

# PROJECT INFO

United Nations Development Programme



Photo by: UNDP/NGO Bioeco

## CHALLENGE

The country is home to 70 percent of the species diversity in the Balkans. Some of the largest remaining European populations of threatened mammals, such as the Brown Bear, Wolf, Balkan Lynx, Wildcat, Otter, and Marbled Polecat, as well as European populations of birds of prey, survive in the mountains and gorges of the country's protected areas.

Almost nine percent of the country is a protected area – including three national parks, four nature reserves, and 58 natural monuments, among others.

Increasingly, leaders and citizens are realizing the need to protect this natural wealth, not only for the future, but also because of the potential to increase tourism and deliver other economic benefits.

But urgent action is required: environmental degradation is accelerating, due, in a large part to increasing agricultural activity and the exploitation of resources – posing an immediate threat to the existence of numerous threatened species.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this project was to support the Government in strengthening the planning, establishment and management of the country's national system of protected areas.

The development of a legal, planning and institutional framework for protected areas helped reduce pressure on globally threatened species within the protected areas, and allows effective and efficient conservation of the globally significant biodiversity of the country.

## RESULTS

Representatives of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, UNDP and the expert community worked together on the development of the first ever Assessment and Evaluation of Biodiversity on National Level Report. This valuable tool allows for more informed decision making and undertaking of actions for biodiversity protection.

The first official National Catalogue of species, which documents each of the 17,604 species living in the country, was produced. This Catalogue is a strong basis for the future development of the country's Red List of Species.

Significant changes were initiated in the legislative and institutional framework for the establishment and management of the system. Three by-laws were enacted and 14 additional are in parliament procedure. This will significantly contribute to the country's efforts in meeting its obligations to the Convention on Biological Diversity and in enforcing the Law on Nature Protection. Also, for the first time ever, financial options and incentives, such as payment for ecosystem services, have been introduced into the Law on Nature Protection.

A National Biodiversity Information system (NBIS) and a web application have been established, offering scientifically verified data on over 30,000 species and habitats in the country.

A strong network has been created to ensure regular informing of relevant stakeholders about the best practices and latest innovations in their sectors. Now, through series of workshops and meetings on new topics such as preparation of management plans, financing of protected areas, and payment for ecosystem services, municipalities, NGOs, resource users and managers are regularly being brought together to exchange knowledge and experience and work together towards enhancing potentials and benefits.

A total of four (4) comprehensive studies on revalorization and management action plans have been prepared for the protected areas of Matka, Tikves, Jasen and Belasica, with the support of top notch international experts. These studies will greatly facilitate the implementation of the National Biodiversity Protection Strategy.

Public opinion support on the necessity for better environmental resource management has increased, thanks to a series of creative initiatives aiming to directly encourage participation of the general public, including a nation-wide photo contest and greater usage of social media tools.

## PROJECT TITLE:

Strengthening the Ecological, Institutional and Financial Sustainability of FYR Macedonia's Protected Areas.

## PARTNERS:

Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, City of Skopje, Municipality of Kavadarci, Municipality of Saraj

## FINANCED BY:

Global Environmental Facility

## BUDGET:

US\$ 1 million

## IMPLEMENTING PERIOD:

3 years (October 2007- March 2011)

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