

Towards a Greener Agenda for the Western Balkans

Albania, as well as the Western Balkans as region, hosts rich biodiversity, including many threatened, rare and endemic species, and relatively large unspoiled ecosystems. From nature we get food and water, energy and medicine, climate regulation support and disaster risk mitigation, among other benefits. There is a need to recognise the value and place nature at the heart of the regional policy, stressed members of the Biodiversity Task Force of South East Europe during the online consultations on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, held in May 2020.

It is expected to have the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans endorsed by the relevant authorities before autumn 2020. The recent pandemic is clearly proving dependence of our wellbeing and livelihoods on the state of nature. Looking for ways to revive our economy after the COVID-19 forced break, we have the opportunity to re-think this relationship. “Joining our efforts through the Biodiversity Task Force of South East Europe, we can advance regional conservation efforts and work together to achieve sustainable use of biodiversity. Healthy nature and conserved biodiversity are vital for the economic recovery of our society,” said **Shpresa Harasani, Member of the Biodiversity Task Force of South East Europe, Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania.**

“We stand ready to help shape the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, engaging in the process the Biodiversity Task Force equipped with required technical expertise and experience for this task,” said **Ms. Tanja Mišević, Deputy Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council** opening the consultations with European Commission Directorates General (DG) in charge of the process, DG NEAR and DG Environment, and moderated by the Regional Cooperation Council. “Stemming from the European Green Deal, it should certainly be flavoured with the reality of our region and complement the 2030 South East Europe Strategy and further regional economic integration,” she concluded.

[EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030](#), a comprehensive plan for protecting nature and reversing the degradation of ecosystems, published as part of the European Green Deal will help shape the Agenda. The Strategy is set to establish protected areas for at least 30% of both land and sea in Europe, restore degraded ecosystems and unlock 20 billion EUR/year for biodiversity through various sources, including EU funds, national and private funding.

“It is encouraging to see ambitious and measurable targets on conservation and restoration in the new EU Biodiversity Strategy and that there is a strong commitment on the EU part towards greening the Western Balkans agenda. IUCN and BDTF members stand ready to support it by contributing to priority setting and participating in discussions on resource mobilisation,” stressed **Boris Erg, Director of the IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.**

Established in 2017, the Biodiversity Task Force of South East Europe functions as a technical and advisory body of the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWG Env) of the Regional Cooperation Council. “The potential lines of action for us could be to inform on regional ecosystems’ restoration potential and to analyse the state of implementation of biodiversity commitments,” stressed **Dejan Radošević, Chair of the Biodiversity Task Force of South East Europe.** “It is also important to prepare a joint position of the EU and Western Balkans at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity,” he added.

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The Biodiversity Task Force of South East Europe (BDTF SEE) was established in 2017 under the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWG Env) of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) to advise on biodiversity aspects of the 2020 South East Europe Strategy, and encourage regional cooperation towards international biodiversity commitments encompassed under the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030), including the Aichi Targets of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) as well as implementation of EU biodiversity related directives. Its permanent members are nominated representatives of six economies: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* , North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. BDTF SEE Secretariat is hosted by IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (IUCN ECARO). The Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Implementation of Biodiversity Agreements (ORF BDU) project funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) provides support to the BDTF SEE and its Secretariat. For more details, please visit <http://bit.ly/2lJmqun>.

Social media hashtags

Primary: #BiodiversityDay #EUBiodiversity #EUGreenDeal

Secondary: #Biodiversity2020 #NatureBasedSolutions

** This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence*