, to serve 2021–2025. We welcomed **three Regional Councillors elected from Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia** that will act as IUCN ambassadors, serve the mission of IUCN, and inform the Council on the interests, priorities and needs of IUCN Members from our region, and thanked the outgoing Councillors for their dedication and efforts!



Atmosphere at the European Green Belt Initiative session

## REGIONAL COUNCILLORS 2020

- Ms Natalia Danilina, Russian Federation
- Ms Tamar Pataridze, Georgia
- Mr Michael Hošek, Czech Republic

## REGIONAL COUNCILLORS 2021

- Mr Carl Amirkulashvili, Georgia
- Mr Samad-John Smaranda, Romania
- Mr Vilmos Kiszel, Hungary

A successful hybrid high-level ministerial meeting on **scaling up Nature-based Solutions for climate change adaptation in the Western Balkans**, as part of the ADAPT Project, explored the climate-nature nexus. Naser Nuredini, Minister of Environment and Physical Planning, North Macedonia, Liburn Aliu, Minister of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, Kosovo, and Ornella Çuçlü, Vice-Minister of Tourism and Environment, Albania gave the opening speeches setting the scene for the debate. The discussion focused on the potential of Nature-based Solutions to support climate adaptation and the role of the IUCN Global Standard in this process.

The **Conservation action to benefit Species, Habitats, and People** session at the Reverse the Red Pavilion explored ways to deliver positive impacts for species, habitats and people, engaging important donors and the private sector, and applying the IUCN Save Our Species approach. Milica Miskovic, IUCN ECARO Species Conservation Officer, and Justine Shanti, Snow Leopard Trust Regional Ecologist, contributed by introducing **SOS Central Asia initiative**.

The session held at the EU stand, titled: **The European Green Belt Initiative – Bridging boundaries to protect Europe's longest green network** brought together a high number of interested participants and experts, creating space for a dialogue on ecological fragmentation and the need for an effective green infrastructure strategy.

We have presented two posters:

1. **Nature-based Solutions at the heart of climate change adaptation in the Western Balkans** that explored the value of employing Nature-based Solutions in response to societal challenges; and
2. **enviroLENS – European Earth Observation Capacities for Environmental Law Enforcement Support** focused on innovative Earth Observation-based technologies and ways it can support evidence-based decision making in the environmental domain.



On 6 September, IUCN ECARO Members and Commission members gathered to meet each other, exchange ideas related to our work in the region and introduce the IUCN ECARO team. The period ahead of us is a challenging one, while also full of opportunities. We left the IUCN Congress with clear takeaways, and look forward to jointly implement the **Nature 2030 IUCN Programme** in our region.



IUCN ECARO Members and Commission members at the IUCN Congress in Marseille

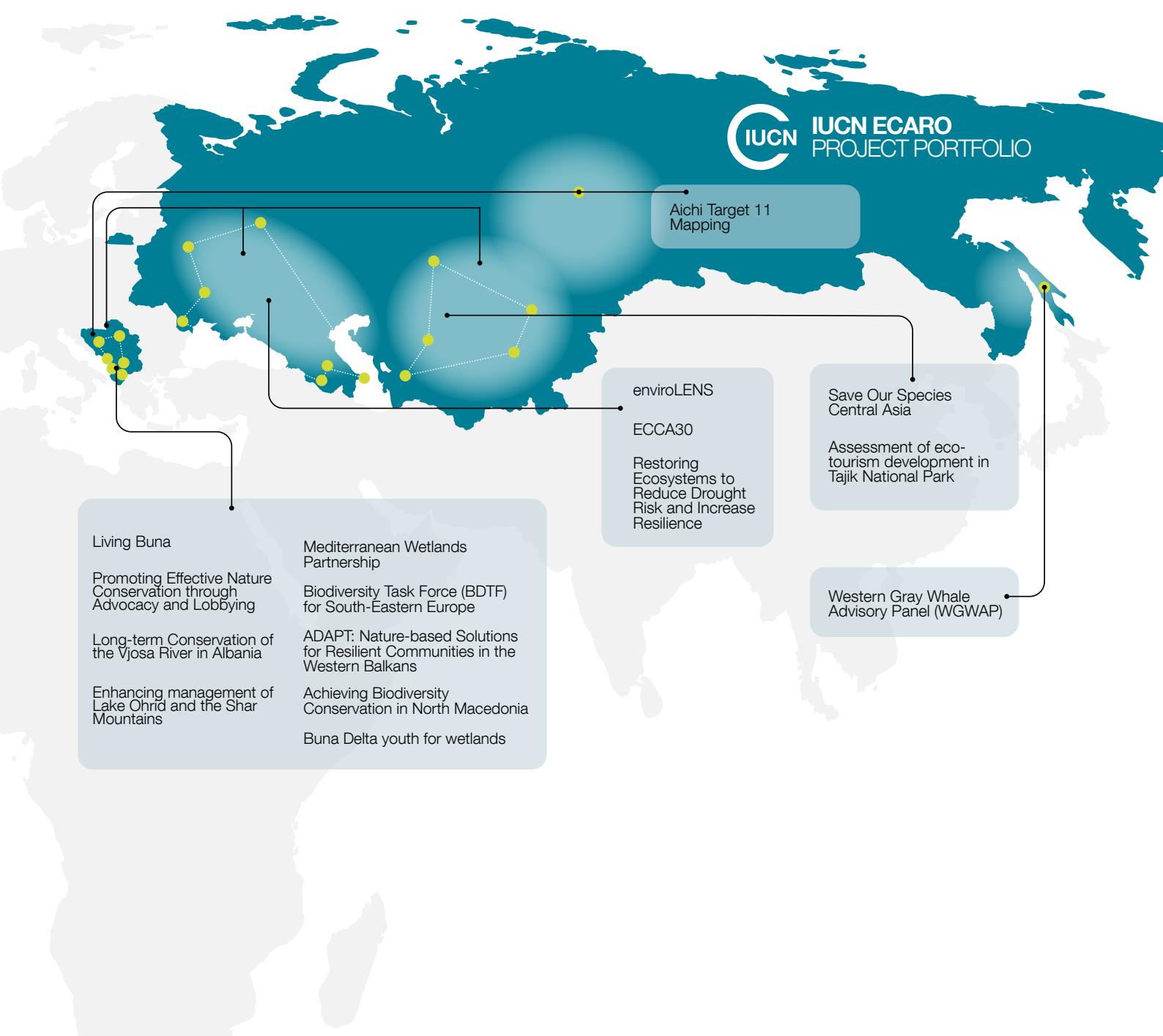
# PROGRAMME WORK AND MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

As a membership and knowledge-based organisation with strong convening power, IUCN ECARO works to:

- Ensure proper implementation of the global conservation policy, and help shape national and regional ones;
- Disseminate and apply IUCN knowledge products across the constituency and the partnership network;

- Introduce innovative approaches to effective biodiversity conservation and natural resource management; and
- Support institutional strengthening and capacity building and promote dialogue across and between the regions, sectors and countries.

[IUCN Open Project Portal](#)



# VALUING AND CONSERVING NATURE

## SMALL GRANTS FOR PROTECTED AREA ECOSYSTEM AND HABITATS RESTORATION IN THE BUNA DELTA

Through the Living Buna small grants scheme IUCN encourages sustainable socio-economic development in around 23,000 ha of the Buna Delta in north Albania. As part of the first phase, fifteen local organisations and community members received financial support to contribute to the long-term conservation of species and habitats, with particular emphasis on halting or reducing unsustainable development and water abstraction. These community-based actions were successfully finalised in 2020. Their overarching theme was awareness raising on the importance and value of the Buna Delta wetlands for the livelihood of the local community. Most of the grantees focused on making the tourism practices more sustainable, for example by engaging with the local fishing community to promote ecotourism fisheries or boosting the ecotourism options in the Dajçi area and in Baks-Rrjoll. Several tour packages launched in the Buna River, Velipoja Beach and Viluni lagoon now integrate clean sport activities.

When it comes to the coastal habitat restoration, the grantees invested their efforts into restoring coastal dunes, and natural forest habitats by planting native poplar, and oak species in the Shkodra Municipality. Some actions focused on the promotion of agricultural products in the area of Ana e Malit and others on the development of the agro-touristic model, including the activities such as



Velipoje beach clean-up, Albania © Arber Xhaferaj



*I trust that we're on the path towards a sustainable and resilient Buna River Delta as we work to get the community more active and educate the young on the importance of wetlands and good management. Through the Action for Buna grants we're helping the local residents take small but important steps, counting on the support from the government and local institutions as well as the international community."*

Zamir Dedej, Director, National Agency of Protected Areas in Albania

the improvement of sewage system and animal waste management on the selected farms. Finally, the last set of the site-based actions supported the transition to clean energy provided by solar panels or green infrastructure development, including the installation of more efficient irrigation systems, and improvement of agricultural practices and water usage in individual households.

As part of the Living Buna Small Grants second phase we have selected for funding eight proposals were selected in late 2021 and commenced implementation. They include activities in agriculture, tourism and conservation that aim to benefit sustainable socio-economic development and ecosystem restoration in the Buna River Velipoje Protected Landscape.

[Learn more](#)



## BUNA DELTA YOUTH FOR WETLANDS

Building on the acquired knowledge related to environmental stewardship in the Buna River Delta, IUCN is working with the youth and local community to engage them and inspire to take an active role in environmental protection and governance. To that end, the 'Youth wetland conservation workshop with a focus on the Western Balkans' was organised in December 2021, creating the space for inter-generational exchange on the topic and initiating youth integration and participation. The event brought together young people from across the Balkans, both individuals and members of organisations, to learn about regional and local policies, strategies and initiatives for conservation. Presenters included IUCN global and regional representatives, the European Commission, and National Agency for Protected Areas of Albania – a member of Biodiversity Task Force of South-East Europe, among others.



## ENHANCING MANAGEMENT OF LAKE OHRID AND THE SHAR MOUNTAINS

The year 2020 brought significant advances when it comes to the evaluation of the natural and socio-economic values of the Lake Ohrid and the Shar Mountains in North Macedonia. IUCN has developed two valorisation studies, one per site, in close consultations with national authorities, local community, and the civil sector steered by Dr Daniel Bogner as biodiversity and capacity-building technical expert. The studies informed the development of respective draft management plans that, with the active engagement of IUCN, were finalised in 2021 in accordance with national regulations governing the process, and steered by [IUCN WCPA Best Practice Protected Areas Guidelines](#) and the results of a [Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool \(METT\)](#) analysis, to name a few. The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of North Macedonia led the process with the support of IUCN and contributions from UNEP, national and



Ohrid Lake Municipalities' signing ceremony © Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of North Macedonia



*Evaluation and consequent preparation of management plans for Lake Ohrid and the Shar Mountains will guide effective management of these sites' valuable natural resources, to the benefit of the local community and in line with the national and international legislative provisions on nature protection."*

Naser Nuredini, Minister of Environment and Physical Planning of North Macedonia

international experts, civil sector and the local community, and should set the direction for the effective management of these two transboundary sites for the next 10 years.

The Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted a law proclaiming part of the Shar Mountains a National Park in June 2021. Just a few months later, in September 2021, the IUCN-organised ceremony convened the Mayors of Ohrid, Struga and Debarca who signed a joint statement, committing to support the re-proclamation of Lake Ohrid as a Monument of Nature.

The efforts towards enhancing management of Lake Ohrid and the Shar Mountains are part of a larger GEF funded project “Achieving Biodiversity Conservation through Creation and Effective Management of Protected Areas and Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Land Use Planning”, implemented through the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning.

[Learn more](#)



## SOS CENTRAL ASIA INITIATIVE

IUCN Save Our Species is a funding mechanism that supports on the ground conservation. In 2020 and through IUCN ECARO, it has continued to support the conservation of the Goitered Gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*) and the Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*) in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan through the SOS Central Asia initiative. The populations of both species are decreasing and listed as Vulnerable to extinction by the IUCN Red List



*Besides focusing on the conservation of individual species, CMS through CAMI also addresses urgent and major threats faced by all or most of these migratory species, such as linear infrastructure or poaching. We are excited to see the successful granting mechanism established through IUCN Save Our Species getting its official recognition at CMS COP13.”*

Christiane Roettger, Coordinator of the CMS Central Asian Mammals Initiative



Snow leopard, Kazakhstan © Wildlife Without Borders

of Threatened Species™. Seven organisations received the grants across Central Asia since 2019, engaging many stakeholders, both at local and international levels. They contributed to building capacity on the ground, working closely with local communities and the youth, helped educate and raise awareness on the importance of wildlife conservation. The use of traditional knowledge, as an important component of these projects is key when it comes to understanding the local perceptions of wildlife and for developing strategies to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts.

SOS Central Asia 2019 grantees are the Public Fund “Ecobioproject”, Snow Leopard Trust, Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan, Regional Association of environmental NGOs of Western Kazakhstan “Tabigi Orta”, Wildlife Without Borders, Marwell Wildlife and Snow Leopard Conservancy. Their projects are at the closing phases and should be finalised by summer 2022.

The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP13) approved CAMI's Programme of Work 2021-2026 in February 2020, incorporating IUCN Save Our Species' Central Asia initiative as a possible funding mechanism for the conservation of key threatened migratory species and their habitats.

[Learn more](#)



## SAVING ONE OF EUROPE'S LAST FREE-FLOWING RIVERS – VJOSA-AOOS

Shared by Albania and Greece, the Vjosa River has a free-flowing course of over 270 kilometres, from its sources in the Pindos Mountains of Greece to the Adriatic Sea in southern Albania. The river valley contains a unique set of ecosystems and species, but it is threatened by the proposed construction of some 40 hydropower plants, land degradation and urbanization, to name a few. IUCN joined the international partnership in 2018 to help develop a vision for conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Vjosa/Aoos River and its catchment.

The Protection study of the Vjosa River Valley based on IUCN protected area standards, published in 2021, was informed by a series of specialist studies into the

ecological, social, cultural and economic values of the Vjosa River catchment. The study provides the rationale and feasibility of declaring a protected area for the Vjosa Valley, to assist the Albanian government process of applying protection within their legislative framework. It includes options for appropriate protected area categories to designate, management objectives and governance options that would ensure the conservation of its key values. The recommendations would provide for biodiversity and landscape conservation, green tourism and sustainable agriculture while acknowledging the socio-economic needs and traditional practices of local communities.

[Learn more](#)



The Vjosa River, Albania © Christian Baumgartner

## ASSESSMENT OF ECO-TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN TAJIK NATIONAL PARK

Tajik National Park is one of the largest protected areas in the world spanning more than 2.5 million hectares. It is home to rare animals, such as Saker Falcon (EN) or Snow Leopard (VU) as well as Himalayan Griffon (NT) and Siberian Ibex (NT), globally threatened as per the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Tajik National

Park is a World Heritage Site since 2013, due to its outstanding scenic values found nowhere else on Earth.

Tajik National Park is increasingly attracting international visitors. However, the lack of tourist infrastructure and poor tourism-related services hamper the development of eco-tourism. To assess the existing and potential tourism routes in the National Park, IUCN and its Member organisation – Association for Nature Conservation of Tajikistan (ANCOT) held wide-ranging consultations in the last few months of 2021. The assessment should be finalised by mid-2022, along with the recommendations on the appropriate locations for the installation of shelters for tourists and on involving local communities in the provision of community-based services.



Tajik National Park © ANCOT

## GOVERNANCE OF NATURE'S USE

### SUPPORTING THE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR BIODIVERSITY OF SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

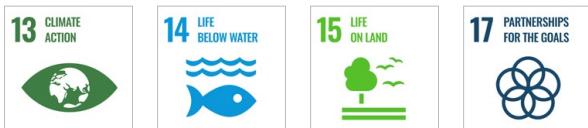
Established in 2017 under the auspices of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Biodiversity Task Force of South-East Europe (BDTF SEE) aims to strengthen regional cooperation on nature conservation in the Western Balkans. It works as an intergovernmental technical body with a mandate to provide technical advice to RCC and Western Balkans economies on Multilateral Environmental Agreements and compliance with Chapter 27 of EU acquis under the accession process. The IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) serves as the Secretariat of BDTF SEE and provides technical support to the Task Force. Some of the BDTF SEE's achievements include the joint Western Balkans economies' participation in CBD-led dialogues and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and strengthened partnerships with key regional networks such as the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, the Southern African Development Community and REDPARQUES.

BDTF SEE made a major contribution to the Leaders' Declaration on the [Green Agenda for the Western Balkans \(GAWB\)](#), adopted in November 2020 at the Sofia Western Balkans Summit. Furthermore, BDTF SEE played a key role throughout 2021 in preparing the roadmap and action plan for its biodiversity chapter, in partnership with the Regional Cooperation Council and the European Commission. The Roadmap and Action plan were adopted by the Western Balkans leaders at a Slovenia EU Presidency high-level event in October 2021, in Brdo pri Kranju, and will guide the implementation of GAWB going forward.

*“Great progress was done in the first years of the existence of SEE Biodiversity Task Force, a result of the determination of its members and their respective structures to develop meaningful regional cooperation on biodiversity, and committed work of the IUCN ECARO, hosting the BDTF SEE Secretariat. It managed to provide evidence for informed decision-making, conducted case studies and formulated recommendations as well as operational documents securing its optimal functioning, and enlargement of this platform.”*

Kristina Kujundzic, Senior Project Manager of the GIZ-ORF SEE Implementation of Biodiversity Agreements (ORF BDU)

[Learn more](#)



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Mutnovsky Volcano, Kamchatka, Russia © Boris Erg

## ACHIEVING AICHI TARGET 11 IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

The Global Partnership on Aichi Target 11 aimed to facilitate the achievement of the target that called for the protection and effective management of 17% of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10% of coastal and marine areas. The project promoted and supported a successful network of partners including governments, international organisations, NGOs and individual experts, coordinated by IUCN and the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). The project activities increased the visibility of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Aichi Targets and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework in the region. Significant results were achieved when it comes to the submission of updated protected area databases from Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, that jointly reported around 800,000 km<sup>2</sup> of new protected areas to the World Database of Protected Areas. When it comes to Central and Eastern Europe, the experts identified opportunities to develop capacities on Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) and protected area management.

[Learn more](#)



Convention on  
Biological Diversity



*I congratulate the Government of Uzbekistan for updating its protected areas information in the World Database of Protected Areas (WDPA). I am confident that Uzbekistan's action will be emulated by other countries to ensure the achievement of Target 11 by December 2020. I express my thanks to IUCN's Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) for facilitating the process and to the Government of Japan for supporting it through the Japan Biodiversity Fund. While the world is reeling under the menace of COVID-19, such positive actions strengthen hope and make a strong case for investing in nature."*

Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity



Buna River Delta, Albania © Arber Xhaferaj

## PROMOTING EFFECTIVE NATURE CONSERVATION THROUGH ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

Partnering with the Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania (INCA), its Member organisations, IUCN helped increase transparency and public participation in nature protection and management of protected areas in Albania. In the course of 2020 and 2021, the partners worked to enhance the knowledge and skills of civil society organisations (CSOs) related to their role in law enforcement and the fight against corruption concerning nature conservation and protected area management. Some of the activities included the small-scale grants awarding to selected ECSOs, finalization and distribution of a 'Handbook on influencing nature conservation policies through effective advocacy and lobbying' and a number of trainings and capacity-building workshops. When it comes to the media, the partners organised five trainings on environmental journalism and the Aarhus convention, and disseminated the handbook on 'The role of media in fostering transparent decision-making for nature resources management'. Finally, the best media contest entries were awarded at the closing event in April 2021, to celebrate and recognize the ongoing efforts of the journalists to raise awareness on the environmental issues in the selected pilot areas.

[Learn more](#)



Divjaka Karavasta National Park, Albania © Arber Xhaferaj

## A STRONG MEDITERRANEAN WETLANDS PARTNERSHIP

As the Mediterranean is getting hotter, we need its coastal wetlands more than ever. But, we have lost 50% of our wetlands in the last 50 years, and there are intense pressures on remaining areas, most of which are damaged and degraded. To avert threats to coastal wetlands in the Mediterranean and promote their conservation and wise use, a number of international, national and local organisations are forming a strong partnership. Their overall aim is to work effectively and deliver activities in full trust and synergy, taking advantage of opportunities for collaboration, knowledge exchange, communication, fundraising and cross-learning. IUCN is an active contributor to this partnership that is expected to grow into a platform of support to civil society organisations and research institutions to ensure Mediterranean wetlands and rivers' protection, restoration, and sustainable use.

[Learn more](#)



## OBSERVING THE EARTH TO ENFORCE ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

Through enviroLENS, a Horizon 2020 innovation project, IUCN helped demonstrate and promote the use of Earth Observation as evidence for environmental law enforcement. By using European satellite capacities, such as those provided by Copernicus, this project responded to the demands of the environmental legal sector by highlighting the benefits of globally applicable, easy-to-use, cost-effective and cross-domain monitoring data retrieved through the eLENS Portal. In 2020 and 2021, IUCN was engaging the stakeholders to test and validate the portal in development stages and working on examples to demonstrate the value of newly developed eLENS portal and therefore the applicability and the relevance of Earth Observation for the enforcement of environmental law. The showcases focused on unsustainable infrastructure development in Skadar Lake National Park in Montenegro and the deforestation in Domogled - Valea Cernei National Park, Romania. Both demonstrated strong legal impact the use of eLENS could have in terms of environmental law enforcement and compliance monitoring.

[Learn more](#)



Deforestation aerial photo © Rich Carey / Shutterstock

Kamchatka and in the Okhotsk Sea in the Russian Far East. An area of relatively high risk is near Russia's Sakhalin Island, where a population of fewer than 250 gray whales feed every summer and autumn. The authors mapped specific geographical areas where gray whale habitats intersect with high-density vessel traffic areas. Based on these "heat maps", they identified locations that signal a conservation concern, both in terms of ship strikes and exposure to elevated underwater noise from vessels.

The study highlights the need to design measures to reduce gray whale mortality and injury from ship strikes. The authors suggest measures, such as establishing new navigation corridors, using speed limits, or placing marine mammal observers aboard ships to detect whales and advise captains to reduce speed or change course. Also, improved monitoring and reporting of vessel strikes and near misses would help scientists and managers assess and reduce the risk to whales.

[Learn more](#)



Grey whale and ships, Canada © Leon W/Dreamstime.com

# DEPLOYING NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

## PLACING NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS IN THE HEART OF CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

The ADAPT, IUCN's regional initiative that aims to increase ecosystem and community resilience to environmental degradation in the Western Balkans through Nature-based Solutions (NbS) is unfolding successfully through numerous regional and local activities and events. It is placing NbS at the heart of climate change mitigation and disaster risk reduction, and is centred on NbS knowledge, policy and planning, implementation, and scale-up.

The initiative aims to deliver six national NbS scoping studies that will describe the contexts relevant for NbS application, provide an overview of the common natural hazards and elaborate on the added benefits of deploying NbS. They will also identify knowledge, institutional and capacity gaps

*The post-COVID-19 world presents a timely opportunity to alter traditional policies, investments, and decisions on an economic recovery that is more resilient. Healthy natural systems reinforce stronger and healthier societies. Nature-based Solutions offer a bridge and an opportunity to adapt to climate change effects, while improving economic recovery and sustainable livelihoods, saving lives and properties. ADAPT has great potential to contribute to Agenda 2030 and EU accession in the Western Balkans.”*

Maria Osbeck, Senior Advisor Environment and Climate from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)



Field visit to future NbS site, Gledičke Mountains, Serbia © IUCN

and barriers for the application of NbS, and recommend entry points for mainstreaming them into national disaster risk reduction and climate change policies and strategies. Key steps were made in 2021 to prepare the baseline assessments for the pilot projects in Serbia and Albania and to move on to the on-ground implementation phase. In Serbia, preliminary consultations with partners and stakeholders have led to the selection of the municipality of Kraljevo as a suitable pilot site, as it has been particularly vulnerable to climate-induced risks in recent years. The issue highlighted by the municipality of Kraljevo is the increased risk of floods due to degraded forests and erosion, which may also lead to landslides. Similarly, our key partners in Albania, the Ministry of Tourism and Environment and the Water Resources Management Agency, have agreed that the municipality of Elbasan will be the site of the pilot project in that country. Like the municipality of Kraljevo, this area is also prone to flooding, land erosion and landslides.

Another key component of the ADAPT initiative is capacity development. To deliver, the team has prepared an outline for NbS training modules. The first Nature-based Solutions regional training focusing on the IUCN Global Standard for NbS™ was successfully organised in June 2021 with the participation of key ADAPT partners and consultants, Project Advisory Group members, representatives of academia, international financial institutions and potential donors. In all, 28 people participated in this successful regional workshop.

The ADAPT influenced the negotiation of the EU Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, by including references to NbS in the climate change and biodiversity chapters. This strengthens links with climate and biodiversity and prepares the ground for implementation of NbS at regional and national levels.

[Learn more](#)



[facebook.com/theadaptproject](https://facebook.com/theadaptproject)

## NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS TO DROUGHT

The ‘Restoring Ecosystems to Reduce Drought Risk and Increase Resilience’ project will support national governments, including in Georgia, to better understand drought emergency, and identify and adopt appropriate Nature-based Solutions (NbS) that will help communities prepare, respond and recover from drought. As frequency of droughts in Georgia increased in the recent years, there is a need to introduce more sustainable agricultural practices and abandon the adverse ones, like land burning.

The project inception meeting organised in October 2021 launched the activities in Georgia, that will be implemented in partnership with CENN, an IUCN Member. The partners will work to strengthen national and sub-national drought management planning by integrating ecological restoration actions to reduce drought hazard and exposure. They will facilitate a dialogue on drought, and increase knowledge and capacities related to the integration of NbS to drought in Georgia.

[Learn more](#)



Austrian Development Agency



Grazing sheep © Roman Odintsov

## ECCA30 INITIATIVE UNDER THE BONN CHALLENGE

ECCA30 is a country-led initiative to bring 30 million hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes into restoration in Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia by 2030 in support of the [Bonn Challenge](#). It is a unifying mechanism to help countries implement Forest Landscape Restoration at scale in support of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Global Biodiversity Framework, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement, Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) goal under United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are rising to the challenge and have committed close to 3 million hectares to the Bonn Challenge.** ECCA30 aims to generate partnerships and promote knowledge sharing on climate, biodiversity and socio-economic benefits of FLR among governments, private actors, and other stakeholders, to mobilise financial resources and technical support for implementation.



*From 2011 to 2020, Uzbekistan has restored forest landscapes in the area of more than 1,560,000 hectares, thus already fulfilling its Bonn Challenge pledge. Now is the time to rethink how we work with nature. There is no doubt forest landscape restoration will play an important role in reducing the risk of, not only COVID, but other disasters in the future as well.”*

Abduvokhid Zakhadullaev, Head of Department of International Relations and Ecotourism Development, State Committee on Forestry of Uzbekistan

At the [Ministerial meeting on Forest Landscape Restoration and the ECCA30/Bonn Challenge in Eastern and South-East Europe](#) in October 2021, 14 countries signed the [ECCA30 Ministerial Declaration](#), deciding to take bold action in forest restoration process and committing to restore more than 4 million ha of land by 2030 under the Global Bonn Challenge. Ukraine pledged to restore around

1,5 million hectares of the degraded and deforested land by 2030, followed by contributions from Montenegro committing to recover more than 20,000 ha and North Macedonia promising to restore 15,000 ha of forests. In addition, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia committed to make effort in restoring ecosystems.



Durmitor National Park, Montenegro © Unsplash

[Learn more](#)



**ECCA30**

# OUR TEAM

**Boris Erg**, Director

## VALUING AND CONSERVING NATURE

**Bruno Leles**, Conservation Programme Project Officer

**Elizabeth Drury**, Conservation Programme Project Officer\*

**Konstantin Gospodinov**, Senior Conservation Project Officer

**Maarten Hofman**, Species Conservation Officer

**Milica Mišković**, Species Conservation Officer

**Pietro Sandini**, Conservation Programme Project Officer\*

**Robin Johnson**, Conservation Programme Project Officer

**Sofia Tvaradze**, Protected Areas Performance Project Officer

## NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

**Alexandra Ibragimova**, Ecosystem Management Project Officer

**Kristin Meyer**, Ecosystem Management Project Officer

**Mihaela Dragan-Lebovics**, Nature-based Solutions Project Officer\*

**Milan Ivanković**, Nature-based Solutions Senior Project Officer

**Milica Radanović**, Nature-based Solutions Project Assistant\*

**Peter Langdahl**, Ecosystem Management Project Officer

## OPERATIONS AND OUTREACH

**Aleksandra Nikodinović**, Communications Officer

**Andjela Klobučar**, Human Resources Officer

**Constantine Makris**, Membership Relations Officer

**Jelena Stjelja**, Finance Assistant

**Milica Marić Berndt**, Finance and Administration Officer

**Vesna Bjedov**, Communications Officer

**Vladimir Smaglijenko**, Senior ERP/Web Application Developer

\* joined in 2021



End of the year staff meeting, 2021

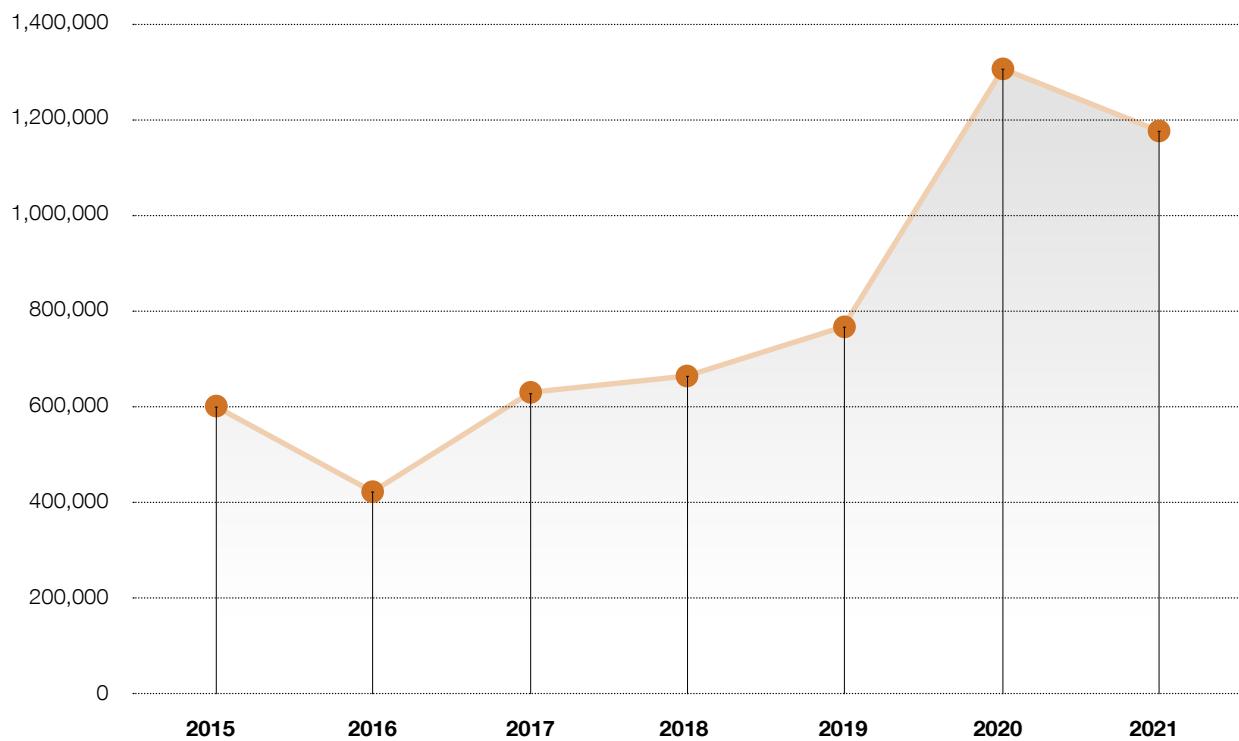
# REGIONAL FINANCIAL SUMMARY

	(€) EUR 2020	(€) EUR 2021
Management and leadership	57,339.59	74,121.75
Valuing and conserving nature	976,521.32	587,199.66
Nature-based Solutions	272,012.69	472,923.74
Operations and outreach	7,970.34	36,243.78
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>1,313,843.94</b>	<b>1,170,488.93</b>

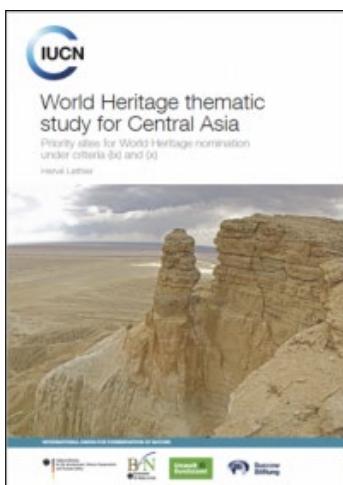
	(€) EUR 2020	(€) EUR 2021
Donor income through projects	1,202,184.61	1,030,390.78
IUCN operational funding	111,659.33	140,098.15
<b>Income</b>	<b>1,313,843.94</b>	<b>1,170,488.93</b>

FIGURE 3: YEARLY BUDGETS



# PUBLICATIONS AND OUTREACH

IUCN – a trusted source of unbiased and evidence-based data on conservation measures showing how nature can support sustainable development efforts.



## World Heritage thematic study for Central Asia (EN, RU)

The study identifies areas, across a regional scale, which display good potential to fulfil the requirements for inscription as natural World Heritage sites, especially those that may qualify under biodiversity criteria (ix) and (x). It also outlines key strategic recommendations which will further the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in Central Asia.

<https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2020.02.en>



## IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions: a user-friendly framework for the verification, design and scaling up of NbS: first edition (MK, SQ, SR)

<https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2020.08.en>



## Protection study of the Vjosa River Valley based on IUCN protected area standards (EN, SQ)

This report provides insight into the rationale and feasibility of declaring a protected area for the Vjosa Valley, along with the management objectives and associated protected area categories that would ensure the conservation of the area's key values.

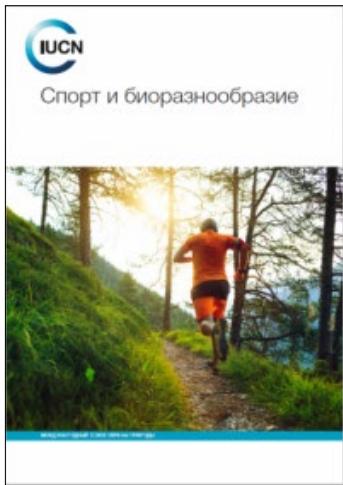
<https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/49471>



### A guide to the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM) (SR)

This handbook presents the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM), which provides a flexible and affordable framework for countries to rapidly identify and analyse FLR potential and locate special areas of opportunity at a national or sub-national level.

<https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/49774>



### Sports and biodiversity (RU)

Sport can have significant negative impacts on biodiversity, through the construction and use of sports venues and the staging of sporting events. This guide is designed to help decision makers understand these potential impacts, and to present options for mitigating them.

<https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/49572>



### Mediterranean Coastal Wetlands Governance Handbook

This Handbook is designed as a practical guide for the governance of coastal wetlands around the Mediterranean (SQ).

<https://medwet.org/publications/handbook-on-governance-of-mediterranean-coastal-wetlands/>

## WEBSITE

The IUCN ECARO website saw a constant increase in a number of visitors as compared to 2018.

## NEWSLETTER

A Voice for Nature Newsletter provides bi-monthly updates on conservation efforts in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Launched in 2016, it brings a selection of news from all three IUCN constituents – Members, Commissions and the Secretariat – to strengthen the network and facilitate information flow across the region. In 2020 and 2021, we published six issues, and our subscriber list grew to 5669 contacts.



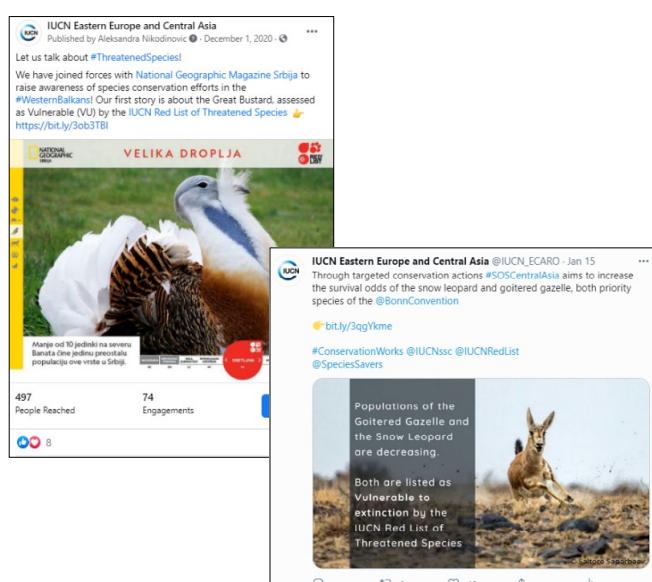
We are also disseminating a number of thematic newsletters, such as the ADAPT Newsletter, featuring the news on Nature-based Solutions in the Western Balkans.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

ECARO launched its social media channels in September 2020, adapting to the challenges that year brought by increasing our online presence and focusing on digital communication. Our social media community reached 565 followers on Facebook and 511 on Twitter by the end of 2021. In addition, we are creating the content for the ADAPT – NbS in the Western Balkans Facebook page and channels dedicated to Biodiversity Task Force of South-East Europe on Twitter and Facebook.

## IUCN ECARO YOUTUBE CHANNEL

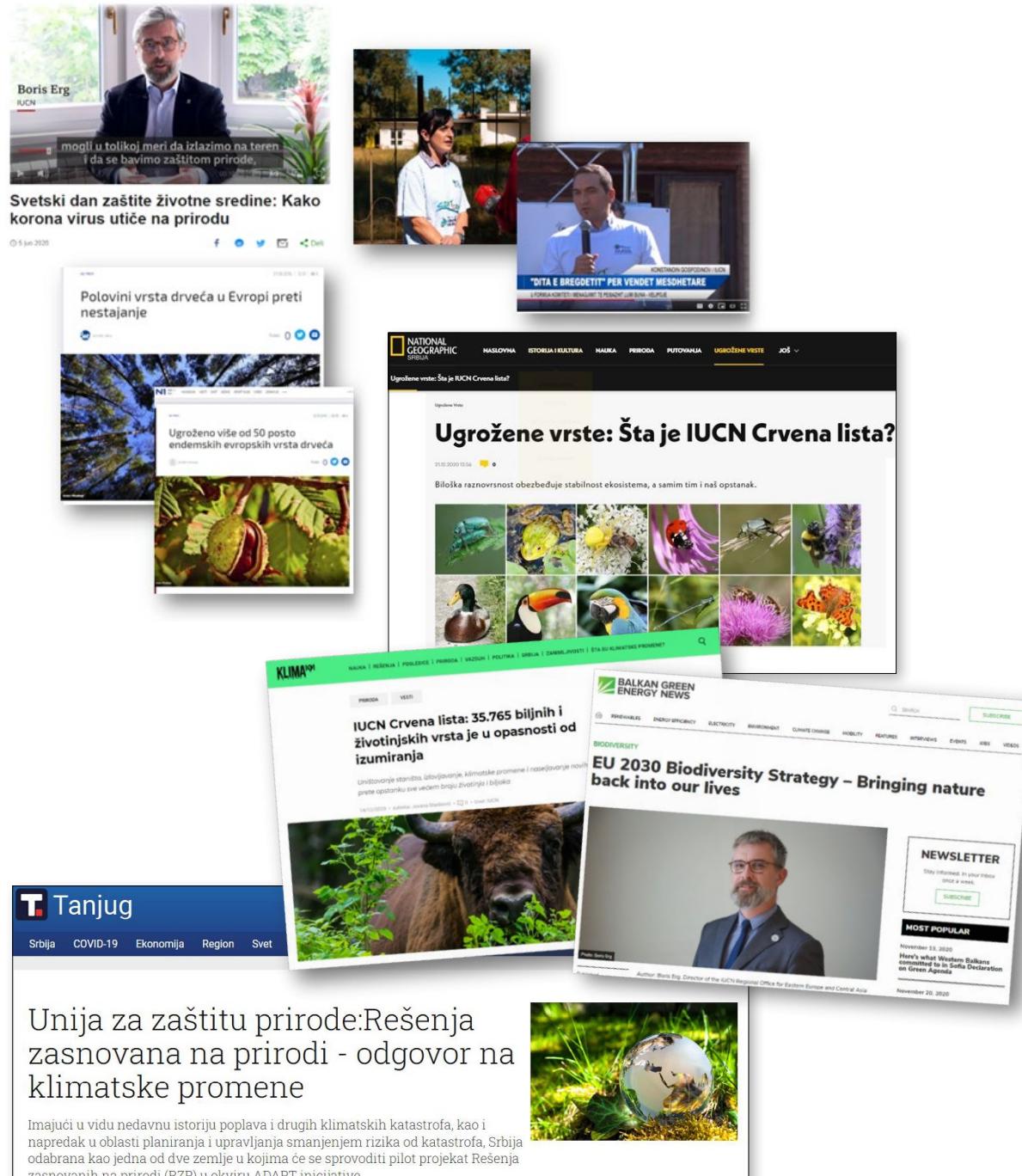
4 videos uploaded reaching more than 1,500 views, and 3 webinar recordings with more than 2,000 views



## IN THE MEDIA

More than 250 mentions in the media in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in 2020 and 2021.

Launch of the Endangered species section on the National Geographic Serbia portal, a partnership aiming to raise awareness on species conservation in the region.







Mutnovsky Volcano, Kamchatka, Russia © Boris Erg

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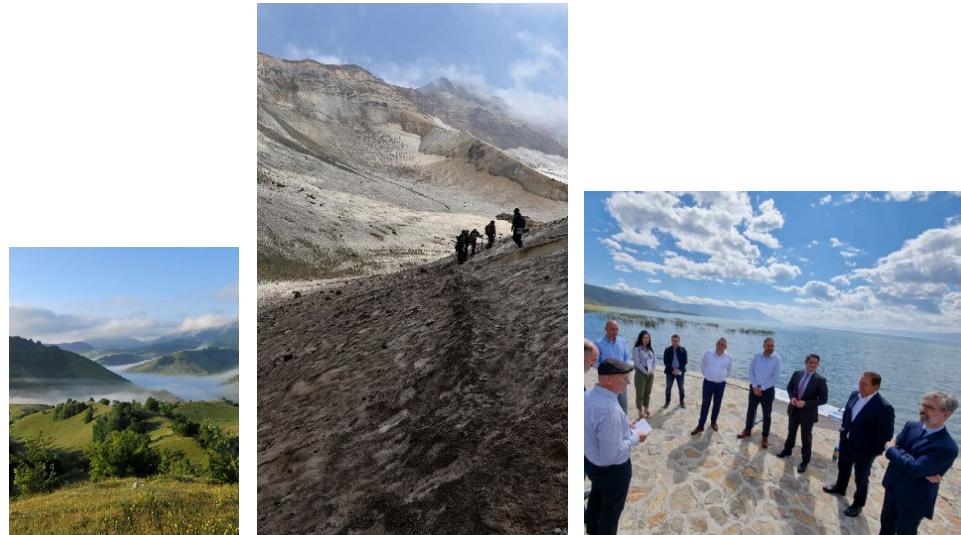
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that values and  
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INTERNATIONAL UNION  
FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE

Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia  
Japanska 35  
11073 Belgrade, Serbia  
Tel. +381 11 22 72 411  
[www.iucn.org/ecaro](http://www.iucn.org/ecaro)  
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