

# Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Biodiversity

## The challenge

South-East Europe is exceptionally rich in biodiversity and hosts a variety of ecosystems, ranging from Mediterranean coastal zones across river, forest and steppe areas to alpine high mountains. A variety of flora and fauna occurring is endemic in the Western Balkans. There is also an above-average abundance of agrobiodiversity.

Nevertheless, the importance of the species and ecosystem diversity and the genetic diversity at regional, national and local levels is insufficiently covered and therefore not adequately protected and properly integrated into development plans. Accession to the European Union (EU) is a common goal for countries of South-East Europe region. The implementation of the complex and inter-sectoral European environmental law in particular puts cooperation countries in front of great challenges. The core elements of European environmental law with respect to biodiversity are the Birds Directive and the Fauna-Flora-Habitat Directive as well as the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020 which was adopted in 2011. Since the initial situation is quite comparable, the candidate countries can learn from the experiences of Croatia as the youngest member of the EU. Although the countries of South-East Europe can already demonstrate visible first successes in the creation of political and legal frameworks to maintain their biodiversity, the implementation remains inadequate at the operational level. There are significant deficits in the implementation of EU directives, e.g. in the area of protected area designation and management but also in the execution of other

Name	Open Regional Fund for South-East – Biodiversity
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Countries	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia (FYR), Montenegro, Serbia and Croatia (as a mentor country)
Lead executing agency	Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)
Duration	2015 – 2018
Project value	3 Mio Euro

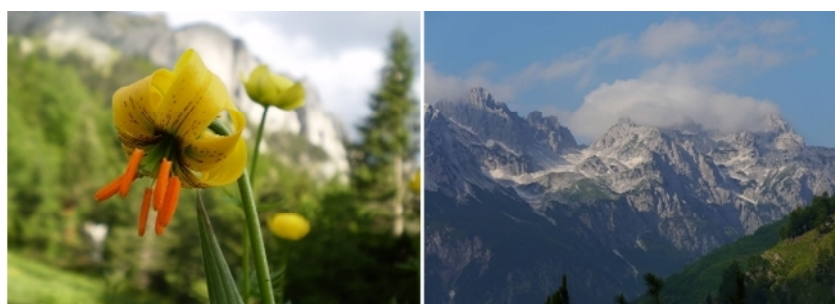
regulatory instruments, as for example the application of and compliance with environmental impact assessments as well as the collection and use of biodiversity-related data. Consequently, there are substantial shortcomings in the integration of biodiversity related issues in relevant decision-making processes for the formulation of policies, strategies or investment plans. After all, climate change increasingly threatens biological resources.

## Goal

Increased regional cooperation in South-East Europe is contributing to the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020.

## Our approach

The project Open Regional Fund Biodiversity (ORF BD) is designed to support conflict-sensitive planning and implementation, and opportunities for the involvement of civil



society are identified and supported. ORF BD promotes regional cooperation of biodiversity-related organisations - in particular the environment ministries and environmental agencies as well as the ministries that deal with or impact on biodiversity and ecosystems, including forestry and agriculture, the municipal administrations, academic institutions and research institutes as well as non-governmental environmental organisations. This is done through the implementation of regional sub-projects involving at least organisations from three countries. ORF BD cooperates closely with existing regional initiatives and networks and supports partnership formation to achieve intended effects and increase sustainability.

## Impact – achievements to date

To achieve the objectives of the project, specific activities in three fields of action are envisaged, so that the planned results of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020 and the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity 2011-2020 (Aichi targets) can be achieved:

1. Increase the knowledge of relevant governmental administration at national and local level as well as academia and private sector actors in the region regarding the economic value of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Through formalised regional assessments and scoping studies, capacity-building activities and institutionalised partnerships, decision base will be improved to support ecosystem conservation and restoration investments, and the development of sustainable land use plans and investment projects in key sectors such as agriculture, forestry, tourism and energy (hydropower);
2. Improve the skills of regional network partners particularly of environment ministries and agencies to report on biodiversity status and protection, e.g. through formulation and harmonisation of biodiversity monitoring and reporting related to endangered target species and priority ecosystems including enhancing data collection bases, establishing data quality control and data sharing

systems, definition of comparable regional indicators, and mapping of priority regional protected areas on the basis of internationally standardised categories;

3. Measures for transboundary management of ecosystems and the protection of priority species in identified transboundary habitats e.g. the regional Dinaric Arc Park and regional expansion of protected areas on the basis of Natura 2000 including implementation measures such as participatory development of management plans and the implementation of pilot actions with replication character, e.g. protection and sustainable use of endangered plants and education campaigns of the different actors.

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