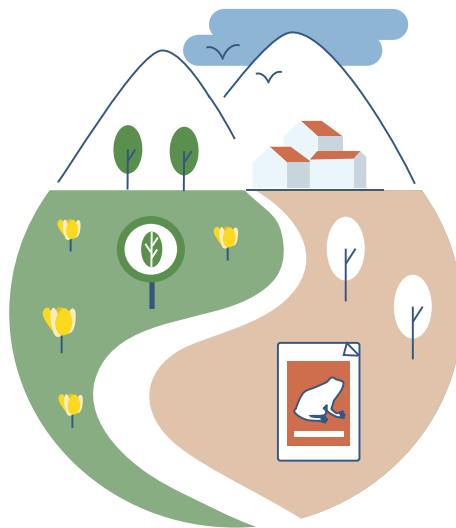
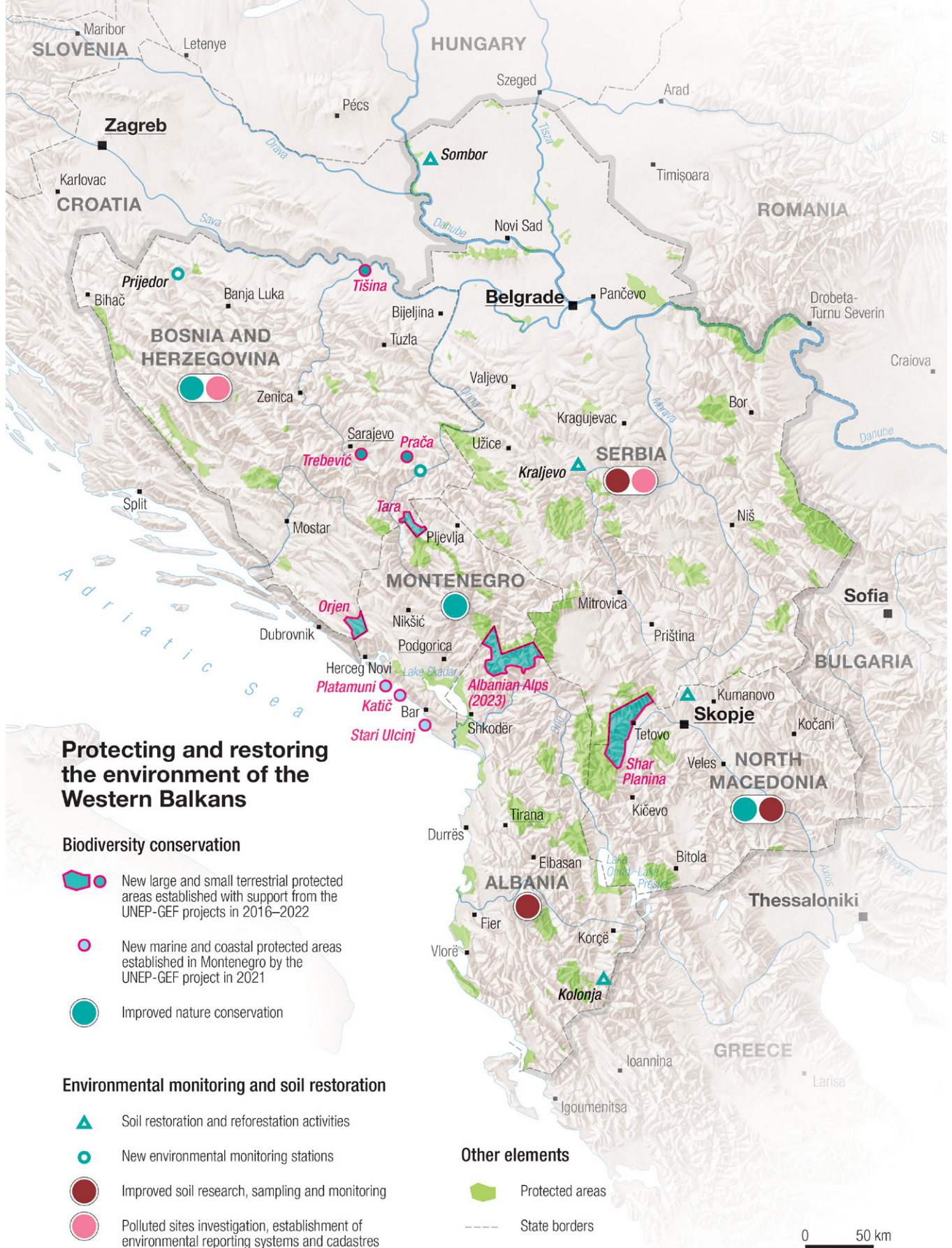


Protecting and restoring the environment of the Western Balkans

A visual summary and lessons learnt from the implementation of the UNEP-GEF projects





Protecting and restoring the environment of the Western Balkans

Biodiversity conservation

- New large and small terrestrial protected areas established with support from the UNEP-GEF projects in 2016–2022
- New marine and coastal protected areas established in Montenegro by the UNEP-GEF project in 2021
- Improved nature conservation

Environmental monitoring and soil restoration

- Soil restoration and reforestation activities
- New environmental monitoring stations
- Improved soil research, sampling and monitoring
- Polluted sites investigation, establishment of environmental reporting systems and cadastres

Other elements

- Protected areas
- State borders

0 50 km

Map produced by Zoi Environment Network, November 2022

Project management and regional coordination:

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
Harald Egerer, Head of UNEP Vienna Programme Office
Sonja Gebert, Associate Programme Management Officer
Iskra Stojanova, Project Coordination Specialist

National GEF project partners:**Albania**

- Ministry of Tourism and Environment
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
- National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA)
- Municipality of Kolonja
- Urban Research Institute (URI)
- Agricultural University of Tirana
- National Forest Agency (NFA)
- Tropoja and Malesi e Madhe Municipalities
- Civil Society Organizations (TOKA, INCA and other)

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Ministry of Environment and Tourism of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Ministry of Spatial Planning of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Fund for Environmental Protection of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Hydro-meteorological Institute of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology, Republika Srpska
- Ministry of Education and Culture, Republika Srpska
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Republika Srpska
- Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund, Republika Srpska
- Institute for protection of the cultural, historic and natural heritage of Republika Srpska
- Hydro-meteorological Institute of Republika Srpska
- Civil society organizations (CENER21 and other)

Montenegro

- Ministry of Ecology Physical Planning and Urbanism
- Environment Protection Agency
- Public Enterprise for Coastal Zone Management "Morsko Dobro"
- Institute for Hydrometeorology and Seismology
- Maritime Safety Administration
- Institute for Marine Biology in Kotor
- Local governments: Kotor, Budva, Bar and Ulcinj

North Macedonia

- Government of North Macedonia
- Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy
- National Park Shar Mountains and other protected areas
- National Academy of Sciences and Arts, state Universities and other scientific and research institutions
- Public enterprises for management of pastures and forests
- National Spatial Planning Agency and Crisis Management Centre
- Local municipalities involved in GEF5, GEF6 and GEF7 projects
- Civil Society Environmental Associations (MED, BFS, ESSA, Friends of Shara, CED, Gryka e Dervenit, Ljuboten and other)

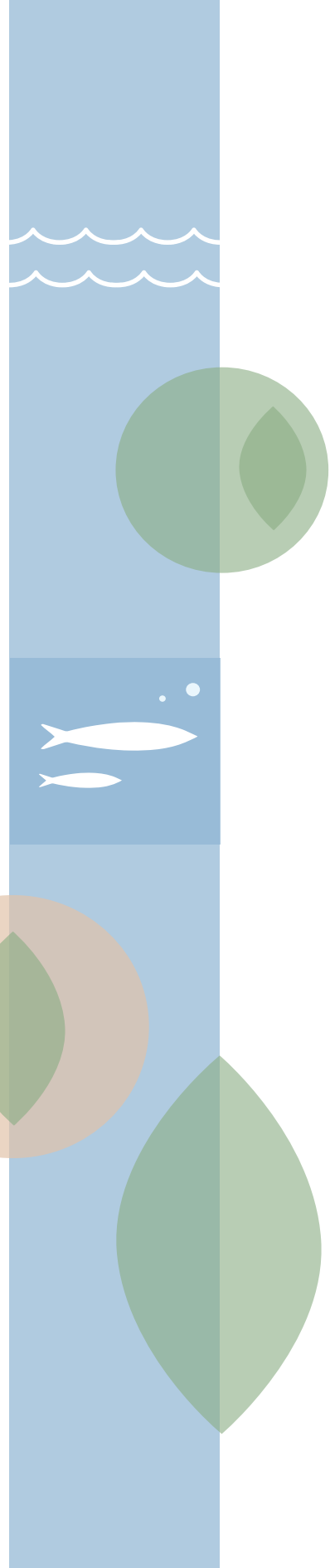
Serbia

- Ministry of Environmental Protection
- Serbian Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)
- Ministry of Mining and Energy
- Hydromet Service of Serbia
- Geological Survey of Serbia
- Provincial Secretariat for Urbanism and Environmental Protection
- Institute of Field and Vegetable Crops
- Soil Science Institute
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia
- Standing Conference of Cities and Municipalities
- City of Belgrade Institute for Public Health
- Forestry and Environmental Action (FEA)
- Other CSOs

International partners:

The Italian Ministry of the Ecological Transition (formerly the Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea), IUCN

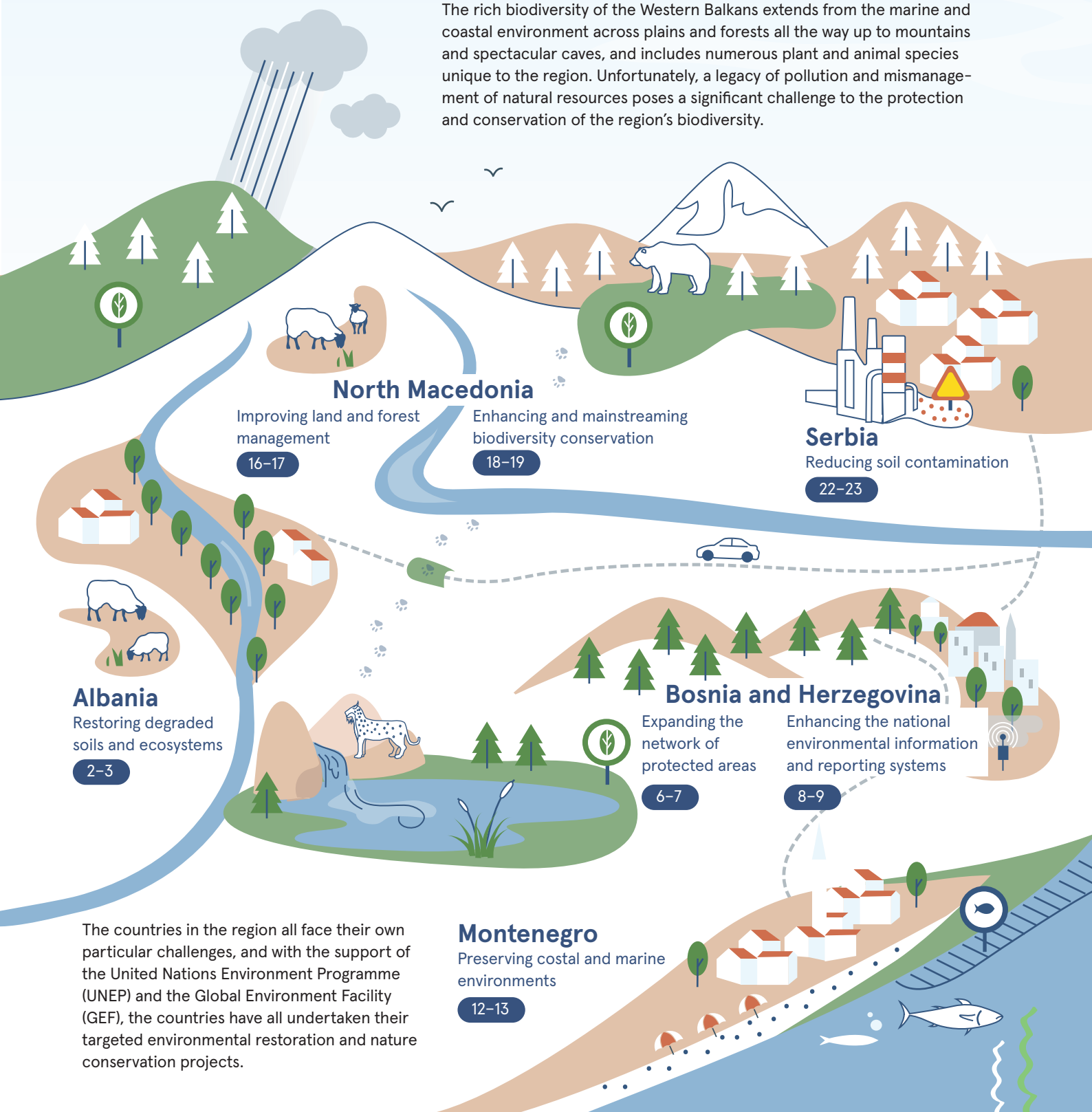
Produced by Zoi Environment Network (www.zoinet.org)



Protecting and restoring the environment of the Balkans

A visual summary of the UNEP-GEF projects results

The rich biodiversity of the Western Balkans extends from the marine and coastal environment across plains and forests all the way up to mountains and spectacular caves, and includes numerous plant and animal species unique to the region. Unfortunately, a legacy of pollution and mismanagement of natural resources poses a significant challenge to the protection and conservation of the region's biodiversity.



Albania

Restoring degraded soils and ecosystems

2-3

North Macedonia

Improving land and forest management

16-17

Enhancing and mainstreaming biodiversity conservation

18-19

Serbia

Reducing soil contamination

22-23

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Expanding the network of protected areas

6-7

Enhancing the national environmental information and reporting systems

8-9

Montenegro

Preserving coastal and marine environments

12-13

The countries in the region all face their own particular challenges, and with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the countries have all undertaken their targeted environmental restoration and nature conservation projects.

The UNEP Programme office in Vienna has three main pillars of work: it acts as the Secretariat to the Carpathian Convention; it hosts the global mountain hub; and it delivers the UNEP Western Balkans work programme, which includes implementing and executing GEF projects.

UNEP approach in the Western Balkans



Project management

All UNEP-GEF projects have strong national ownership, with objectives and activities aligned with national and global priorities. UNEP has active project offices in each country.



Partner engagement

UNEP maintains active engagement with environmental national and local authorities, civil society organizations, academia and the mass media. International partners and neighbouring countries participate in experience exchange.



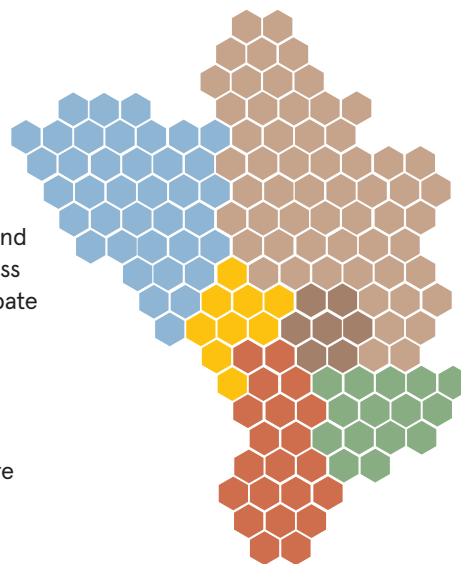
Science and assessments

Collaboration with numerous scientific organizations ensures evidence-based decision-making and solutions. Project results are transparent and available on UNEP and governmental websites.



Public awareness

Project teams and partners promote knowledge dissemination and interest among the general public and decision makers. Key findings and project results are covered by mass media.



Contribution to implementation of the multilateral agreements

Climate change

The Western Balkans region is highly vulnerable to climate change with strong interlinkages to air pollution. The UNEP-GEF projects contribute to implementation of the Paris Agreement and support the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) by working on air pollution and disaster risk reduction, climate proofing and adaptation.



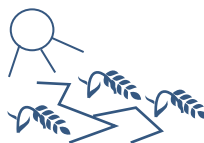
Biodiversity

Preservation of landscapes and seascapes in the Western Balkans is promoted through mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into land use and planning, addressing drivers and threats, and enhancing environmental protection networks under UNEP-GEF projects, which collectively contribute to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD).



Land degradation

The efforts toward meeting the Land Degradation Neutrality goals include land and forest assessments and conservation, reforestation and restoration. Decontamination of the polluted sites contributes to the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).



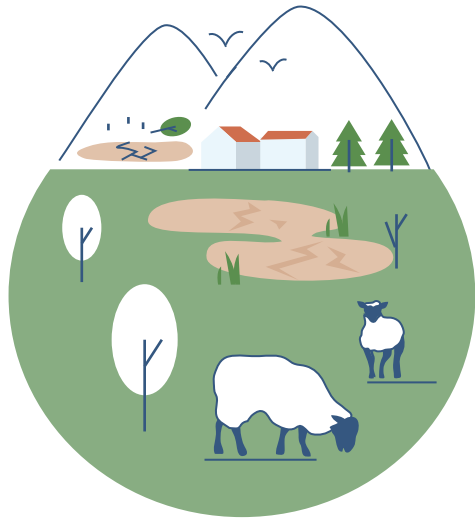
EU Green Deal and the regional networks

Preserving the shared mountains, land, rivers and seas requires regional collaboration and information exchange. UNEP supports the Western Balkans countries' progress toward adherence to the EU Green Deal principles and more specifically – Green Agenda for the Western Balkans through regional environmental forums, assessments, policy planning, knowledge and indicators.



Albania

Promoting ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management



Project budget



Total budget, million USD: **10.4**
GEF grant, million USD: **0.8**

Project duration



2017–2021

Project participants



Scientists



Farmers



Shepherds



Forest rangers



Local residents

Project components



Strengthening the legal and institutional framework on sustainable land management



Mapping and rehabilitating degraded lands

The UNEP-GEF project supported the sustainable management, restoration action and practices in **120 ha** of degraded forest and pastureland, out of the total 22 000 ha degraded forest and pasturelands mapped by the project.

Benefits of sustainable land management



Restored forests



More productive pasturelands



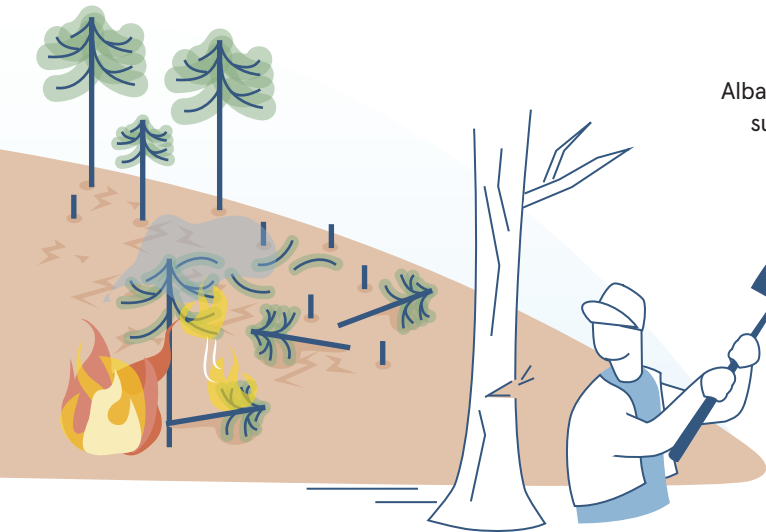
Protection against natural hazards



Knowledge and public awareness



Integrated land use planning



Albania's forests and pasturelands are depleted mainly by lack of sustainable management, illegal logging and forest fires. The project contributed to better and more sustainable forests and pasture land management practices being applied in Kolonja Municipality. The addition of land degradation indicators and monitoring practices, as well as mapping of degraded sites will better inform local processes for decision making and land use planning.

The project helped develop sub-legal acts on forestry, as well as a handbook on sustainable land management and land use, and provided training for national and local officials, farming households and resource managers to reduce pressures on natural resources in a 22 000 ha area. The project supported restoration practices, rehabilitation plans, and reforestation in Kolonja Municipality, and used World Soil Day, International Forest Day and other occasions to engage and inform the public, including local schools and youth.



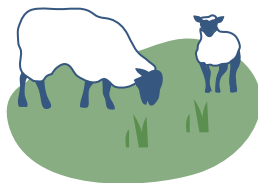
Benefits of project implementation



- Mapping of degraded lands
- Improved land use planning



- Improved forest science and monitoring
- Reforestation of selected areas



- Sustainable pasture management and grazing permit system



- Improved public awareness
- Prevention of soil erosion and forest degradation



National and local resource managers receiving on-site training on Sustainable Forest Management, Ossiach, Austria © Anjutinka Sullaj, MTE



Site preparations for International Forest Day, awareness raising activity with Kolonja high school students © Vis Dako, URI



Forest thinning and improvements during site rehabilitation activities in Kolonje © Vis Dako, URI



Bosnia and Herzegovina

Expanding protected areas network and enhancing biodiversity conservation

Project budget



Total budget, million USD: **14.9**
GEF grant, million USD: **1.4**

Project duration



2016–2022

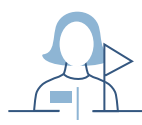
Project participants



Scientists



Forest managers and rangers



Tourism sector

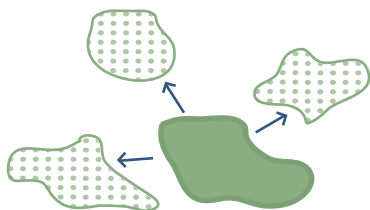


Officials



Local conservation groups and NGOs

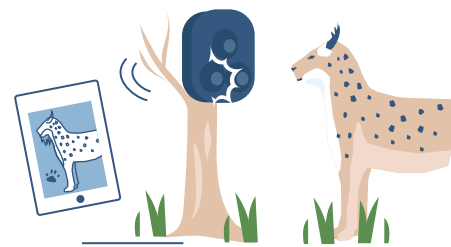
Project components



Expanding protected areas



Improving management effectiveness of the protected areas, skills of staff and information for the public



Enhancing biodiversity monitoring

Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the richest countries in Europe in terms of biodiversity, but until recently its protected areas covered only 118 000 ha, or about 3 per cent of the country's territory. By summer 2022, the project helped create six new protected areas, adding **40 000 ha**. Studies for another four areas and legal provisions are developed.

Biodiversity-rich and high-value natural sites that received protected status in Bosnia and Herzegovina



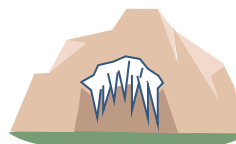
Forests



Waterfalls and river canyons



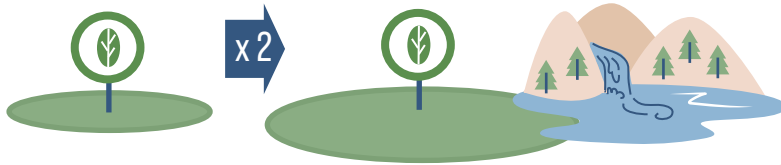
Wetlands and coastal zones



Caves and karst plains

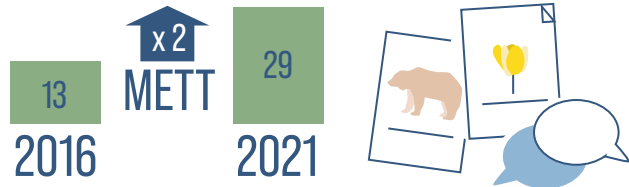


Mountains



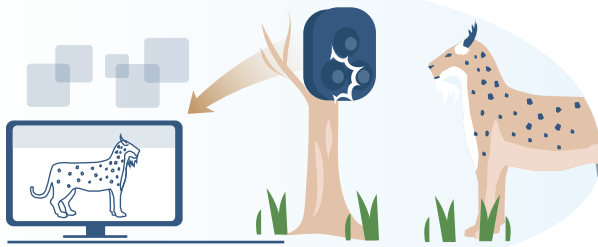
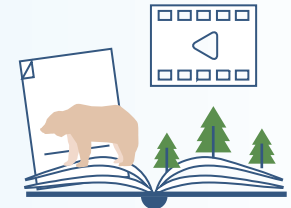
Thanks to feasibility studies, consultations and administrative work accomplished by the UNEP-GEF project, Bosnia and Herzegovina expects to add up to **10** new protected areas and thus, expand the protected areas network. The newly established areas include: Protected landscape Vjetrenica-Popovo Polje (4 710 ha), Nature Monument Orlovača Cave (278 ha), Tišina Habitat (196 ha), Tara Nature Park (14 453 ha), Orjen Nature Park (16 715 ha), Prača Nature Park (4 068 ha).

The project has supported improvements in management effectiveness and in biodiversity conservation via training for managers and rangers of protected area, by the design of new financing mechanisms and through an outreach campaign with WWF. As measured by the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (**METT**), scores have more than doubled – from **13** at the project's start to **29**.



The project initiated a special day for protected area managers, now an established event organized annually to improve communication and to foster experience exchange and cooperation among the protected areas of the country. People active in nature conservation received monthly newsletters on projects, funding and events, and public information materials heralding the unique natural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A biodiversity monitoring system has been strengthened with the development of two modules on protected areas and endangered species (Red lists). The Clearing House Mechanism was enhanced to offer top functionality for users, including protected area managers. Guidelines on the National Red List Index were developed and delivered through training.



Bosnia and Herzegovina

Enhancing environmental information management



Project budget



Total budget, million USD: **3.5**
GEF grant, million USD: **1.5**

Project duration



2014–2018

Project participants



Environmental
authorities



Hydromet
institutions



Local
authorities

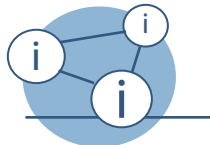
Project components



Benefits of improved environmental information and reporting systems



Better informed
decision making



Inter-agency data
collaboration



International
reporting



Reduced burden
of data collection
and analysis



Public access and
use of information



Core Indicators

The GEF project contributed to the design of a core set of environmental indicators consistent with global environmental commitments under the Rio Conventions on biodiversity, climate change and desertification. As a result, consistency, spatial coverage and time series of environmental data improved.

Following severe floods in 2014 a co-financing contribution from the Czech Republic and the Republika Srpska Fund for Environmental Protection was received in 2015 and a capacity building for flood prevention of two hydro-meteorological institutes in BiH had been enhanced. The project identified affected area and critical catchments, proposed improvements for the current practices for hydrology interventions and aims to replicate the related best practices country-wide. UN Environment and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) Secretariat supported Sarajevo in joining the BreatheLife campaign.

First official AQI has been developed by FHMZ and launched within WED 2019.

The two hydrometeorological institutes have benefited from an upgrade of the existing air quality monitoring stations in Ivan Sedlo and Banja Luka and the installation of two new stations in Prijedor and Goražde. Data from all air quality monitoring stations was connected to a unified online platform for real time display of air quality. The GEF project supported efforts by the environmental and local authorities and NGOs on air pollution reduction, and contributed to the “Beat Pollution” campaign.

An illustration of a cityscape with buildings, a car, and a radio tower. The radio tower has concentric circles around it, representing signal transmission. The text 'Air quality monitoring stations' is positioned below the tower.

Air quality monitoring stations

An illustration of a person holding a megaphone and a sign. The sign shows a factory with a red 'X' over it, indicating pollution. The text 'Awareness of health and environment links and air pollution' is positioned below the person.

Awareness of health and environment links and air pollution

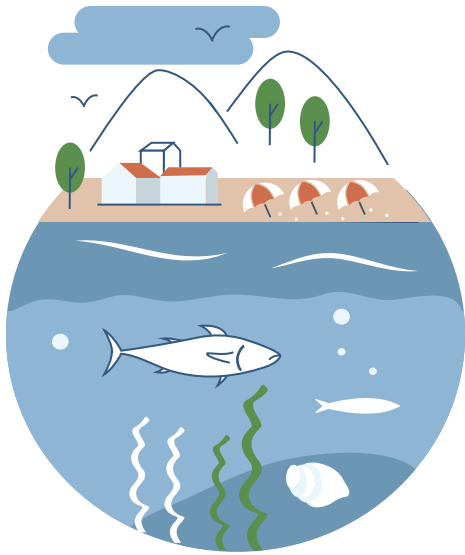




Protected forest landscape © Ana Čurić & RZZZ KIPN



Protected cave © Samir Solakovic



Montenegro

Protecting coastal and marine environments

Project budget



Total budget, million USD: **14**
GEF grant, million USD: **1.6**

Project duration



2017–2022

Project participants



Scientists



Officials

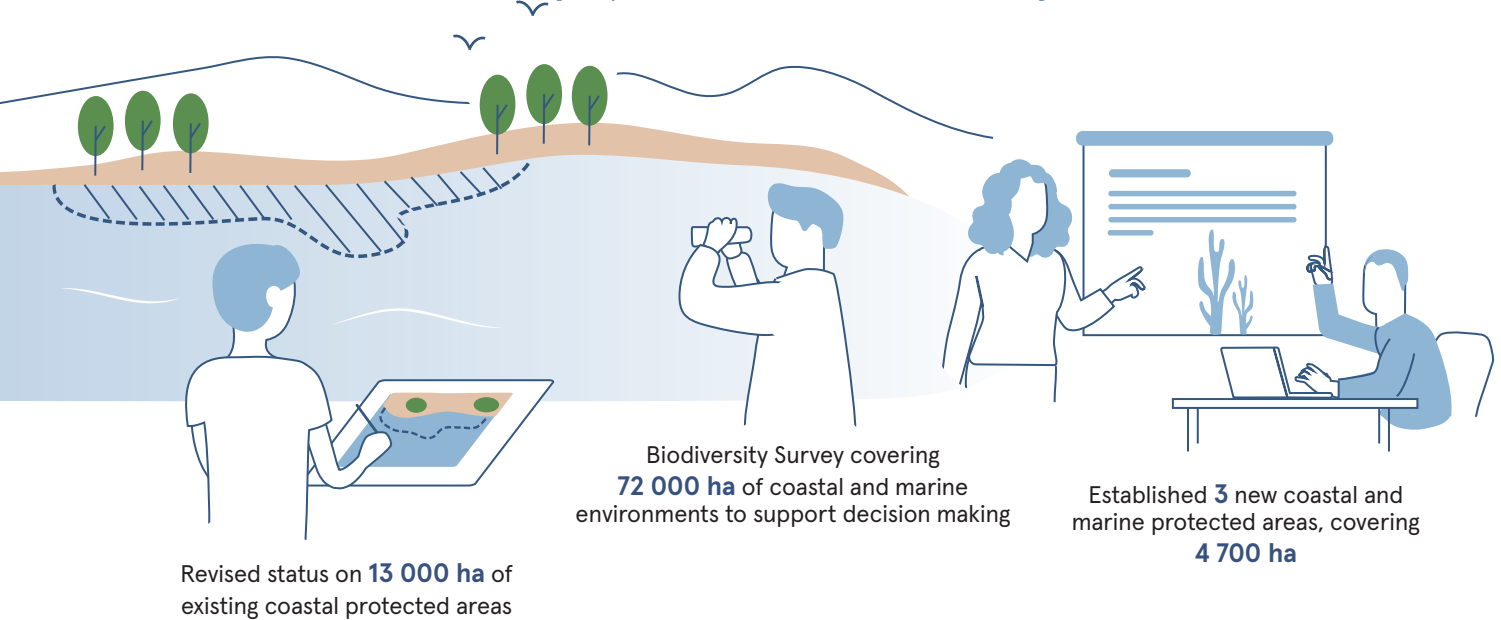


Local communities



Manager of coastal and marine protected areas

Selected project activities and accomplishments



Revised status on **13 000 ha** of existing coastal protected areas

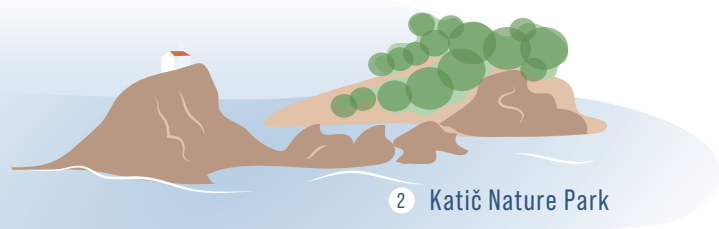
Biodiversity Survey covering **72 000 ha** of coastal and marine environments to support decision making

Established **3** new coastal and marine protected areas, covering **4 700 ha**

Establishing coastal and marine protected areas in Montenegro is essential to the effort to limit and prevent threats to marine biodiversity and to develop sustainable tourism. The project helped conduct extensive ecological studies, identify priority locations for new marine protected areas (MPAs) in Platamuni, Katič and Stari Ulcinj, facilitate training of experts and the manager of the MPAs, development of management plans, public consultations and an awareness-raising campaign, as well as procurement of the necessary equipment – including a patrolling boat for the newly designated marine protected areas.



The project helped set up Montenegro's first three coastal and marine protected areas – Platamuni (1 087ha), Katič (2 745 ha) and Stari Ulcinj (929 ha) – all proclaimed in 2021. Platamuni Nature Park has zone II (two) at three locations of particular biological importance – Žukovac Cove, Velika Krekavica Cove and Cape Platamuni. Katič Nature Park is important for conservation of seaweed and coral biocenosis around Katič islands, in Maljevik bay and Perčin bay, whereas Stari Ulcinj Nature Park is a shelter of various marine species and their habitats. The new conservation status of these areas will help to preserve seaweed, sea caves, coral organisms and endemic coastline species, and reduce pressures from wastewater, fishing, marine traffic, illegal construction and expansion of infrastructure.

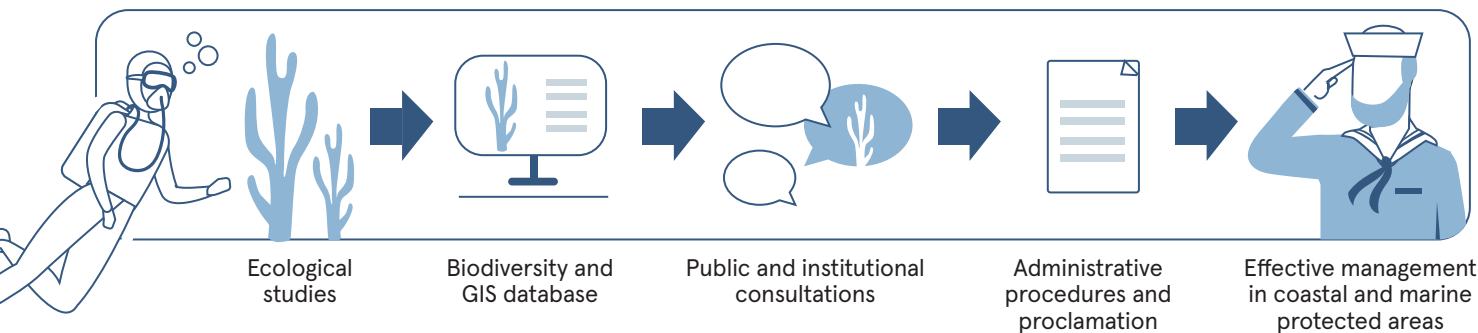


2 Katič Nature Park

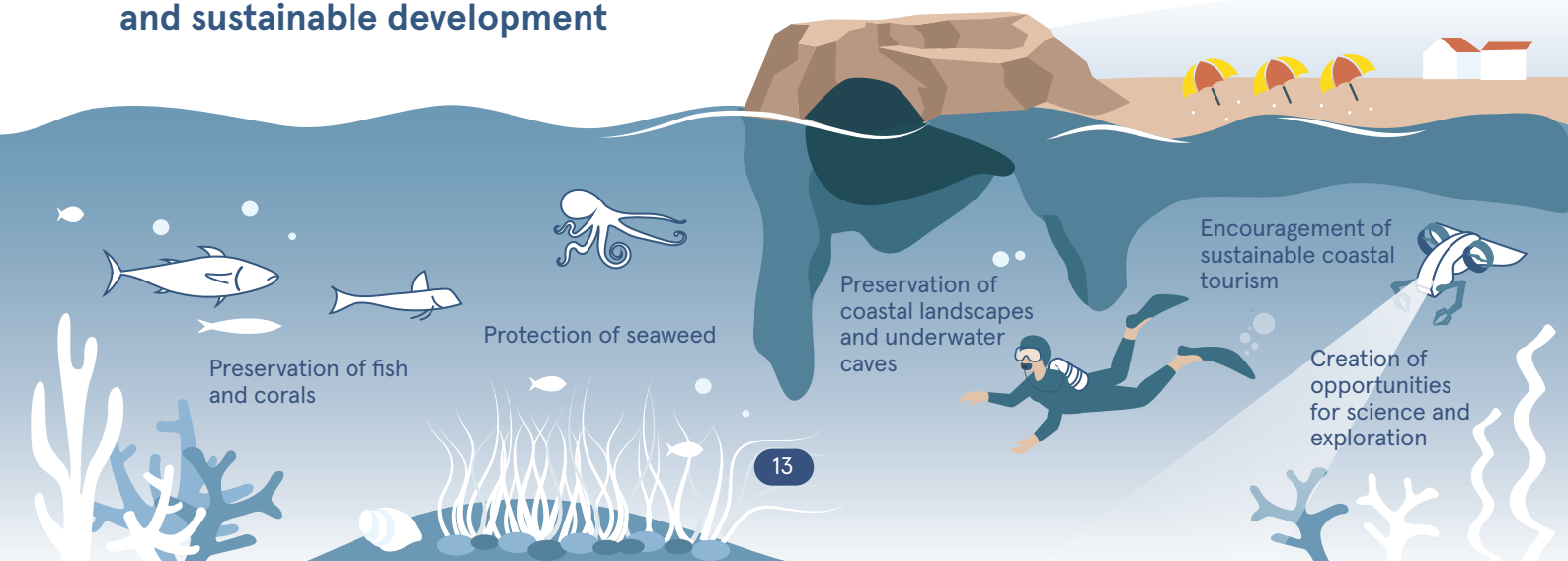


3 Stari Ulcinj Nature Park

The process behind the establishment of marine protected areas



How Montenegro's new coastal and marine protected areas support nature and sustainable development



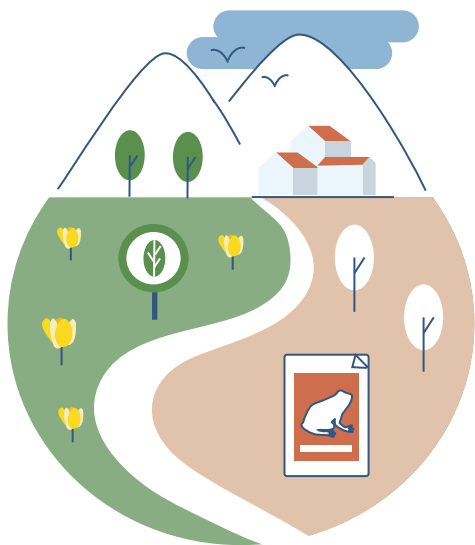




Training on marine protected areas management © UNEP



Stari Ulcinj © UNEP



North Macedonia

Expanding protected areas network and mainstreaming biodiversity into land use planning

Project budget



Total budget, million USD: **25.3**
GEF grant, million USD: **3.4**

Project duration



2016–2022

Project participants



Officials



Civil society



Academia,
universities

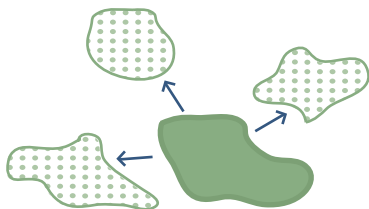


Local
communities,
land users



Protected area
rangers

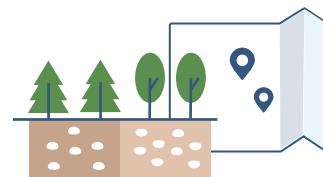
Project components



Expansion of the national
protected areas network



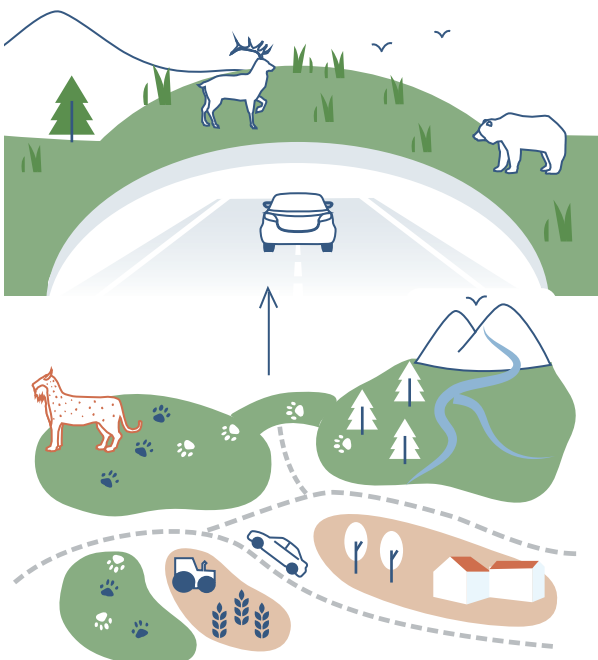
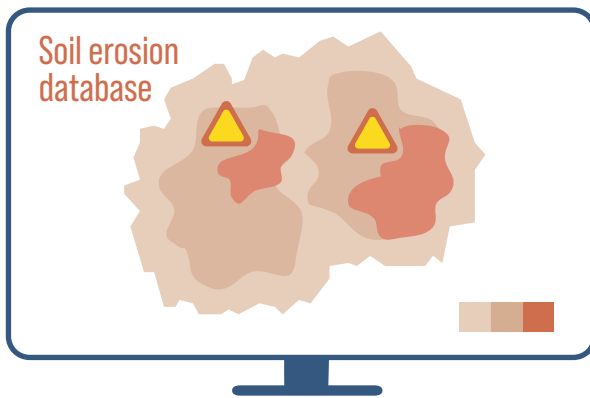
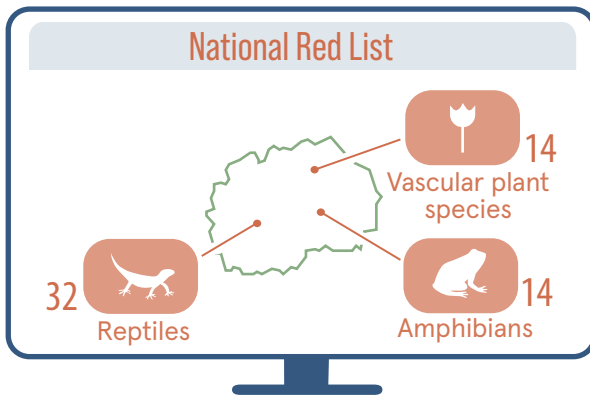
Increased effectiveness of
biodiversity management



Biodiversity mainstreaming
into land use planning

This UNEP-GEF project supported environmental and socio-economic studies and stakeholder consultations, and helped create Shar Mountains (Šar Planina, 2 747 m) National Park in June 2021, which expanded North Macedonia's protected areas by **62 705 ha** or 2.5 per cent. The national park has four zones that are managed according to the plan designed by the project, and together with the neighbouring countries' protected areas, represents one of the largest transboundary protected areas in Europe.

The project also helped to perform the reassessment of Ohrid Lake Monument of Nature and development of the management plan. The project supported numerous meetings, public campaigns and promotional events, taking into consideration the rights of vulnerable groups and gender equality.



Assessments and studies

The project supported assessments and studies for the national Red List and the design of an online platform (redlist.moepp.gov.mk) hosted by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning. This work involved the collaboration of local and international (IUCN) scientists, NGOs and officials, and focused on setting up a national framework for conducting national Red Lists assessments, as well as assessing the conservation status of all reptile and amphibian species in the country, including a subset of important plant species.

The framework of the national Red List of North Macedonia is consistent with the global IUCN Red List framework. As more and more species groups are being assessed, it will increasingly support the country's conservation policies, information needs, and analyses of the status, trends and threats to species.

Soil erosion mapping

The project developed a new national soil erosion map, a database of soil sealing and soil organic matter loss for three pilot areas – Strumica, Ohrid and Prilep regions, as well as forest vegetation maps for pilot sites in Maleševo region.

Sustainable use of forest products

An assessment of the status and use of non-timber forest products was performed, in addition to suggested quotas for bearberry, helping to inform environmental decisions on specific limitations and regulations on collection, use and trade.

Protected areas and ecological connectivity

The project trained rangers, protected area managers, inspectors and staff of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning in effective management of protected areas, as well as spatial planners and forestry experts in mainstreaming biodiversity into land use and forestry planning.

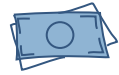
Ecological links were reassessed, solutions proposed and manuals prepared for improved urban and land-use planning that considers biodiversity concerns, especially of large carnivores and green infrastructure development. The project helped identify forests with high ecological values, and helped develop specific guidelines for the Buković and Belasica pilot areas.



North Macedonia

Promoting sustainable land management in the most vulnerable mountainous landscapes

Project budget



Total budget, million USD: **25.5**
GEF grant, million USD: **3.7**

Project duration



2019–2023
(planned)

Project participants



Disaster management authorities



Local residents



Officials



Forest rangers



Shepherds

Project components



Strengthening the legal and institutional framework for sustainable land and forest management



Implementing sustainable land and forest management practices in the most vulnerable mountainous regions



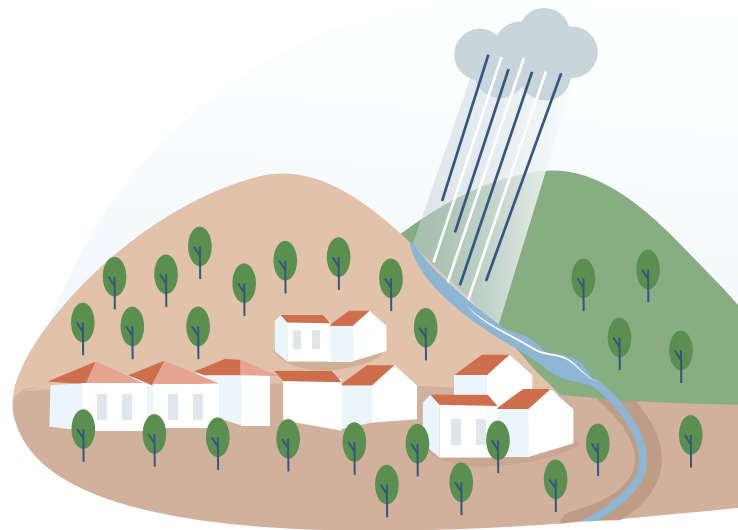
Improving knowledge management and public awareness

This project supports the development of a soil protection law and strategy, guidelines for soil quality monitoring and local soil protection, as well as environmental action plans for the targeted municipalities. Soil erosion control measures will reduce the devastating effects of torrential rains and flooding, whereas three pilot sites will demonstrate good practices for forest management, reforestation, ecological approaches for erosion control, regulation of grazing, fire prevention and control of illegal logging.



Uncontrolled forest exploitation and unsustainable agricultural practices in the mountains have led to severe erosion and increased susceptibility to flooding, and improper selection of trees and poor forest management undermined previous afforestation efforts.

The project aims to develop and strengthen policy and institutions for sustainable land and forest management, and to reduce the impacts of land degradation in the north-western mountain regions of North Macedonia. Nature-based solutions, including science-backed reforestation, will be applied to lower the risk and severity of flooding.



Expected project benefits



Improved pasture conditions and management practices



Improved forest management and increased coverage



More effective policy making related to soil and forest resources



Improved land use planning and erosion control



Increased protection and reduced risk from natural hazards



Sheep and shepherd dogs Šarplaninec © Ivica Spasovski



Biking to Leshnica valley © Aleksandar Panajotov



Beekeeper from Veshalla village © Ivica Spasovski



Serbia

Preparing the groundwork for cleaner soil

Project budget



Total budget, million USD: **7**
GEF grant, million USD: **0.7**

Project duration



2015–2021

Project participants



Industry and clean-tech



Scientists and educators



Local and national environmental officials



Mass media



Youth

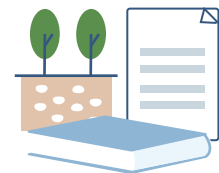
Project components



Improved institutional, policy and science cooperation on integrated land use management



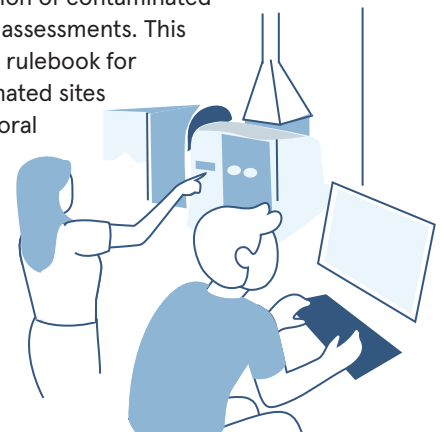
Support for local authorities and communities in planning and implementing integrated natural resources management



Capacity-building, awareness raising, information-sharing

Serbia's environmentally unsustainable development resulted in industrial pollution and uncontrolled waste disposal. In an effort to reduce pressures on soil and to foster soil remediation skills and efforts, this project identified more than **700** polluted sites, including **100** sites with confirmed contamination. The project successfully applied a methodology for environmental and human health risk assessment to **32** sites, and established a **Cadastre of Contaminated Sites** managed by the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA).

For **14** priority polluted sites, the project recommends excavation, relocation to a secure location, stabilization, phytoremediation and other appropriate methods. Italy's experts shared their experience in pollution analysis and remediation and trained local officials in investigation of contaminated sites and preliminary risk assessments. This process also resulted in a rulebook for identification of contaminated sites and improved cross-sectoral collaboration.





The project helped local authorities in the analysis and testing of trade-off measures, including clean-up and remedial actions at open unauthorized landfills in Kraljevo and Sombor, developed guidelines for local soil monitoring programmes for self-government and strengthened capacities for soil quality monitoring and reporting.

The project received significant attention from scientists and the mass media. Information materials on polluted industrial sites and soil conditions were disseminated through a national website on land degradation. Research papers and information on project results were published and presented at local and international conferences and used to inform ongoing projects on the investigation and clean-up of pollution. In addition, the project helped organize awareness events on World Soil Day in 2017 and 2018. As a result of the project, cooperation among institutions dealing with contaminated sites improved.





Soil sampling at industrial complex "Toza Markovic", Kikinda © Aleksandra Siljic Tomic



Ash landfill at Kostolac thermal power plant © Nemanja Jevtic



Hazardous waste storage at “Zupa” chemical industry, Krusevac © Dragana Vidojevic



Expert Working Group site visit to the smelting complex in Bor © Milenko Jovanovic

Albania

Biodiversity conservation and resilience to climate change in the Albanian Alps

Project budget



Total budget, million USD: **10.1**
GEF grant, million USD: **1.4**

Project duration



2023–2026

Project participants



Officials



Farmers



Shepherds

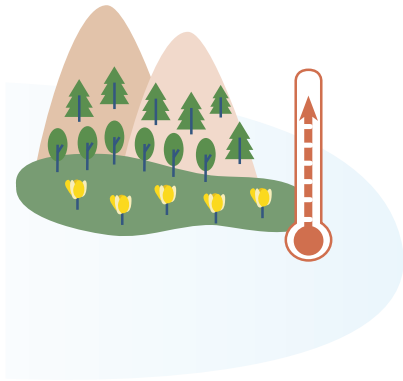


Protected area rangers

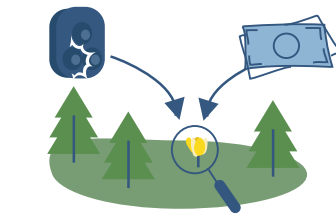


Local residents

Project components



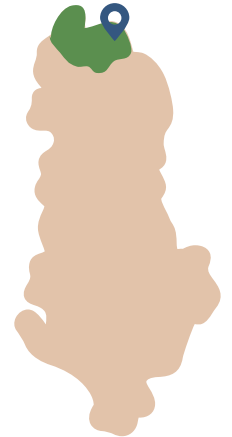
Strengthening the resiliency of mountain landscapes to climate change



Establishing an enabling environment for effective management of the Albanian Alps National Park



Scale-up of lessons learned on sustainable financing, climate resilience, strengthened practical experience and “know-how” to address threats to protected areas



Bosnia and Herzegovina

Towards Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)

Project budget



Total budget, million USD: **7.3**
GEF grant, million USD: **0.8**

Project duration



2023–2025

Project participants



Officials



Farmers



Shepherds



Scientists

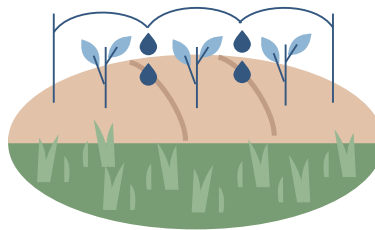


Local residents

Project components



Stronger institutions and better policies to achieve LDN targets



Demonstration of best practices



LDN monitoring and reporting

North Macedonia

Biodiversity conservation and sustainable land and tourism management

Project budget



Total budget, million USD: **58**
GEF grant, million USD: **3.7**

Project duration



2023–2027

Project participants



Officials



Tourism managers



Shepherds

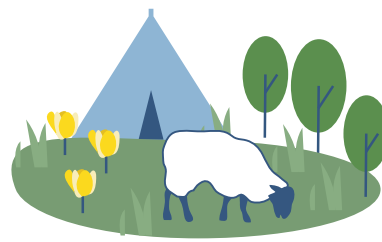


Protected area rangers

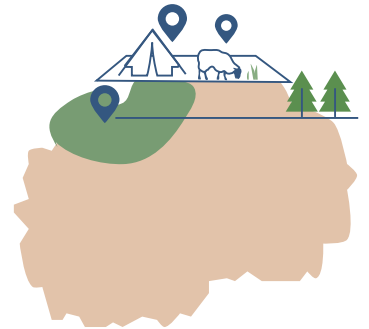


Local residents

Project components



Scale-up of integrated land and biodiversity management country-wide



Integrated Biodiversity and Land Degradation (Neutrality) Monitoring and Reporting System

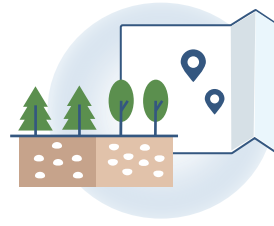
Benefits from implementation of the UNEP-GEF projects



Stakeholders engagement, cross-sector links



Red List updates, studies, new knowledge



Soil and forest maps and methodologies



Nature-focused land use planning



Information for policy makers



Information for youth and students



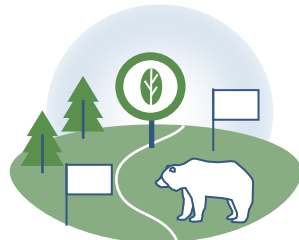
Public awareness campaigns



Mass media coverage



Experience exchange



Transboundary nature conservation and cooperation



Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals



Contribution to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

As the leading global voice on the environment, UNEP works with the GEF to support countries in implementation of their national strategies and goals on climate change, biodiversity and land degradation. The UNEP-GEF projects in the Western Balkans reflect the UNEP values enabling the public and policymakers to improve the quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

For more information about the UNEP-GEF project results, please consult the following online sources:

Albania

- Project brief: <https://www.unep.org/regions/europe/our-projects/breathing-life-back-degraded-land-albania>
- Project page with photo and video materials: <https://www.kolonja.gov.al/promovimi-i-menaxhimit-te-qendrueshem-te-tokes-mqt-ne-shqiperi-nepermjete-rikuperimit-te-integruar-te-ekosistemeve>

North Macedonia

- Project brief on land degradation: <https://www.unep.org/regions/europe/our-projects/building-shield-against-flooding-vulnerable-areas-north-macedonia>
- Project brief on biodiversity: <https://www.unep.org/regions/europe/our-projects/leveling-national-biodiversity-conservation-north-macedonia>
- Promotional video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKNxgnbX4W4>

Serbia

- Promotional video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3TUMKBbfMU>
- Project overview: <https://www.unep.org/regions/europe/our-projects/preparing-groundwork-cleaner-soil-serbia>
- Serbia's land degradation website: <https://degradacijazemljista.sepa.gov.rs>

Montenegro

- Promotional video (not developed within the scope of the project): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unCoXjtZPMQ>
- Project brief: <https://www.unep.org/regions/europe/our-projects/coast-adriatic-sea-better-protected-montenegro>

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Project brief: <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/coming-clean-air-bosnia-and-herzegovina>
- Promotional video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zy_vX0he7N8
- Map of protected areas in the Republika Srpska: <http://e-priroda.rs.ba/en/protectedsites>
- Map of protected areas in the Federation of BiH: <http://e-prirodafbih.ba/en/protectedsites>

Protected areas designated under the UNEP-GEF project:

- Landscape Tišina: <http://e-priroda.rs.ba/en/protectedsites/details/15/zasticeno-staniste-tisina>
- Nature Park Tara: <http://e-priroda.rs.ba/en/protectedsites/details/34/park-priode-tara>
- Nature Park Prača: <http://e-priroda.rs.ba/en/protectedsites/details/30/park-priode-praca>
- Nature Park Orjen: <http://e-priroda.rs.ba/en/protectedsites/details/29/park-priode-orjen>
- Protected Landscape Vjetrenica-Popovo polje: <http://e-prirodafbih.ba/en/protectedsites/details/12/zasticeni-pejzaz-vjetrenica-popovo-polje>
- Nature Monument Mokranjska Miljacka: <http://e-priroda.rs.ba/en/protectedsites/details/32/spomenik-priode-peci-na-mokranjska-miljacka>



The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**, established in 1972, has been the global authority that sets the environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the [UN system](#) and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

UNEP's mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by [inspiring](#), [informing](#), and [enabling](#) nations and people to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

UNEP works on delivering transformational change for people and nature by drilling down on the root causes of the three planetary crises of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste. UNEP employs seven interlinked subprogrammes for action: [Climate Action](#), [Chemicals and Pollutions Action](#), [Nature Action](#), [Science Policy](#), [Environmental Governance](#), [Finance and Economic Transformations](#) and [Digital Transformations](#).



The **Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development** is a globally accepted pledge for poverty eradication and sustainable development achievement on a global scale by 2030, considering three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental. At its heart are the 17 **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership.



The **Global Environment Facility (GEF)** serves as financial mechanism for several **multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)**, such as the three Rio Conventions (UNCBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC), which are linking their mandates to the development agenda, and strategies, and provides support to Countries for scalable and innovative solutions to achieve global environmental benefits across a broad range of domains, including Biodiversity, Chemicals and Waste, Climate Change Adaptation, Climate Change Mitigation, Forests, Freshwaters, Land Degradation, Oceans.



The GEF's mission is closely aligned with the SDGs, and therefore can play a key role in supporting countries with their implementation. It mainly addresses Goals 13 on climate action, 14 on life below water, and 15 on life on land; however considering that GEF makes innovative, catalytic and integrated investments to achieve transformational change in other areas, it is also contributing toward achievement of several other goals.



The **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration** – a rallying call for the protection and revival of ecosystems all around the world – aims to halt environmental degradation, and to restore ecosystems to achieve global goals. Only with healthy ecosystems can we enhance people's livelihoods, counteract climate change, and stop the collapse of biodiversity.

The UN Decade runs from 2021 through 2030, the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals and the timeline scientists have identified as the last chance to prevent catastrophic climate change.



The **European Green Deal**, introduced in December 2019 by the European Commission, is an integral part of the Commission's strategy, contributing as well to implement the United Nation's 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goal.

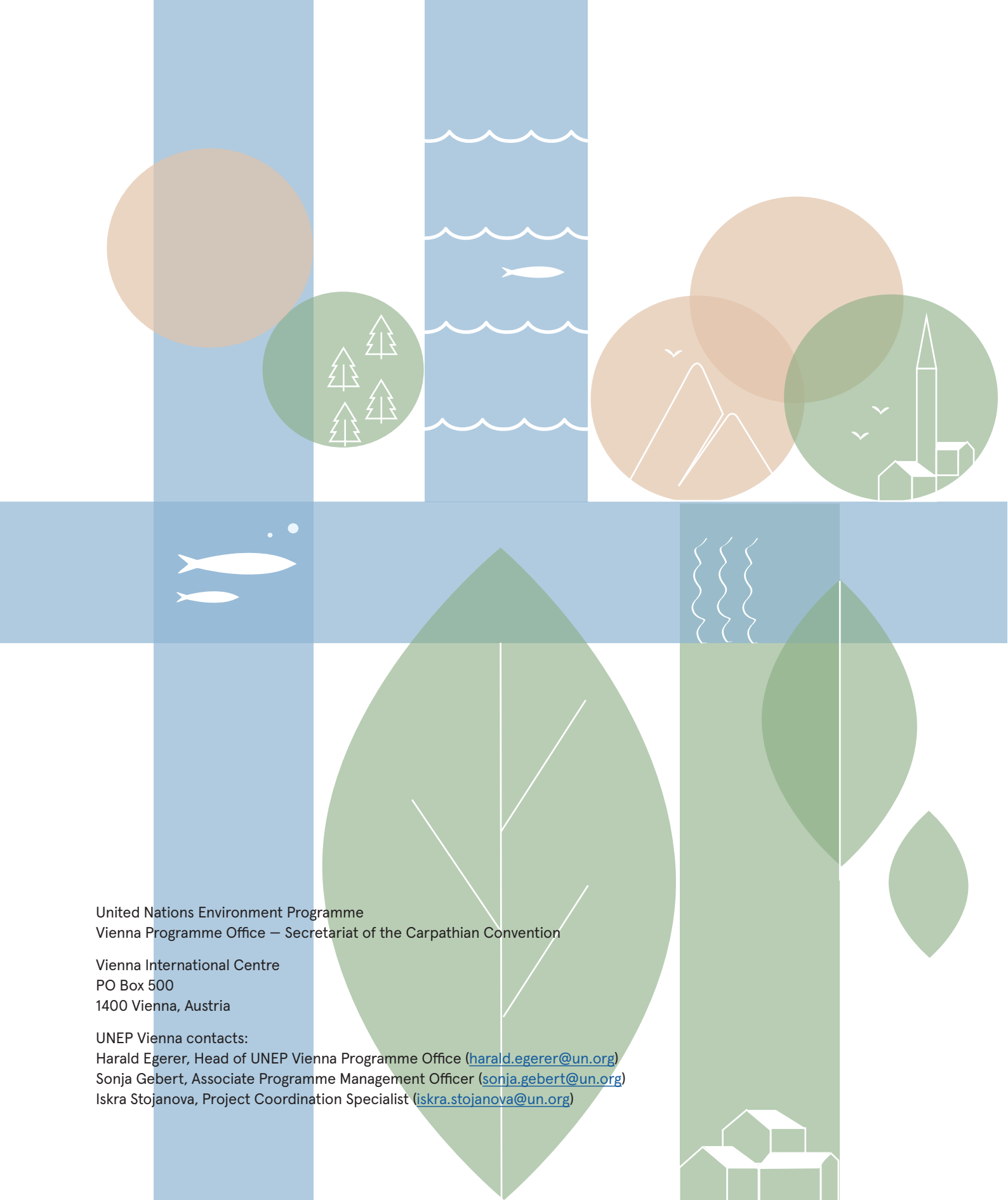
It serves as Europe's growth plan aiming to make it a climate-neutral, resource-efficient, innovative, and socially inclusive continent. It includes several goals spanning many different policy areas, such as Clean Energy, Sustainable industry, Buildings and Renovation, Sustainable Agriculture Farm to Fork, Eliminating Pollution, Sustainable mobility, Biodiversity and Sustainable Finance.

The six economies in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) have a strong economic potential, but face a major convergence challenge in relation to countries in the European Union. Encouraging progress has been made in the past two decades in terms of regional cooperation and advances towards eventual EU membership.

The **Green Agenda for the Western Balkans** included in the Communication on an Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans adopted by the European Commission. It further details the five pillars of the Green Agenda: (1) climate action, including decarbonisation, energy and mobility, (2) circular economy, addressing in particular waste, recycling, sustainable production and efficient use of resources, (3) biodiversity, aiming to protect and restore the natural wealth of the region, (4) fighting pollution of air, water and soil and (5) sustainable food systems and rural areas. Digitalization will be a key enabler for the above five pillars in line with the concept of the dual green and digital transition. The objectives of these pillars have been pursued through concrete actions and supported by mechanisms and financial instruments.

For over 15 years, assisting the governments of the Western Balkans, UNEP has been directly supporting the region in achieving the global environmental goals, through implementation of numerous projects and initiatives. UNEP implementation modality includes a participatory approach with an array of partners, from academic institutions to local communities, civil society organizations and the private sector. UNEP has assisted in achieving biodiversity and land management and protection, but also tackling climate change and air pollution, as well as environmental monitoring and reporting. This has been done with the support provided by GEF and other bilateral donors. UNEP will continue assisting the region through active implementation of activities contributing to achieving global and European targets for environmental protection, such as the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.

** 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.*



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