

The background of the image is a close-up, high-angle shot of a blue corrugated metal surface. The ridges of the metal run diagonally from the top-left towards the bottom-right, creating a strong sense of depth and texture. The lighting is bright, highlighting the metallic sheen and the repetitive pattern of the ridges. In the lower right quadrant, the text 'EURONATUR' is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Below it, the text 'OUR YEAR 2023' is written in a white, handwritten-style font.

EURONATUR
OUR YEAR 2023

EDITORIAL & CONTENT



Dear Sir or Madam,
dear Friends of EuroNatur!

„EuroNatur is positively stubborn“. This compliment was recently paid to us by a long-time EuroNatur donor. We are delighted they feel that way. It is indeed our ambition to take responsibility for the issues to which we have committed ourselves, i.e. to not abandon areas and partners with whom we endeavour to maintain long-term ties – in good times and in bad.

Getting involved, speaking out publicly – especially in the countries of the Western Balkans, where EuroNatur has its geographical focus, this is easier said than done. In particular where corruption, manipulation and arbitrary state interference are on the agenda, people need a high level of courage and tolerance to frustration to stand up for a healthy environment. This makes international support and European solidarity all the more important.

On behalf of the EuroNatur Presiding Committee, I would like to thank all our donors and funders who make it possible for us to provide this support to our partners in conservation. The EuroNatur Annual Report for 2023 shows you once again that it pays off – and how much so.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. Dr. Thomas Potthast
President of EuroNatur Foundation

2 Editorial	3 Orientation map	4 Europe's forests	8 Europe's rivers
14 European Green Belt	16 Bear & Wolf	20 Europe's migratory birds	24 Mentoring programme
26 EU policy	28 Some other developments that made us happy in 2023	30 Media & PR work	
32 Economic situation in the 2023 financial year	40 A testament for European nature		
41 Dealing with potential risks	42 Transparency	44 EuroNatur's project foci in 2023	50 Mission & Vision
51 Organization & structure	52 EuroNatur digital	53 Donation appeal	54 Imprint

ORIENTATION MAP

This map is for orientation purposes and only shows the project areas depicted in the EuroNatur Annual Report 2023. The project report illustrates the core themes as well as the Foundation's working methods by way of example. Successes or challenges in 2023 are highlighted. We are also continuously committed to the protection of Europe's natural heritage in projects that could not be presented in detail due to lack of space. A complete overview of all EuroNatur activities can be found in the chapter "EuroNatur's project foci in 2023". The EuroNatur newsletter www.euronatur.org/newsletter-en provides information on current developments.

- ① Cantabrian Mountains (Spain)
- ② Neretva Delta (Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina)
- ③ Ulcinj Salina (Montenegro)
- ④ Šar Mountains (North Macedonia) and Korab-Koritnik Mountains (Albania)
- ⑤ Vjosa/Aoos (Albania, Greece)
- ⑥ Carpathians (Romania)
- ⑦ Northern Dinarides (Slovenia, Croatia, Italy)
- ⑧ Livanjsko Polje (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
- ⑨ Black Drin / Skavica (Albania)



— European Green Belt



EUROPE'S FORESTS

Romania's forests under pressure

Geographical location in Europe

Romanian Carpathian Mountains (map p. 3, no. 6). These mountains host the European Union's last sizeable primeval forests outside of Scandinavia. Focal areas of the campaign include primeval and old-growth forests in national parks, areas that form part of the European Natura 2000 system of protected areas, and precious forests that are as yet unprotected.

Status

Few habitats in Europe are as important for both species conservation and climate change mitigation as the Romanian Carpathians. And yet the destruction of nature continues unabated. The Romanian government is making no serious effort to protect primeval and old-growth forests. Four years ago, together with our partners Agent Green and ClientEarth, we filed a complaint with the European Commission against the Romanian authorities for illegal logging in Natura 2000 sites. As a result, infringement proceedings were initiated. However, the case has still not been referred to the European Court of Justice. The EU Commission continues to focus on dialogue with the Romanian government. Meanwhile, valuable forests are being destroyed at an alarming rate.

Objectives

With the „SaveParadiseForests“ campaign, we aim to preserve the priceless forests of the Romanian Carpathians for posterity.

EUROPE'S LAST WILD FORESTS ARE UNIQUE NATURAL TREASURES, BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS AND INDISPENSABLE ALLIES IN CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION. WE WANT TO HELP PROTECT THESE ECOSYSTEMS FROM EXPLOITATION. ONE OF THE LEVERS IS THE WORK WE DO AT THE EU LEVEL, BUT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS ALSO BEING DEPLOYED.





Important developments in 2023

- EuroNatur and Agent Green have documented that deforestation is continuing unabated in the Natura 2000 sites included in the infringement proceedings against the Romanian authorities.
- In several meetings held in the course of 2023 we drew the attention of EU Environment Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius to the seriousness of the situation.
- A planned visit by members of the European Parliament's Environment Committee was cancelled under dubious circumstances. Agent Green then took matters into their own hands and brought two selected MEPs to the deforested areas. They were visibly shocked and pledged their support.
- The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 stipulates that primeval and old-growth forests that are not yet protected should be included in the trans-European network of protected areas. In order to facilitate further deforestation, the Romanian government is likely to refrain from notifying many such forests to the EU. Together with Agent Green, Greenpeace Romania and the remote sensing experts from Space4Good, we have therefore begun to produce a „shadow map” showing all the forests in the Romanian Carpathians that are in need of protection and particularly worthy of protection.

Outlook

We will prepare a strong and technically sound counter-proposal for Romania's new suite of (forest) protected areas and use it in our lobbying. At the same time, we will continue to insist that the government in Bucharest must answer for its inaction to the European Court of Justice.

Partners: Agent Green, ClientEarth, Greenpeace Romania, Space4Good, EIA

Funding: Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation, EIA, Manfred-Hermesen-Stiftung for Nature Conservation and Environmental Protection, EuroNatur's donors

EUROPE'S FORESTS

“We have entered uncharted territory”

Satellite technology, artificial intelligence and human experience – the perfect mix to save the last wild forests in the Balkans? Together with partners in conservation in seven Balkan countries and the remote sensing experts from Space4Good, we ventured into this new terrain. In this interview, Susanne Schmitt, forest expert at EuroNatur until June 2024, talks about the first steps and a successful experiment.

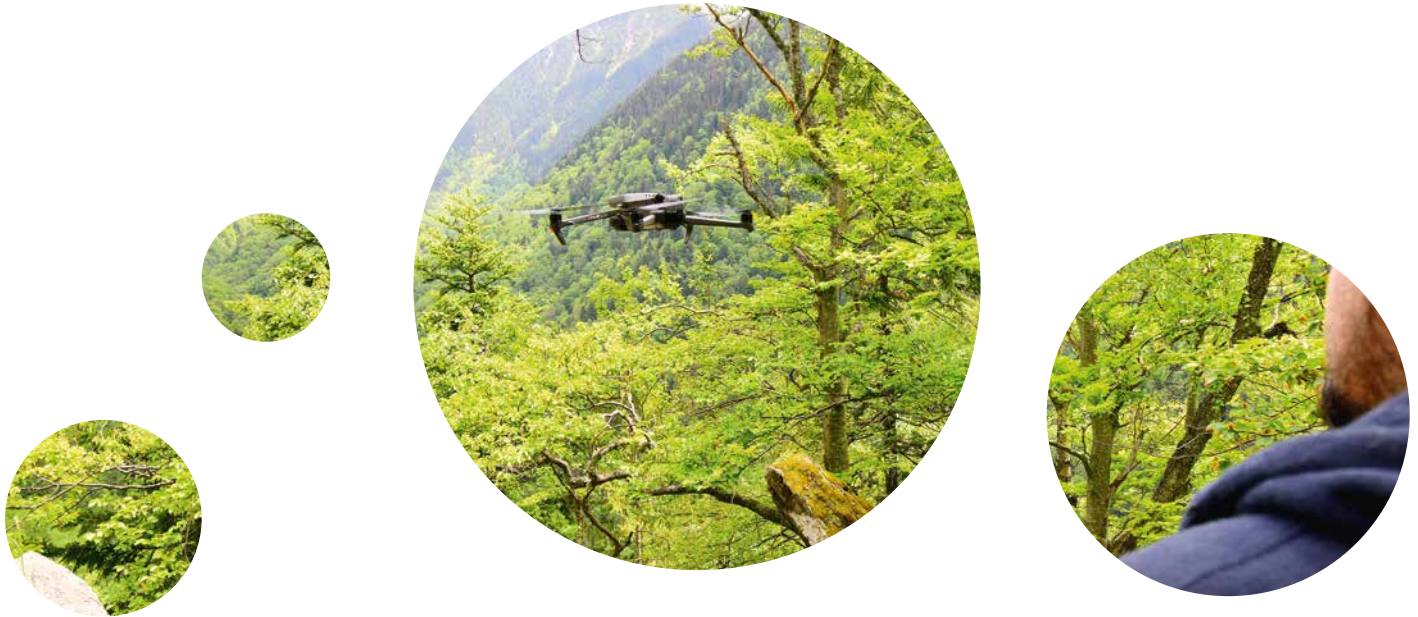
What was the aim of this experiment?

There is still no complete mapping of forests in the Western Balkans and no up-to-date databases. Our aim was to use satellite Earth observation to locate primeval and old-growth forests, and to find out how threatened they are. In some places, for example, we were able to see where deforestation had taken place or was currently taking place. The third and final step was to check whether these areas had already received any protective designation.

How did you find the primeval and old-growth forests?

The first step was to define characteristics that would allow old-growth forests to be identified on satellite images. Test areas that were undoubtedly covered in old-growth forest helped with this. Then artificial intelligence came into play: Space4Good trained a machine learning model to recognise these typical patterns. The result was a first map showing where and with what probability primeval and old-growth forests can be found. The EuroNatur partners in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Kosovo helped to further improve the model with ground-truthing.





How good is the result?

Thanks to the model, we now have a good idea of where primeval and old-growth forests still exist in the seven countries analysed. This is a valuable basis for better protection in the future. Ground-truthing has proven that the model is highly accurate. Wherever the map showed an 80% or greater probability of primeval or old-growth forest, there was indeed such forest. This is an excellent result. Unfortunately, it turns out that many of these forests have not yet received any protective designation.

Can you give us examples of such forests?

Areas in northern Albania are of particular interest. While the model indicates that there is a high probability that primeval and old-growth forests still exist there, it also shows that these areas have suffered extremely high rates of deforestation in recent years. That's a very volatile situation! Now we need to take a closer look at the situation on the ground and decide what to do next.

How can the map now be used to improve the protection of forests?

In some areas, the aim will be to get new protected areas designated. Using the map, we can now lobby for this at national and European level. Where protected areas already exist, we need to check that they are offering adequate protection. Where necessary, we will support our partners in taking legal action against illegal logging. Another important goal is to build a strong transnational network of forest conservationists, scientists and NGOs.

Interview: Katharina Grund

Partners: Space4Good, PPNEA, ERA, CZSS, CZIP, Biom, MES, BPSSS

Funding: Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, EuroNatur's donors



EUROPE'S RIVERS

Vjosa-Delta: Flamingos or an airport

Geographical location in Europe

Narta Lagoon in the estuary of the Vjosa River in Albania (map p. 3, no. 5).

Status

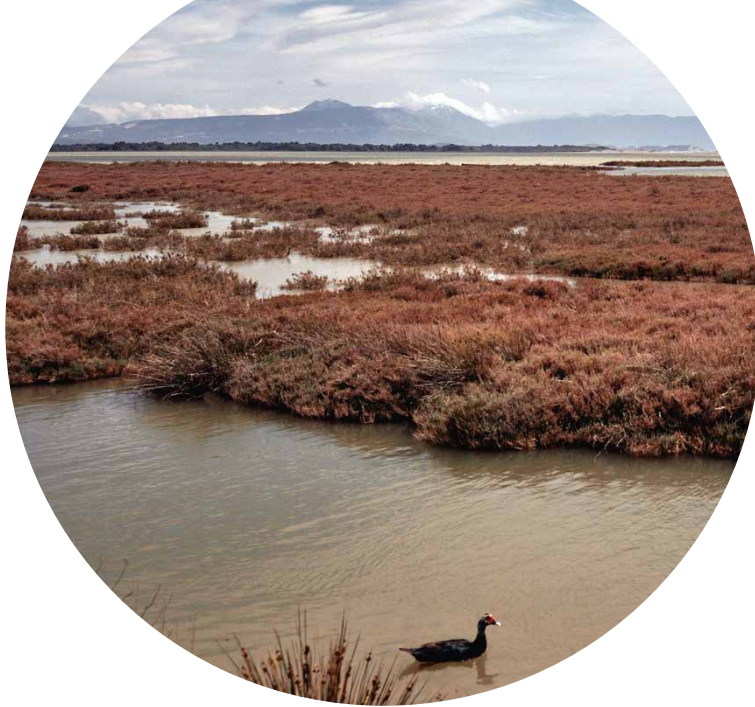
The Narta Lagoon is crucial for the conservation of Europe's birdlife. Moreover, it is part of the Vjosa Delta – the estuary of the river that was designated as Europe's first Wild River National Park in March 2023 (read more on p. 10-11). Through the course of each year, the Vjosa-Narta area is habitat to more than 220 bird species (including greater flamingo and pelican). Nevertheless, an international airport is due to open there in 2025. In our view, the project violates national and international law. It has also been criticised by the European Commission and the European Parliament. Despite this, construction is already well underway.

Objective

Our aim is to stop the Vjosa International Airport project. The Vjosa's entire catchment area should be protected as a national park, including the river delta.

THERE ARE STILL WILD RIVER LANDSCAPES OF BREATH-TAKING BEAUTY IN THE BALKANS. BUT EVEN THERE, LAND-USE PRESSURE IS INCREASING. TOGETHER WITH MANY OTHER CAMPAIGNERS, WE ARE RAISING AWARENESS, STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY, SUPPORTING LEGAL ACTION AND HIGHLIGHTING ALTERNATIVES TO THE DESTRUCTION OF NATURE.





Selected activities and achievements in 2023

- Meanwhile, the Bern Convention - one of the most important nature conservation agreements in Europe - has also come out clearly against the project at European level: The construction of Vloora International Airport should be suspended until an environmental impact assessment has been carried out. So far, however, the Albanian government has ignored this message.
- The national-level court cases filed by our Albanian partners PPNEA and AOS at the end of 2022 are still pending. They were passed back and forth between the various instances throughout 2023. However, PPNEA and AOS have at least now been recognised as having legal standing.
- In June 2023, an application was made for an injunction to temporarily halt construction. Even though an injunction is designed to provide swift interim relief while a case is being heard, no decision had been made by the end of 2023.
- A subsidiary of Flughafen München GmbH is also involved in the Narta case. Munich Airport International GmbH (MAI) claims to be acting in an „advisory capacity“, but Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama is touting MAI as the future operator of Vloora Airport, thus underscoring the project's alleged integrity. Following a site visit

to Albania, EuroNatur's managing director Gabriel Schwaderer and Richard Mergner, chairman of BUND (Friends of the Earth, Germany), addressed this contradiction at a press conference. This was followed by several critical media reports, including in the major German daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung.

- EuroNatur also criticised the airport construction in a letter to the Bavarian Minister President Markus Söder. The State Chancellery did not reply.

Outlook

A science week in the Vjosa Delta will provide further data to substantiate the ecological value of the Narta Lagoon. We will also continue to support our partners in taking legal action against the airport project.

Partner: PPNEA

Funding: DIMFE, Gerda Techow Gemeinnützige Stiftung, EuroNatur's donors and sponsors

EUROPE'S RIVERS

Vjosa National Park: Rejoice and weep

One of the biggest milestones in 2023 was the designation as a national park of Albania's wild Vjosa river. Unfortunately, the celebrations were short-lived. In this interview, Annette Spangenberg, head of nature conservation at EuroNatur, explains why.

On 15 March 2023, the time had finally come. The Vjosa National Park was established. What was it like to experience this moment?

It was very emotional for all of us! After all, we had been working towards this goal for more than ten years – with the help of our supporters and together with our partners at EcoAlbania, Riverwatch, Patagonia and many other stakeholders. At the beginning of our involvement, there was very little scientific data to document the extraordinary ecological value of this river. But we had realised early on that the Vjosa is a natural treasure that deserves the highest protection status. Now Europe's first wild river conservation area is finally official! It stretches 190 kilometres along the Vjosa river with its tributaries Shushicë, Drino and Bënça. What a contrast to the Albanian government's original plans to build two large hydropower plants in one of the Vjosa's most impressive sections. Together we were able to prevent what would have been a disaster and instead help this river landscape to attract worldwide attention.



“ I AM GLAD THAT YOU ARE NOT GIVING UP AND ARE KEEPING AT IT. AFTER ALL, OVER THE PAST DECADES, THIS POSITIVE PERSISTENCE HAS REPEATEDLY LED TO SUCCESSSES THAT WERE NOT NECESSARILY THOUGHT POSSIBLE AT THE OUTSET, SUCH AS IN ULCINJ SALINA AND OTHER AREAS. ”

DR. GERD BONGS, EURONATUR DONOR



So have we reached our goal? Has the Vjosa been saved?

No, unfortunately not. The Albanian government is not taking its responsibility for the protected area seriously. Prime Minister Edi Rama is not only pushing ahead with the construction of an international airport at the Vjosa estuary, which we are campaigning against (read more on p. 8-9), but work is also currently underway to divert one of the Vjosa's most important tributaries. Unlike the Vjosa delta, the Shushicë is already part of the national park.

Is there a bigger plan behind this?

If you put one and one together, you can indeed see the connection. The Albanian government obviously wants to further develop coastal mass tourism. The airport will bring the tourists, who are then supplied with water diverted from the Shushicë via a pipeline. So Edi Rama is completely undermining the idea of the national park.

How are we going to deal with this setback?

It's really tough at the moment. To add insult to injury, in February 2024 the Albanian parliament passed a legislative change that makes a mockery of the purpose of all protected areas in the country. Luxury hotels, dams, airports and other mega-projects in protected areas can now be rubber-stamped. But we will not give up until the Vjosa, its tributaries and its delta are truly safe, even though this will be a huge challenge in view of this new situation.

Interview: Katharina Grund

EUROPE'S RIVERS

Skavica: Giant dam in Albania

Geographical location in Europe

Dibra Valley on the Black Drin in north-east Albania (map p. 3, no. 9).

Status

As part of the „Save the Blue Heart of Europe“ campaign, EuroNatur has been working with Riverwatch from Austria and local partners for more than a decade to protect free-flowing rivers in the Balkans (**for more information see balkanrivers.net/en**). Since 2023, we have been increasingly focussing on particularly damaging large dam projects. This includes the Skavica hydro-power plant in north-east Albania. The last free-flowing section of the Black Drin is at risk of getting dammed to create one of the largest reservoirs in Europe. What would be lost is an astonishing diversity of species and much of the historic Dibra region – a fertile valley that has made a name for itself as a centre for ecotourism and organic farming. Tens of thousands of people are to be either resettled or virtually cut off from the outside world. The project would also affect the rare Balkan lynx, several fish species that are only found in the Balkans, and valuable willow-alder riparian forests. The Albanian parliament passed a special law in 2021 and subsequently commissioned US infrastructure giant Bechtel with the planning and construction of Skavica. The project was never put out to public tender.

Objectives

Our aim is to help the people of the Dibra Valley stand up for their rights, trust in their effectiveness and oppose the dam project. The aim is for the plans to be shelved and for investments to be made into less harmful forms of energy generation instead.



IT IS SO GOOD TO HAVE AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION LIKE EURONATUR ON OUR SIDE. FOR US, TO FEEL LESS POWERLESS IS THE GREATEST GIFT. 🗨️

MAJLINDA HOXHA, GARD



Selected activities and achievements in 2023

- EuroNatur supported the Albanian NGOs Black Drin Association and Albanian Helsinki Committee in filing a constitutional complaint against the Skavica hydropower plant.
- With success: the Constitutional Court accepted the complaint for review in 2023. This shows that there is resistance coming from civil society. Moreover, only 15 per cent of all cases submitted are considered admissible, and even fewer of those submitted by civil society organisations. As a result, the court ruled that public hearings must be held.
- In Tirana, a workshop trained selected members of the local community to powerfully argue against the Skavica dam, in favour of nature and the interests of the local communities.

Outlook

We will continue to support local initiatives in informing community representatives in the Dibra Valley about the Skavica project and their options for resistance. We aim to more strongly raise the issue of Skavica at EU level in order to increase pressure on the Albanian government in the context of the accession negotiations.

Partners: Bankwatch, LAG Integrimi, GARD, Res Publica

Funding: Client Earth, 1% for the Planet, EuroNatur's donors and sponsors

EUROPEAN GREEN BELT

Tangible conservation along the Green Belt

Geographical location in Europe

Ecosystem network with an extraordinarily high level of biodiversity, forming a 12,500 km long corridor along the route of the Iron Curtain of the Cold War era (map p. 3). The European Green Belt connects eight biogeographical regions and 24 nations.

Status

Although the European Green Belt is of great ecological and historical importance, for a long time there were few effective ways of funding the initiative. This changed with the BESTbelt project. With the support of the European Commission, we have already been able to help a large number of civil society organisations that would otherwise find it difficult to apply for funding. This is particularly the case for smaller non-governmental organisations whose work on the ground is however particularly important for nature conservation. The high level of interest in applying for funding confirms that we are on the right track with BESTbelt.

Objectives

The European Union allocated €3.5 million to BESTbelt for the period 2021-2026. In particular, we are supporting local initiatives along the European Green Belt that conserve biodiversity and implement promising ideas, such as sustainable regional development initiatives.



“ ONCE AGAIN, WE WERE OVERWHELMED BY THE NUMBER AND VARIETY OF APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE SECOND ROUND IN 2023. WE CAN HARDLY WAIT TO SEE THE PLANNED PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED AND TO PROVIDE ADVICE AND SUPPORT TO THE MANY PEOPLE INVOLVED ON THE GROUND. ”

ANNE KATRIN HEINRICHS,
HEAD OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN BELT PROGRAMME



To find out more about 24 selected precious pearls along the Balkan Green Belt, please enter the following link in the search bar of your browser or scan the www.euronatur.org/egb-pearls



Selected activities and important achievements in 2023

- Three of the BESTbelt projects that started in 2022 were already completed in 2023. For example, the municipality of Knjaževac in eastern Serbia successfully tackled its waste problem. Simple circular economy practices were implemented in several villages in the municipality, educational activities on waste reduction were carried out and waste bins, composting facilities, etc. were installed.
- We applied the lessons learned from the first call for proposals (2022) to the second. With success: 96 applications were submitted in the reporting year, of which 17 are being funded. Remarkably, three of the new projects are located in the Finnish part of the European Green Belt, where the partner network was severely affected by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.
- Another focus of BESTbelt 2023 was the promotion of 'green jobs' in the European Green Belt. The aim is to ensure that (young) people do not have to migrate in search of work, but can find sustainable employment opportunities in rural areas.

Outlook

In 2024, our activities will focus on the third call for project applications. We also aim to communicate BESTbelt more intensively in 2024 in order to make the results and successes accessible to a wider public.

Partners: BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany), European Green Belt Association

Funding: European Union, EuroNatur's sponsors



BESTbelt



With financial support of the European Union

BEAR & WOLF

Transboundary bear protection in the Balkans

Geographical location in Europe

Border region between Greece, Albania and North Macedonia.

Status

As is the case almost everywhere in Europe, brown bear habitats in the southern Balkans are being massively disturbed and continuously fragmented by infrastructure projects and other human activities. In addition to habitat loss, illegal hunting threatens the bear population in the project area. This could have a devastating effect on the entire population of brown bears in the Balkans, especially as it is not even known exactly how many bears live in the region.

Objectives

The main objective of the Tripoint Brown Bear (TBB) project is to re-establish connectivity between the brown bears' highly fragmented habitats. In addition, we aim to implement practical measures to promote low-conflict coexistence between bears and humans. We want to raise public awareness that this is possible. Only local acceptance can ensure the long-term survival of the brown bear in the southern Balkans.



BEARS AND WOLVES ARE SLOWLY BUT SURELY RETURNING TO THEIR ORIGINAL HABITATS. TOGETHER WITH OUR PARTNERS, WE ARE WORKING TO PROTECT THEM AND DEVELOP SOLUTIONS THAT ALLOW HUMANS AND ANIMALS TO COEXIST WITH MINIMAL CONFLICT.





Selected activities and achievements in 2023

- In May 2023, our project partners held workshops in Albania and North Macedonia for candidates to potentially become involved in Bear Intervention Teams (BETs). The BETs have already proven their worth. In December 2023, a female brown bear was ensnared in Albania near the Greek border. The animal was rescued with the help of BET staff trained in previous courses and an experienced team from Greece.
- At another workshop in Greece in November 2023, rangers from North Macedonia were given bear-proof rubbish bins to place on the outskirts of villages where brown bears have been spotted. The marked bins are equipped with pepper spray that is released when a bear opens the bin to get at food. The idea is to scare off curious bears and signal to the animals: „Please don't eat here!“.
- At the same workshop, our Greek partners introduced two Karelian Bear Dog females, Adele and Athene. They are trained to bark at brown bears to keep them away from human settlements.
- In all three countries of the TBB project, various stakeholders such as hunters and national park staff were trained in bear monitoring methods, as there are few reliable figures on bear populations in the border region.
- Albania, Greece and North Macedonia want to strengthen political cooperation on nature conservation. This is essential for the success of the TBB project.

Outlook

The Tripoint Brown Bear (TBB) project ended at the end of 2023. But even after the project's completion, the partners will continue to work together towards the long-term goal of maintaining stable brown bear populations in the Balkans.

Partners: Callisto, MES, PPNEA

Funding: Fondazione Capellino, EuroNatur's donors and sponsors

BEAR & WOLF

“This debate is certainly not an objective one”

EuroNatur welcomes the return of wolves to their traditional territories across Europe. But we are also aware of the urgent need not to leave livestock farmers alone with their worries and problems. Antje Henkelmann analyses the current situation in the following interview.

Baden-Württemberg's first wolf pack in a long time is now history, following several road collisions that were fatal for the wolves. But it is probably only a matter of time before there is a new pack in the state. What should people be prepared for, especially those who keep livestock out on pasture?

In general, Baden-Württemberg is well prepared for the return of wolves. Livestock farmers can receive individual advice and support in financing and implementing preventive measures. In addition, the wolf compensation fund "Trärgemeinschaft Ausgleichsfonds Wolf" – of which EuroNatur is a member – helps quickly and unbureaucratically should livestock suffer wolf damage.



“LAST BUT NOT LEAST, THE PROTECTION OF WOLVES IS ALSO AN EXPRESSION OF OUR COMMITMENT TO VALUES SUCH AS TOLERANCE AND COEXISTENCE. ||

ANTJE HENKELMANN,
PROJECT MANAGER WOLF AT EURONATUR



Cue livestock predation: What needs to be done now to prevent conflicts between wolves and humans?

Information is particularly important. Attacks on livestock, for example, can be virtually eliminated with proven countermeasures. Much has been done to improve practical support. It's no longer just a case of 'here's money for you to buy a wolf fence'; care is also taken to ensure that the fence can be properly erected, maintained and repaired. In many regions there are voluntary initiatives and financial support from conservation organisations for this extra work. Baden-Württemberg is also a positive example because it has long had a working group on lynx and wolves in which the various organisations exchange information. The interactions are not always harmonious, but they are constructive. Farmers, hunters, conservationists and scientists are working together with the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture to find solutions.

Major political pressure came from the EU Commission in 2023, which wants to reconsider the wolves' protected status. In September, Ursula von der Leyen said that wolves are also a potential threat to humans. What's up with that?

With this misleading statement, Ursula von der Leyen stirred up unnecessary fears, especially as this claim is not based on scientific data. In Europe, wolves generally pose no threat to humans. Together with several international conservation, wildlife protection and animal welfare organisations, we criticised the EU Commission President in an open letter for her harsh choice of words. The fact that Ursula von der Leyen's argumentation is absent of any scientific backing is worrying and suggests that there is more to this. There is a danger that the wolf will be used as a Trojan horse to weaken the European Habitats Directive, which protects many other species across Europe.

Interview: Christian Stielow and Katharina Grund

EUROPE'S MIGRATORY BIRDS

Forging alliances for bird conservation

Geographical location in Europe

Bird habitats along the Adriatic Flyway, which runs from north-eastern to central Europe across the Balkans to Africa. Numerous project areas in six countries of the Western Balkans: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania and Serbia.

Status

Illegal bird hunting in the Mediterranean is taking a heavy toll on Europe's migratory birds. There are also many bird crime hotspots in the countries of the Western Balkans: Roughly one million migratory birds lose their lives to illegal hunting along the Adriatic every year. This carnage is a significant contributing factor in the significant decline of many migratory bird populations, including such charismatic species as the turtle dove and lesser spotted eagle.

Objectives

With the help of our large network of partners in conservation, we aim to significantly reduce illegal bird hunting in the Balkans. To this end, we are mobilising various interest groups to increase pressure on the governments of the south-eastern European states and remind them of their obligations as signatories to relevant international agreements. Effective deterrents for poachers will also need to be put in place. The illegal killing of birds is not a trivial offence and must be punished accordingly.



BIRDS PROVIDE US WITH A CLOSE CONNECTION TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE SURVIVAL OF US ALL. THEY ARE AN INDICATOR OF THE STATE OF NATURE. IF BIRDS CAN NO LONGER FIND SUITABLE NESTING SITES OR FOOD, THE ENVIRONMENT AS A WHOLE IS IN A BAD STATE.





Selected activities in 2023

- Our Croatian partners at Biom have significantly expanded their volunteer programme. Almost 90 people volunteered to take part in waterbird counts and recorded cases of illegal killing, particularly in the Neretva Delta (map p. 3, no. 2). Another important area of work has been markets where songbirds are illegally traded.
- In Serbia, our partners at BPSSS identified and pressed charges in 46 cases of illegal quail hunting with sound lures. Fines were imposed on three Italian citizens (Serbia is a hotspot for hunting tourists from the EU) and the hunting organisation responsible was fined.
- Our partners in Serbia also organised several workshops for hunters. Responsible hunters can be our allies in the fight against the illegal killing of birds. Participation was high and, in addition to illegal bird-trapping, the topic of animal poisoning was also addressed.

Important achievements in 2023

- In Croatia, the illegal killing of common quails using sound lures has decreased by more than 50 per cent (compared to 2018) in the areas surveyed by Biom. In some protected areas for birds in Southeast Europe, not a single case of illegal bird hunting was recorded in the reporting year. Our measures are having an impact.

- In the Neretva Delta in Croatia, pressure from our partners has led to the involvement of the police's criminal investigation unit. The aim is to dismantle the network of illegal bird hunters in the vast river delta. The first poacher was arrested in November 2023.

Outlook

How close have we come to our goal of reducing illegal bird hunting in the Mediterranean by at least 50% by 2030? With the help of our partners and under the leadership of BirdLife we will produce an interim report in 2024 to answer this question. Our aim is to persuade government officials to take action and we will provide them with concrete recommendations on how to effectively combat illegal hunting.

Partners: BirdLife International, BirdLife Europe & Central Asia, BirdLife Middle East & BirdLife Africa, VCF, Tour du Valat, BPSSS, HDZZP, Biom, Naše ptice, CZIP, PPNEA, AOS, DOPPS, FOS

Funding: Hans Wilsdorf Foundation, Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation, EuroNatur's donors and sponsors

EUROPE'S MIGRATORY BIRDS

Ulcinj Salina: Excavators dig for species protection

Late summer 2023: The noise of construction machinery permeates the air, excavators are moving earth and kicking up dust. What sounds like another conservation drama is actually nature conservation in action. The heavy machinery is being used to help restore the water regime in the Ulcinj Salina in Montenegro. Over a length of 6.6 kilometres, excavators are using the sediment from the salt basins and piling it up to form new dams. In parallel with the earthworks, the main sluices and pumps are being restored. The restored dams will help to flood the area with fresh salt water, an important step in improving the saltworks' ecological status.

These works had been planned for a long time and were well overdue, but the unresolved issue of ownership of the Ulcinj Salina, the uncooperative attitude of the former director of the National Parks of Montenegro and the lack of a suitable management body for the area of salt evaporation ponds had delayed the measures for years. During this time, the ecological status of Ulcinj Salina had declined. In the hot summers of recent years, some of the saltworks' evaporation ponds dried out completely, while heavy rainfall in winter regularly flooded them with fresh water – disastrous conditions for salt-loving species of flora and fauna. Now the first restoration measures are helping to make the former Adriatic bird paradise attractive again for specialised species such as black-winged stilts and flamingos.



“WHEN I LOOK BACK ON THE PAST YEAR, ALL THE PROBLEMS WE’VE HAD SEEM SMALL COMPARED TO THE RESULTS WE ACHIEVED. ALL IS NOT YET WELL IN THE ULCINJ SALINA, BUT THE FEELING OF HAVING CONTRIBUTED TO THE PRESERVATION OF THIS IMPORTANT ECOSYSTEM GIVES MY COLLEAGUES AND ME THE STRENGTH TO CONTINUE OUR MISSION. ”

KSENIJA MEDENICA, CZIP PROGRAMME MANAGER

See the before and after comparison
in this video, online at:
enatur.org/1054



Sellout averted

2005

In the 70th year of its existence, the Ulcinj Salina in Montenegro, one of the largest areas of salt evaporation ponds on the Adriatic, is privatised. From now on, the saltworks are systematically run down. The operating consortium has ambitious tourism plans for the site.

2013

Ulcinj Salina, for a long time the most important employer in the region, closes and makes all its saltworkers redundant. At this point, the infrastructure is barely maintained and the saltworks' ecological status is deteriorating dramatically.

2017

EuroNatur and its Montenegrin and international partners intensify their campaign to save the saltworks. We are fighting a mire of corruption and illegal machinations.

2019

First major success: Ulcinj Salina is declared a nature park. This national protection paves the way for the saltworks to be designated an international Ramsar site, a fitting honour for one of the most valuable protected areas for birds in Europe.

2022

A major barrier to the implementation of tangible measures to improve biotic conditions at the site is the unresolved question of ownership. Finally, in July 2022, there is certainty: the entire saltworks site will be registered as state property in the cadastre of the city of Ulcinj.

2023

The overdue restoration works can finally commence ...

Partners: CZIP, MSJA, Nature Returns

Funding: MAVA, Nature Returns, EuroNatur's donors and sponsors

TURNING POTENTIAL INTO SUCCESS

Mentoring programme for conservationists

Status

We have realised how important it is to create spaces for self-reflection and relaxation, even under great pressure. The mentoring programme and the Leaders for Nature Academy, which the MAVA Foundation ran for the first time in 2017, have helped us to do this. New platforms were created to connect with MAVA conservation partners, to learn and develop together. The Mentoring for Effective Nature Conservation (MENC), a special mentoring programme for partners of EuroNatur and MAVA in the Mediterranean region, was first launched by EuroNatur with the support of Mowgli Mentoring experts. The second cohort went on a mentoring trip in the reporting year.

Objective

The aim is to strengthen conservationists in Europe.

Activities and achievements in 2023

Eight mentoring pairs from a total of 13 organisations and 11 different countries took part in the 2023 MENC. In addition to one-to-one meetings between mentors and mentees, there were regular opportunities for dialogue within the larger group. We brought together many committed people who are now working together on their personal development beyond the programme. They are developing into ever stronger personalities who are better equipped to master the challenges of working in nature conservation.

Outlook

The mentoring programme will be continued.

Partner: The Human Edge (formerly: Mowgli Mentoring)

Funding: Hans Wilsdorf Foundation



IN NATURE CONSERVATION, WE URGENTLY NEED STRONG PERSONALITIES WHO ARE CALM, OPEN-MINDED, ABLE TO INSPIRE OTHERS AND NOT DISCOURAGED BY SETBACKS. OUR „MENC“ MENTORING PROGRAMME IS DESIGNED TO SUPPORT STAKEHOLDERS IN THEIR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT.



Read an article about MENC in our online journal at enatur.org/1059



“ I am very grateful to have met such extraordinary people who are ready to change the world by developing themselves! ”

Konstantinos Perikleous, Terra Cypria, Cyprus



“ It's easy, especially in the conservation scene, to lose oneself out of sheer selflessness in what one wishes to achieve externally. But personal development must not be neglected. ”

Leonie Kraut of EuroNatur, MENC Coordinator



“ It was great that I was able to regularly take time or reflection. It's something that usually tends to be neglected. Even just preparing for the sessions with my mentor was so very valuable. ”

Paula Počanić Vovk, Biom, Croatia

EU POLICY

More money for biodiversity conservation

Geographical focus

Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia and Latvia.

Status

The EU Member States of Central and Eastern Europe are true hotspots of biodiversity. Many sites are already part of the EU's network of protected areas. However, although Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia and Latvia receive extensive financial support from the European public purse, these countries invest very little in biodiversity. What is going wrong? To find out, we worked with our partners to organise a series of roundtables to open a constructive dialogue between key stakeholders from government, NGOs and academia. The aim was to create an understanding of the urgency of biodiversity conservation, particularly at government level, to identify barriers to funding relevant projects and to improve cooperation between public authorities and civil society.

Objectives

The aim is to ensure sufficient and efficient use of EU funds to halt the loss of biodiversity in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.



EURONATUR DEFENDS CIVIL SOCIETY'S AND NATURE'S COMMON GOOD IN BRUSSELS. AMONG OTHER THINGS, WE AIM TO ENSURE THAT INVESTMENT IS CHANNELLED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION SO AS TO ACHIEVE THE EU'S KEY ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES.



Read the report „Biodiversity on the Brink“ online at enatur.org/1058



Important activities and achievements in 2023

- In all four countries, we identified barriers to funding biodiversity conservation. These include insufficient cooperation between stakeholders, high bureaucratic requirements for obtaining funding and, last but not least, a lack of knowledge about what biodiversity actually is.
- We published the key findings of our analysis in a report entitled "Biodiversity on the brink - What's holding back financing for nature in the EU?" The report also contains recommendations to decision-makers on the national and European levels on how to improve the situation.
- The report was presented at a webinar with 79 attendees from government, NGOs and academia, and was downloaded more than 200 times after publication.
- In three of the four countries where roundtables took place, the exchange between partner organisations and authorities continued after the end of the project.

Outlook

One focus is the structuring of the EU's multi-annual financial planning. Our aim is to ensure that more money is spent on protecting or restoring Europe's biodiversity in the future. We also aim to improve the criteria for the allocation of EU funding.

Partners: Bankwatch, DOPPS, Zelena Akcija, Balkani, Green Liberty Latvia

Funding: BMUV

SOME OTHER DEVELOPMENTS THAT

In addition to the big issues that moved us in 2023, there is more good news to report from the past year, from Spain to Greece. We asked our partners and staff for their personal highlights.



Encouraging bird numbers in Livanjsko Polje

“ The results of the counts confirm that our conservation efforts are bearing fruit and that bird monitoring is getting better and better. Many volunteers from the region are now helping us. The bird life of Livanjsko Polje is now better studied than in any other area in Bosnia–Herzegovina. ”

Goran Topić, Naše ptice, Bosnia–Herzegovina



Comeback after more than 50 years

“ The return of the monk seal to Montenegro's coastal waters after more than 55 years is fantastic news! Our colleagues in neighbouring countries have already had regular sightings. So we couldn't wait to document their presence in the Montenegrin part of the Adriatic. We managed to do just that in August 2023. This special occasion is a sign that we are on the right track with our efforts to conserve the monk seal population. ”

Nevena Petković, CZIP, Montenegro



Goru the lynx is now a grandfather

“ Goru's story is one of the highlights of the LIFE Lynx project to reintroduce lynx to the Dinarides. Goru arrived in Slovenia from the Carpathians in 2019. In his first year he mated with a local female lynx. Other liaisons followed. Goru became a grandfather for the first time in 2023. All of us in the team are very proud of him. ”

Maja Sever, LIFE Lynx

MADE US HAPPY IN 2023



The Aaos river is protected

“ The fact that the last and previously unprotected part of the Aaos river has been designated as a protected landscape is an important step towards preserving the entire river basin. It is hoped that this designation will not only avert the immediate environmental threats, but that the area will also serve as a model for other regions. ”

Alexis Katsaros, Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos (MedINA), Greece



Beehives are bear-proof

“ We have secured a total of 300 beehives with electric fences in our area of operation in the Cantabrian Mountains. The success rate is 100%: not a single bear has managed to penetrate the protected apiaries. Acceptance of the bears among beekeepers is increasing. ”

Roberto Hartasánchez, Fapas, Spain



30th anniversary of the EuroNatur photo competition

“ It is great to see how “Europe’s Natural Treasures” has developed over the past three decades: It has become an institution among Europe’s nature photography competitions and for nature photographers. The fantastic images we receive each year are a tribute to the beauty and diversity of Europe’s nature. ”

Kerstin Sauer, EuroNatur

MEDIA AND PR WORK



Europe's rivers in the spotlight

The establishment of the Vjosa Wild River National Park was one of the highlights of the past year and also shone a media spotlight on the region (see pages 10-11). Numerous media outlets announced the good news, some euphorically so, with others expressing concerns about the Vloora airport:

The Guardian, 15 Mar 2023

A collaboration between the Albanian government, international experts, NGOs from the Save the Blue Heart of Europe campaign to protect Balkan rivers, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Patagonia, the outdoor clothing company and environmental organisation, the 12,727 hectare (31,500 acre) park aims to ensure the Vjosa and its unique ecosystems are safeguarded. It has been given IUCN category II park status, a high level of protection similar to that of a wilderness.

New Scientist, 5 Apr 2023

The river Vjosa, which rises in Greece and flows through Albania into the Adriatic, is Europe's last great free-flowing river, meaning it is uninhibited by dams or artificial banks from source to sea. The new status of Albania's river Vjosa is a major conservation milestone. But plans to open an airport on the river's delta next year soured the celebrations.

National Geographic, 5 May 2023

Besjana Guri of EcoAlbania, a nonprofit organization in Tirana, Albania's capital, that was instrumental in the campaign, says the Vjosa can "be an inspiration for all communities who are fighting to save their rivers. Our message to them is that it is possible to win this fight no matter how difficult it may seem."



Photo: Xhemal Xherri - If the Albanian government has its way, numerous aeroplanes will soon be landing and taking off here: Aerial view of the construction of Vloora Airport in the Vjosa estuary in 2022.

OUR COALITION WAS FORMED IN RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S RIVER-DESTROYING PLANS. WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL FOR THIS AWARD, BUT WE ALSO DEDICATE IT TO THOSE WHO ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN CITIZENS' INITIATIVES AND WHO STAND IN SOLIDARITY FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE LIFE-GIVING RIVERS. 🌿

DOROTA CHMIELOWIEC-TYSZKO, JUSTYNA CHOROŚ AND PIOTR NIEZNAŃSKI



Polish river protection coalition receives EuroNatur award

The 2023 EuroNatur Award ceremony highlighted river conservation in Poland. The prize was awarded to the Save the Rivers Coalition or Koalicja Ratujmy Rzeki, an alliance of scientists, committed individuals and local institutions. The alliance has been campaigning for the protection of the Vistula and Oder rivers for many years, among other issues, and is fighting against the planned construction of the E40 waterway, which jeopardises one of Europe's largest wilderness areas in the transnational Polesia region. Impressions from the award ceremony are available online at euronatur.org/award23.

The Vjosa river on the big screen

The Vjosa was showcased to good effect at the Innsbruck Nature Film Festival in October 2023. In the documentary „Saving the Vjosa - The story behind“, the people who made the Vjosa Wild River National Park possible had their say. Some of them were even able to attend the festival. Artists, scientists and members of the „Save the Blue Heart of Europe“ campaign took part in a panel discussion to answer questions about the Vjosa and the new national park. In addition, the „Rivers of Europe“ photo exhibition, organised by EuroNatur, showed just how valuable and beautiful free-flowing rivers are, but also how disastrous the construction of hydropower plants can be for a river's ecology.

ECONOMIC SITUATION

“Balanced result and consistent effectiveness”

After an outlier year in 2022, the EuroNatur Foundation is back in the black. In this interview, Executive Director Gabriel Schwaderer explains why a drop in revenue is not a red flag and talks about the importance of a good donor base for the future.

How did 2023 turn out financially for the EuroNatur Foundation?

2023 was a good year for the Foundation in financial terms. We were able to compensate well for the closure of the MAVA Foundation, which for many years was the most important charitable foundation to support us. Although our total income was significantly lower, the bottom line is that we still achieved a positive result. The drop in income was expected as the MAVA Foundation had significantly increased its funding to us in 2021 and 2022. We passed on all this additional funding to our partner organisations. This generous support could not be compensated for, but that was not our goal. Our aim was to break even for the year and be able to continue our important project work in its full breadth and known effectiveness.

So even a year and a half after MAVA funding has ended, its impact is still evident in the EuroNatur Foundation's accounts?

Yes, you can see that, for example, in the normalisation of the additional claims reserve for externally funded projects – there was a spike in the final phase of MAVA funding, when a huge amount of funding was distributed for the last time, for which we had to add to the additional claims reserve. We have now been able to release these funds. All in all, our income from external grants has dropped significantly, by about a third. This corresponds to a reduction in our project funding to our partners, also by around a third. At the same time, our staff costs have increased. This is due to the urgent need to strengthen our team and to compensate our employees for the massive increase in inflation. However, we were able to offset this by reducing other operating expenses. We have managed our business in a cost-conscious manner and benefited from the normalisation of the additional claims reserve mentioned at the beginning.



Donors form the basis

In 2023, EuroNatur Foundation's regular donors, sponsors and legacy donors continued to provide the financial footing for our tangible conservation efforts in Europe as well as for political lobbying, campaigns, awareness-raising and environmental education. Once again, EuroNatur also attracted substantial financial support for project implementation, primarily from private foundations and associations as well as from public sector funding in 2023, most notably from Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, Austrian Development Agency, Bernd Thies Foundation, Binding-Stiftung, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, German Federal Environmental Foundation (DBU), Dr. Manfred and Gudrun Keim Fund, European Union, Fondation Prince Albert



Il de Monaco, Hans Wilsdorf Foundation, Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation, Fondation Genevoise de Bienfaisance, Fondazione Capellino, Lappat Fund, Ludwig Raue Memorial Fund, Manfred-Hermesen-Stiftung for Nature Conservation and Environmental Protection and the German Environment Agency (UBA).

The year 2023 was once again characterised by economic uncertainty and difficult conditions in the financial markets for society at large, with people being cautious with their money. How has this affected the Foundation?

The development of donations is extremely important to us. That's why it's all the more pleasing that we were able to increase our donations again compared to the year prior. This is really good news in a still difficult environment, given the inflation trend and the general uncertainty among the general public. Positively, we have managed to keep the number of donors almost constant. Of course, as a result of old age or illness, we do lose loyal supporters who have been with us for a long time, but we are also gaining new, younger donors. We rely on this support from private sources because we have to provide our own contributions for many of the grants we have been very successful in securing from private foundations or the public sector, and we can only do this if we have stable income from donations.

ECONOMIC SITUATION

What is the relevance of testamentary bequests for the organisation?

Bequests and endowments are very important to us and a great display of trust. We were able to transfer a large proportion of the bequests to our Foundation's capital stock in 2023, thereby further strengthening the Foundation's financial base. These bequests contribute directly to the long-term protection of Europe's natural heritage. It is very gratifying that the Foundation's capital now stands at €9 million and that our financial base has been further strengthened. This will help us to maintain the quality and effectiveness of our work in the long term.

In the previous financial year, there was an unpleasant and unforeseen development in financial assets that had a negative impact on the balance sheet. Was it possible to avoid this in 2023?

In 2022, the unscheduled need to write down our financial assets had a very negative impact on our balance sheet. Fortunately, this did not happen again in 2023; instead, we have a very positive financial result and the revenue from asset management made a significant contribution to the positive financial result for the year.

Presentation of the Activity Report in accordance with DZI specifications

The income and expenditure headings used for the purposes of this Activity Report correspond to the prescribed specifications as part of the guidelines for the DZI (German Central Institute for Social Issues) Seal of Approval. The headings therefore diverge somewhat from the customary breakdown set out in the Handelsgesetzbuch (German Commercial Code), especially in the profit and loss account. Amongst the criteria assessed by DZI are two important threshold values, i.e. the share of expenditure on advertising and administration to total relevant expenditure, and the ratio of expenditure on advertising to total income from donations. Not all expenditure is included for the purpose of calculating the share of administrative expenditure: Expenditure on portfolio management and commercial activities are not taken into consideration. Given that the DZI calculations of the shares of expenditure under the different headings are only undertaken following the publication of the Activity Report, there may be some discrepancies between EuroNatur's calculations and the DZI results.



DZI Seal of Approval

In May 2024, EuroNatur Foundation was again awarded the DZI (German Central Institute for Social Issues) Seal of Approval. EuroNatur had applied for the seal in August 2023 based on its 2022 annual accounts. The result of the DZI assessment of EuroNatur Foundation was a positive one: It confirmed that we meet the seven DZI Seal of Approval standards (please refer page 42).

Every year, we venture to look ahead together. What can the Foundation expect in the coming years, what are the biggest challenges?

Recruiting new supporters will remain a key task for us in the coming years. Only if we succeed in doing that will we be able to continue to campaign for nature conservation in Europe. We are currently working on the EuroNatur strategy for the next ten years. It will be the compass that guides us to be strategic and purposeful in the decisions we make in our day-to-day activities. The backlash against nature conservation and biodiversity protection, which we have been seeing for some time now, has significantly intensified. Populist tendencies are on the rise, both at national and European level, and a respectful, fact-based discourse is becoming increasingly difficult. In this environment, we at EuroNatur are a voice grounded in scientific facts and evidence, and specifically seek out and accept discourse.

Questions: Anja Arning

ECONOMIC SITUATION



A testament for European nature

A further strengthening of EuroNatur's asset base is of great importance for the foundation's independence and performance as a successful advocate for nature in Europe. The increase in the foundation's capital creates planning certainty and independence. Endowments and bequests therefore provide immensely valuable support to us and are a great sign of confidence, confidence that we endeavour to honour with our commitment. In 2023, endowments and a large part of the revenue from bequests were transferred to the Foundation's capital stock. This, together with the endowments received, has further strengthened EuroNatur Foundation's financial position. We expect that revenues from portfolio management will remain stable in the coming years.

Bequests and legacies in 2023

In 2023, the following individuals bequeathed funds to EuroNatur Foundation upon their death. We are greatly indebted to them and will honour their memory.

- Dr. Ulrike Hurler
- Heinrich Otmar Ruemmer
- Prof. Dr. Edith Frances Borie



Non-autonomous foundations and named funds

In 2023, EuroNatur managed three non-autonomous foundations and three earmarked named funds. The named funds' capital (€ 499k) was increased by € 3k compared to the previous financial year while the capital of the non-autonomous foundations (€ 2,169k) remained unchanged. In the reporting year, yields from non-autonomous foundations continued to exclusively benefit EuroNatur project activities.

- Dr. Manfred and Gudrun Keim Fund
- Ludwig Raue Memorial Fund
- Lappat Fund
- EuroNatur Fund for Eastern Germany
- EuroNatur Fund for the Protection of Migratory Birds
- Elisabeth Seifert-Becker's endowment fund for the protection of wolves in memory of Viktoria Neumann, Emilie and Franz Seifert

€

Working together for Europe's nature

EuroNatur's successes in nature conservation in Europe in 2023 could only be achieved with the support provided by our donors, sponsors and legacy donors as well as providers of grants and commercial sponsors. We are most grateful for your support!

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31.12.2023

ASSETS		2023	"000 €	2022	"000 €
A. Fixed assets			10,467		10,029
	I. Intangible assets	0		0	
	II. Tangible assets	901		936	
	III. Financial assets	9,566		9,093	
B. Current assets			1,366		2,126
	I. Stocks	7		5	
	II. Account receivable and other assets	684		1,415	
	III. Liquid funds, short-term securities	675		706	
C. Deferred items			8		10
TOTALS			11,841		12,165

LIABILITIES		2023	"000 €	2022	"000 €
A. Equity			9,000		8,859
	I. Foundation's capital				
	Core capital	77		77	
	Endowments (in the financial year € 96k, p.y. € 6k)	6.417		6.245	
	II. Revenue reserves	2.506		2.537	
B. Provisions			179		360
C. Liabilities			2.660		2.946
D. Deferred items			2		0
TOTALS			11.841		12.165

PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT FOR 2023

Revenue according to DZI	2023	2022	%	%
	*000 €	*000 €	2023	2022
Cash donations *	1,258	1,139	21.78	15.87
Donations in kind	23	39	0.40	0.54
Bequests	148	312	2.56	4.35
Fines	2	5	0.03	0.07
Subtotal - total income from donations* (excluding endowments)	1,431	1,495		
Government grants	1,007	648	17.44	9.03
Grants from other organizations	2,669	4,524	46.22	63.03
Commercial activity	0	8	0.00	0.11
Interest and capital gains	445	438	7.71	6.10
Other revenue	223	65	3.86	0.91
Total revenue	5,775	7,178	100.00	100.00
Withdrawals from revenue reserves	31	20		
Withdrawals from the special reserve	0	298		
	5,806	7,496		

Expenditure according to DZI	2023	2022	%	%
	*000 €	*000 €	2023	2022
Expenditures on programmes				
Staff-related expenditure	1,699	1,523	29.65	21.05
Material expenditure and non-personnel costs	2,759	4,061	48.14	56.12
Expenditures on advertising and PR work				
Staff-related expenditure	180	193	3.14	2.67
Material expenditure and non-personnel costs	327	322	5.71	4.45
Expenditures on administration				
Staff-related expenditure	512	425	8.93	5.87
Material expenditure and non-personnel costs	113	287	1.97	3.97
Expenditures on portfolio management & business operations				
Portfolio management	141	425	2.46	5.87
Total expenditure	5,731	7,236	100.00	100.00
Transfers to the Foundation capital stock	75	260		
Transfers to revenue reserves	0	0		
Transfers to special reserve	0	0		
	5,806	7,496		

* In the 2023 financial year we received € 1,581k in donations, € 54k of which have not yet been claimed due to earmarking. The latter are expected to be claimed in the following year and at the time of actual spending funds.

The endowments of € 96,480.65 (p.y. € 6,380.65) are not included in the income statement.

A TESTAMENT FOR EUROPEAN NATURE



MY LEGACY DOES GOOD.
SO THAT EUROPE'S NATURE IS
PRESERVED IN ALL ITS DIVERSITY.

In politics, business and society at large, there is still not enough decisive action to initiate the necessary turnaround towards a future worth living. This makes it all the more important for individuals to take personal initiative and responsibly help shape the world, even beyond their own lifetime.

If you would like to find out more about bequests, please visit our website at www.euronatur.org/en/legacy-giving or feel free to get in touch with us directly.

Your contact is: Sabine Günther
sabine.guenther@euronatur.org
Fon + 49 (0) 7732/92 72 17

DEALING WITH POTENTIAL RISKS

For a non-profit foundation, EuroNatur Foundation's capital stock is relatively slim. Therefore the organization is urgently dependent on donations and third-party grants so as to be able to discharge its mandate as an advocate of nature in Europe. We are aware of the fact that with this funding comes great responsibility and day in, day-out we work towards using the funds as efficiently as possible. Due to differences in legal systems, language barriers and potentially greater corruption risks, the manner in which these grants and donations are passed on to partner organizations abroad is also a sensitive issue, one that is predicated on a very good network of contacts built up over many years. Moreover, a multi-level control system is essential for the correct assessment of and effective response to risks. Risk mitigation measures must also be adopted for capital investments.



EuroNatur deserves your confidence

How do we counter risks such as financial and economic crises or a possible lack of competent and trustworthy partner organisations? How do we prevent potential misappropriations of funds or inefficiency in project work?

Find our answers to these questions online at enatur.org/1063



TRANSPARENCY - ONE OF EURONATUR'S IMPORTANT TENETS

Initiative for transparency in civil society

EuroNatur has been a signatory to Transparency International Germany's "Initiative Transparente Zivilgesellschaft" (Initiative for transparency in civil society) since 2010. Signatories to the initiative voluntarily commit to publishing ten particular items of information about their organization on their homepage. These include i.a. their statutes, the names of essential decision-makers, and information on how they are funded, how they use their funding, and their personnel structure.

Auditing

In 2023, EuroNatur once again voluntarily submitted to an audit of its annual accounts by an auditor. The auditing and tax accounting firm WISTA AG audited EuroNatur Foundation's 2023 annual accounts in accordance with Par. 317 ff. of the German Commercial Code (HGB) and in accordance with the accepted standards for the review of financial statements as set out by the Institute of Public Auditors in Germany (IDW) and endorsed the accounts with an unqualified audit certificate.

EuroNatur was again awarded the DZI Seal of Approval. In 2023, EuroNatur Foundation was once again awarded the DZI (German Central Institute for Social Issues) Seal of Approval. It expired at the end of the third quarter of 2023. The seal was awarded again in 2024. It certifies that, amongst other things, EuroNatur meets the DZI's seven standards as follows:

- EuroNatur conducts its work in keeping with its statutes.
- The organization's management and oversight are adequately structured, clearly separated and are being exercised effectively.
- In our solicitation of donations and public relations work we provide information in a clear, truthful, factual and open manner.
- We openly and comprehensively report on our work, structures and finances.
- Remuneration is paid taking into consideration the organization's charitable status, qualifications, levels of responsibility, and customary pay standards.
- The procurement and use of funding as well as the organization's financial status are documented in a comprehensible manner and are subject to appropriate controls.
- The proportion of funds spent on advertising and administration in 2022 was at an appropriate level in accordance with the DZI standards ("appropriate" = 10 % to 20 %). The effectiveness of the organization's spending is monitored and results are documented and published.



TRANSPARENCY

Capital investment based on environmental and ethical criteria

EuroNatur Foundation's foundation capital now amounts to almost EUR 6.5 million. Moreover, EuroNatur Foundation holds assets of more than EUR 2.2 million in trust for the benefit of three non-autonomous foundations. Our main financial service providers for asset management purposes in 2023 were the Bank Vontobel Europe AG, Munich Branch, and the V-BANK AG in Munich, Germany. We manage a large proportion of our assets ourselves and are advised by an independent financial adviser on a fee basis. Environmental and ethical investment criteria are of crucial importance to us.

System of remuneration

The Foundation is organized in three departments: Conservation, Communication and Administration. These divisions have a total of seven functional levels: Administration/Communication I-III, Project Management I and II (Conservation), Brussels and Head of Department. Remuneration bands have been set for each of the levels, extending 20% either side of the mid-point. Without exception all members of the Presiding Committee and the Board of Trustees act in a voluntary capacity and only receive reimbursements for cost incurred, but no flat-rate expense allowances.

Advertising and donor information

Fundraising and donor information was carried out independently by the EuroNatur Foundation in 2023 and, apart from printers, no agencies or external service providers were commissioned. EuroNatur Foundation regularly informs its donors about current projects and developments in project work, and solicits support for tangible projects.

Impact monitoring and impact analysis

One of the most important tenets of EuroNatur's work is the efficient deployment of funds entrusted to us by our donors and by the organizations (both governmental and non-governmental) that support our work. Systematic planning of activities and comprehensive impact monitoring are preconditions to the efficient use of funds.

Would you like more detailed info?

Detailed information on the topic of transparency can be found online (including our investment criteria, salary structure, forms of advertising, fundraising practices and impact monitoring measures) visit our website at

enatur.org/1061



EURONATUR'S PROJECT FOCI IN 2023



In 2023, the projects implemented by EuroNatur Foundation focused on the following areas:

- **Protecting the European Green Belt and further advancing the European Green Belt Initiative**
- **Protecting Europe's rivers and river landscapes**
- **Protecting migratory birds in Europe**
- **Protecting large carnivores in Europe**
- **Protecting Europe's last wilderness areas**
- **Protecting species-rich cultural landscapes in Europe**
- **EU nature conservation policy**

This Activity Report describes a selection of projects under individual priority headings. EuroNatur Foundation has supported and implemented a number of additional projects and initiatives over and above these priorities, a more detailed description of which is beyond the scope of this report.



Priority "European Green Belt"

Funding spent on this priority: 945,630 Euro

Projects:

Protection and development of the European Green Belt and on-going advancement of the initiative (Partners: all EGBA members as well as the actors involved in the European Green Belt initiative; Funding: EuroNatur's donors), **BESTbelt – Connecting and protecting unique landscapes throughout Europe by empowering local stakeholders** (Partners: BUND, EGBA and stakeholders involved in the European Green Belt Initiative; Funding: European Union, EuroNatur donors), **Improving connectivity along the Balkan Green Belt** (Partners: PPNEA, MES; Funding: BMUV with funds from the Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP) for environmental protection in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and other countries neighbouring the European Union), **Implementation of model projects to support sustainable development and nature conservation in the Sar/Korab–Koritnik region along the Balkan Green Belt** (Partners: MES, PPNEA, CNVP; Funding: DBU, Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, EuroNatur's donors), **Strengthening NGO-led Conservation in the Transboundary Prespa basin** (Partners: MES, PPNEA, SPP; Funding: Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, EuroNatur's donors)

Priority "Protecting Europe's rivers and river landscapes"

Funding spent on this priority: 1,331,709 Euro

Projects:

"Save the Blue Heart of Europe" campaign (Partners: Riverwatch, LAG Integrimi, ClientEarth, DPRS, Eko-svest, Front 21/42, Bankwatch, GARD, Res Publica, River Collective; Funding: 1% for the Planet, Manfred-Hermsen-Stiftung for Nature Conservation and Environmental Protection, Fondation Genevoise de Bien-faisance „Valeria Rossi di Montelera", Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, Client Earth, EuroNatur's donors), **Saving Europe's last free flowing wild river – Vjosa/Aoos** (Partners: Riverwatch, EcoAlbania, MedINA, Patagonia; Funding: Holdfast Collective, Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, Gerda Techow Gemeinnützige Stiftung, EuroNatur's donors), **Protecting the Narta Lagoon in the Vjosa Delta from destruction by the Vlora International Airport Project** (Partners: PPNEA; Funding: DIMFE, Gerda Techow Gemeinnützige Stiftung, EuroNatur's donors), **Commitment to a free-flowing Oder river** (Partners: Eko-Unia, Friends of the Earth Germany (BUND), Fridays for Future Poland; Funding: EuroNatur's donors)

EURONATUR'S PROJECT FOCI IN 2023



Priority "Protecting migratory birds in Europe"

Funding spent on this priority: 362,702 Euro

Projects:

Safeguarding the bird migration route along the Adriatic Flyway (Partners: BirdLife, VCF, Tour du Valat, HDZPP, Biom, DOPPS, BPSSS, CZIP, Naše ptice, AOS, PPNEA, FOS; Funding: Hans Wilsdorf Foundation, Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation, EuroNatur's donors), **Protecting the Ulcinj salt flats** (Partners: CZIP, MSJA, Nature Returns; Funding: MAVA Foundation, Nature Returns Programme, EuroNatur's donors), **Protecting European wet meadows and pastures, in particular in the European Stork Villages** (Partners: European Stork Villages and their national conservation partners; Funding: EuroNatur's donors)



Priority "Protecting large carnivores in Europe"

Funding spent on this priority: 876,916 Euro

Projects:

Protecting brown bears in the Cantabrian Mountains (Partner: Fapas; Funding: EuroNatur's donors), Protecting brown bears in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Partner: CZZS; Funding: Bernd Thies Foundation, EuroNatur's donors), Cross-border protection of brown bears in the tri-border area of Albania, North Macedonia and Greece (Partners: PPNEA, MES, Callisto; Funding: Fondazione Capellino), Protecting brown bears, lynx and grey wolves in the northern Dinarides (Partner: University of Zagreb, Carnivora Magna; Funding: EuroNatur's donors), Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme (Partners: MES, PPNEA, ERA, Stiftung Kora, Funding: Hans Wilsdorf Foundation, EuroNatur's donors), Preventing the extinction of the Dinaric-South-Eastern Alpine lynx population through reinforcement and long-term conservation (Partners: University of Zagreb, Slovenia Forest Service, Hunters Association of Slovenia, Institute of the Republic of

Slovenia for Nature Conservation, Technical University in Zvolen, University of Ljubljana, Associazione Progetto Lince Italia, Karlovac University, Biom, ACDB, Italian Carabinieri special command unit for the protection of forests, the environment, and the agri-food sector; Funding: EU LIFE, EuroNatur's donors), Protection of large carnivores in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Guidelines for dealing with wolves (Partners: EuroNatur is a member of the 'Arbeitskreis Wolf' working group as part of the 'AG Lynx Baden Wuerttemberg' working group, Funding: EuroNatur's donors), Protecting the Mediterranean monk seal colony at Cap Blanc (Partner: CBD Habitat; Funding: EuroNatur's donors), Protecting Mediterranean monk seals in the Eastern Adriatic (Partners: MOM, PPNEA, CZIP, Biom; Funding: MSA, EuroNatur's donors)

EURONATUR'S PROJECT FOCI IN 2023



Priority "Protecting Europe's last wilderness areas"

Funding spent on this priority: 466,181 Euro

Projects:

Protecting old-growth and primeval forests in Romania (Partners: Agent Green, ClientEarth, Greenpeace Romania, Space4Good, EIA; Funding: Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation, EIA, Manfred-Hermesen-Stiftung for Nature Conservation and Environmental Protection, EuroNatur's donors), Ecological forest conversion of monoculture pine forests in Brandenburg to semi-natural mixed forests (Partners: Nature Park administrations at Dahme-Heideseen, Märkische Schweiz, and Schlaubetal; German Federation for Nature Conservation (Nabu) - Märkische Schweiz regional association; Stiftung Naturschutzfonds Brandenburg; local conservation groups and farmers; Funding: EuroNatur Trust for Eastern Germany, EuroNatur's donors)

Priority "Protecting species-rich cultural landscapes in Europe"

Funding spent on this priority: 157,618 Euro

Projects:

Support for the protection and sustainable regional development of the Bosnian karst polje Livanjsko Polje (Partners: Naše ptice, CZZS; Funding: DIMFE, EuroNatur donors), Safeguarding two important bat roosts in Brandenburg and Poland (Funding: Interreg, Ludwig Raue Memorial Fund, EuroNatur donors)

Priority "EU nature conservation policy"

Funding spent on this priority: 154,511 Euro

Project:

Biodiversity financing (Partners: Bankwatch, Zelena Akcija, DOPPS; Funding: BMUV)



Abbreviations

Partners:

ACDB: Association for the Biological Diversity Conservation
AOS: Albanian Ornithological Society
ATN: Association for transhumance and nature conservation in Portugal
Biom: BirdLife Croatia
BPSSS: Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia
BUND: Friends of the Earth Germany
CAN: Climate Action Network
CBD Habitat: Foundation for the Conservation of Biodiversity and its Habitat in Spain
CNVP: Connecting Natural Values and People
CZIP: Center for Protection and Research of Birds of Montenegro
CZZS: Center for Environment in Bosnia-Herzegovina
DOPPS: BirdLife Slovenia
DPRS: Slovenian Native Fish Society
EEB: European Environmental Bureau
EGBA: European Green Belt Association
EIA: Environmental Investigation Agency
ERA: Environmentally Responsible Action group
Fapas: Wild animal protection fund (Spain)
FFF: Fridays for Future
FOS: Foundation of Success
FWFF: Fund for Wild Flora and Fauna
GARD: Group of Rural Activists of Dibra
GLV Integrimi: Local Action Group Integrimi
HDZPP: Croatian Society for Bird and Nature Protection
Kora: Foundation for carnivore ecology and wildlife management in Switzerland
MedINA: Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos
MES: Macedonian Ecological Society
MOM: Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk seal
MSJA: Dr. Martin Schneider-Jacoby Association
PPNEA: Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania
SOT: Tourism Organization of Stepnica
SPP: Society for the Protection of Prespa
STEP: Society for Territorial and Environmental Prosperity
VCF: Vulture Conservation Foundation
WWF: World Wide Fund for Nature

Funding:

BMUV: German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection
DBU: German Federal Environmental Foundation
DIMFE: Donors' Initiative for Mediterranean Freshwater Ecosystems
LIFE: L'Instrument Financier pour l'Environnement
MSA: Monk Seal Alliance
PONT: Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust

MISSION & VISION

EuroNatur – Connecting nature and people



We are committed to connecting nature and people in a peaceful Europe – beyond national borders. Our donors support us in this endeavour.

The growth-oriented way we lead our lives and run our economies at this point in history is characterized by ruthless exploitation of natural resources and has resulted in the pervasive destruction of nature as well as in drastic climate change. People all around the world are feeling the resultant adverse effects.

Nature is the natural resource base on which all humans depend. Species and habitat diversity are prerequisites of a quality environment. Our aim is a European continent that hosts free-flowing rivers, pristine forests and diverse cultural landscapes and that offers sufficient space for wild animals and migrating birds within these and other ecosystems.

OUR MODE OF OPERATION

Our efforts for the protection of plants, animals and habitats are transboundary in nature; we strengthen local conservation organizations and create international networks between them. Together with our Europe-wide partner network we create solutions that allow humans to live and work in harmony with nature. In our work we follow a well-proven approach:

KNOWING

Using reputable scientific studies, we provide evidence of the conservation importance and uniqueness of species, landscapes and habitats and of the threats they face.

PROTECTING

We work on driving forward the formal protection of endangered species as well as of habitats and landscapes of particular high ecological value. To this end we utilize national and international political structures.

SAFEGUARDING

Protected areas and species must be given sustained effective protection. We support control measures and make our demands for rigorous protection measures heard in national and international political institutions as well as in the courts. Where necessary, we exert public pressure on decision-makers (for example by way of protests and media attention).

LIVING

We generate acceptance of the need for protection and potentially associated restrictions for the local communities. Together with the local people we establish ecologically compatible land-use methods in protected habitats that open up socio-economic prospects. This helps us to win over local people as partners for achieving our conservation objectives, thus laying the groundwork for the long-term effectiveness of our efforts.

ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE



A Foundation to protect Europe's nature

EuroNatur is a non-profit foundation established in 1987 by Friends of the Earth Germany (Bund für Umwelt- und Naturschutz Deutschland, BUND), Nature And Biodiversity Conservation Union (Naturschutzbund Deutschland, NABU) and Environmental Action Germany (Deutsche Umwelthilfe, DUH). It is headquartered in Radolfzell. EuroNatur is legally, organizationally and financially independent, autonomous and non-partisan. A foundation having legal personality (rechtsfähige Stiftung) such as EuroNatur differs from a registered voluntary association (Verein) in that it has no membership base. The latest exemption notice (Freistellungsbescheid) was issued by the tax authority in Singen on January 26, 2024. EuroNatur is a member of, amongst others, the following organizations: European Green Belt Association e.V., International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), European Habitats Forum, German League for Nature Conservation and Environmental Protection (DNR), Agrar-Bündnis e.V. and Wetlands International – European Association.

The current Articles of Association can be downloaded at www.euronatur.org/statutes.

Presiding Committee provides strategic orientation

New members of the Presiding Committee are proposed by existing members and elected to the Committee by majority vote. The President is elected from among the members of the Presiding Committee. In 2023, EuroNatur's Presiding Committee had six voting members, all of whom served in a voluntary capacity. Their duties include determining the organization's strategic orientation, approving annual budgets, and approving the annual accounts. The Presiding Committee oversees the work of the Executive Director and the Director of Conservation Policy with a view to its lawfulness, expediency and economic efficiency. Detailed Committee member profiles can be accessed at www.euronatur.org/en/about-euronatur/organization/presiding-committee.

Board of Trustees serves as an advisory committee

EuroNatur's Presiding Committee can nominate persons to the Board of Trustees who support the organization's concerns. In 2023, EuroNatur's Board of Trustees had 19 members, all of whom served in a voluntary capacity. They support EuroNatur in three areas: technical advice, especially with respect to access to funding; public relations work; establishing the organization and its work more firmly within society. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees attends the meetings of the Presiding Committee in an advisory capacity. Detailed profiles of the Members of the Board of Trustees can be accessed at <https://www.euronatur.org/en/about-euronatur/organization/euronatur-board-of-trustees>.

Salaried management staff in charge of operative implementation

The Executive Director is in charge of and responsible for steering the organization's operative work. In the reporting year, EuroNatur employed a total of 33 staff, who are active in the units of conservation, administration and public relations. More than 30 voluntary collaborators support the work of EuroNatur Foundation.

EuroNatur Service GmbH

More than 25 years ago, the EuroNatur Foundation established a wholly owned subsidiary, the EuroNatur Service GmbH, a limited company. This small but efficient service provider publishes and markets landscape and wildlife calendars and guidebooks on EuroNatur's project regions as well as a wide range of reference books and exclusive items. Additionally the EuroNatur Service GmbH has specialized on layout and mail order services which it provides to the EuroNatur Foundation and other clients.

EURONATUR DIGITAL

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ACTIVE ON FACEBOOK

We'd love for you to become our 10,000th Facebook follower! By following our Facebook channel, you can stay up to date with all the latest news, share our content with your friends and get in touch with us. We'd love to welcome more followers who enjoy interactive communication!

www.facebook.com/euronatur



ACTIVE ON LINKEDIN

Follow our dedicated staff and EuroNatur on LinkedIn! We give you great insights into our diverse work across national borders. Is there anything you'd like us to know or do you think what we are doing is great? Then comment, share and like our posts. Want to get involved yourself? Then write to us on LinkedIn!

linkedin.com/company/euronatur



ACTIVE ON INSTAGRAM

Great animal photos and stunning landscape shots, replete with exciting information about our work: Follow us on Instagram, marvel at the beauty of Europe's nature and share our posts!

www.instagram.com/euronatur



DIGITAL NEWSLETTER

Twice a month we will bring you the latest news. You can subscribe to the free EuroNatur newsletter and help us by forwarding this invitation to your contacts.

euronatur.org/newsletter



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**!! I SUPPORT THE EURONATUR FOUNDATION BECAUSE I AM IMPRESSED BY
THEIR PROJECTS, THEIR WAY OF WORKING AND THEIR COMPETENCE! !!**

Sibylle Möbius, Sustaining member since 1992



IMPRINT



The EuroNatur team in June 2024 (in rows from left to right):

Front:

Nadya Moussa, Isabel Wintermantel, Dr. Amelie Huber, Ines Fantinato, Sandra Wigger, Kerstin Sauer

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The DZI (German Institute for Social Issues) seal of approval certifies that EuroNatur is serious, transparent and uses donations wisely and effectively.

Conservation needs action – and money!

Our successful work is built on targeted strategies, efficient methods, sound knowledge, rich practical experience and respectable partner organizations in the project regions. But existing opportunities translate into concrete measures only with the help of our donors.

Donations to registered charities such as EuroNatur are tax-deductible. Please help Europe's nature and wildlife.

Please spread the word and help us find new supporters for EuroNatur!
www.euronatur.org



