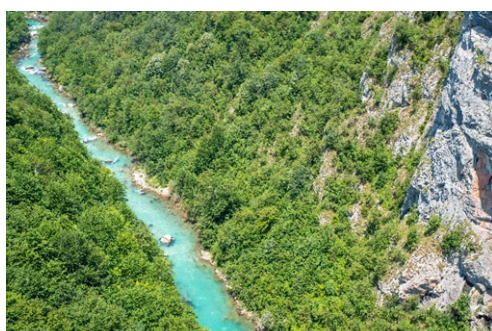




PROJECT INFORMATION

Nature-Aligned Western Balkans: strengthening biodiversity governance and dialogue



Tara river, Durmitor,
Montenegro

Source: iStock Blue Cat Studio

Background

The integration of Western Balkan countries into the European Union is a strategic priority, with environmental sustainability as a central pillar of this process. The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB) was created to address the region's ecological challenges and align environmental standards with those of the EU.

The Biodiversity Task Force for the Western Balkans (BDTF) and IUCN as its Secretariat and the regional coordinator for Pillar 5 of the GAWB Action Plan, focus on protecting and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity through measures to conserve natural habitats, safeguard endangered species, and promote sustainable land use.

Project details

The project objective is a significant transformation in biodiversity governance across the Western Balkans region by creating a structured framework that links technical support with high-level political endorsement. By supporting the implementation of the GAWB Action Plan, and enhancing alignment with EU biodiversity standards under Chapter 27 of the EU environmental acquis, the initiative will promote a transformative shift in regional conservation policy and practice. It will contribute to more coherent biodiversity policymaking and enhanced institutional capacity through collaboration with existing regional coordination mechanisms (i.e. Regional Working Group on GAWB and BDTF).

The project will also reinforce ongoing efforts to promote ecological connectivity and cross-border biodiversity networks, including the expansion of the Emerald Network as a stepping stone toward Natura 2000 designation. By delivering training programs, peer exchanges, and technical support, the initiative will equip national and regional institutions to strengthen biodiversity governance and enhance implementation of relevant EU directives.

Updated: March 2026

Project region: Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia)

Duration: 11/2025 – 11/2027

Beneficiaries: Environmental authorities, Regional Cooperation Council, Biodiversity Task Force, civil society organisations

Implementing organisation: IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO)

Project number: 3725 510103

Thematic management:

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Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP)

for environmental protection in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and other countries neighbouring the European Union – a programme of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

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