



WWF

REPORT

MED

2020



WWF Mediterranean  
Programme Report FY20

ADRIA

## **Programme Information**

### **WWF Mediterranean – Operational Units:**

- WWF Mediterranean Leadership & Coordination, Mediterranean Marine Initiative Team (office in Rome)
- WWF Adria (lead office in Zagreb, country offices in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina)
- WWF North Africa (lead office in Tunis, country office in Morocco)
- ANP|WWF Portugal (independent organization with its own national board)

### **Geographic regions covered by the programme:**

- Adria: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Albania
- North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya
- Portugal
- Mediterranean Regional Sea

### **Global Priority Programmes:**

- Mediterranean Ecoregions (Terrestrial and Freshwater Ecoregions in Adria, North Africa, Portugal)
- Mediterranean Marine Initiative (regional, Adria, North Africa)

WWF Mediterranean is operating under the FY18-22 Strategic Plan

Date of this report: September 2020

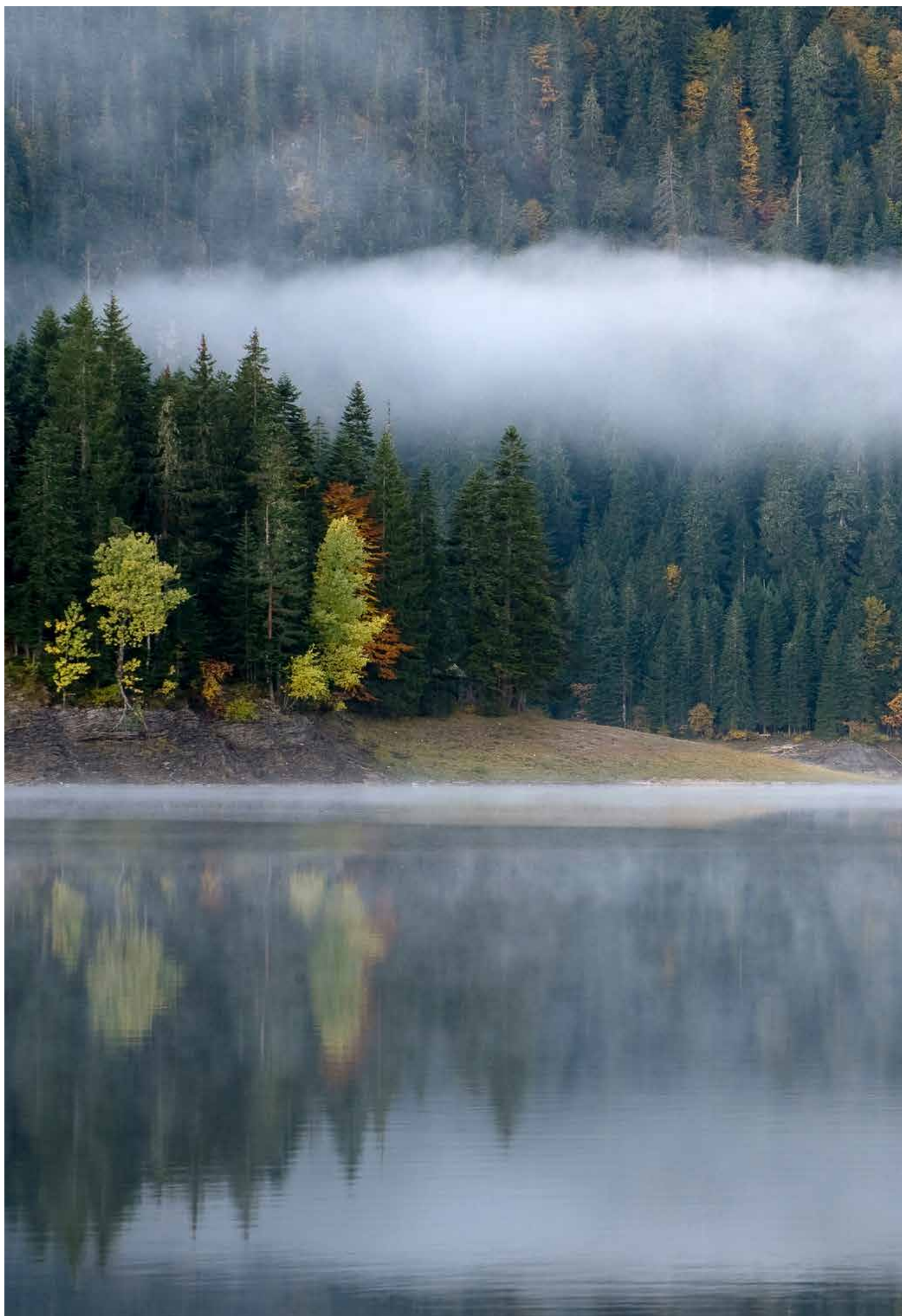
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*The recovery plans that governments around the world are designing may provide the necessary drive towards investment in nature.*

2020 will remain in our collective memory for years to come. The COVID-19 pandemic is a painful wakeup call to the risks that human societies create by destroying nature and neglecting public goods such as widespread health systems. Fortunately, the motivation to bring nature higher up on the humanity agenda, the so called “2020 Biodiversity Super Year”, prevailed despite the challenges. Key decision-making moments, when countries have to sign on formal commitments, have all shifted to 2021, but 2020 may still be recorded as the year when humanity decided to bend the curve of nature destruction. The recovery plans that governments around the world are designing may provide the necessary drive towards investment in nature. Our times are daunting, but hope is stronger than ever - as is the effort of WWF and civil society organizations in the Mediterranean.

Despite the restrictions related to COVID-19, in FY20 (July 2019-June 2020) WWF Mediterranean was able to complete the spinoff of WWF Adria, the network office leading conservation across eight countries in the west Balkans region. Now WWF Adria operates as a self-standing Program Office reporting to WWF International. This organizational change comes after the successful spinoff of ANP|WWF in Portugal, three years ago. WWF Mediterranean continues to lead conservation across the four countries of North Africa and to provide regional coordination and project development and implementation functions for the Mediterranean Marine Initiative.

Our work advanced in FY20 in spite of the considerable disruption to our plans. From March 2020, all field activities were put on hold while offices were closed and staff required to work from home. Work plans were adjusted to focus on activities that could be implemented online. Staff adapted quickly to the new situation and much was accomplished in spite of the long lockdown.

In Tunisia, the WWF team organized virtual Friday webinars to address top priority conservation issues, open to government, the private sector and civil society; the attendance was way beyond expectations, increasing week after week and including many decision makers.

The Mediterranean Marine team set up a platform to work virtually with small-scale fishers (SSF) helping them to market their catch directly to consumers. Under the “Friends of SSF Platform” promoted by WWF and the GFCM (the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean), WWF Mediterranean launched the SSF University to build the capacity of small-scale fishers to fish sustainably.

In Tunisia WWF supported fishers in the northern region of Tabarka in setting up a cooperative to help them increase the market value of their catch; in Ghannouch (Gulf of Gabes) the fishers themselves initiated a No Take Zone to support sustainable fisheries. In Taza National Park, Algeria, WWF helped fishers to initiate “pescatourism” activities as an alternative means of generating income. On Lastovo island (Croatia), WWF Adria launched a Blue Business Incubator to demonstrate that a sustainable blue economy can drive islands towards self-sufficiency and sustainability. Also in Croatia, WWF pushed the largest aquaculture company, Cromaris, to become certified by the Aquaculture Stewardship Council. In Portugal, ANP|WWF initiated the establishment of the Algarve octopus fishery co-management forum, the second after the goose-barnacle co-management forum in the Berlenga Islands. And, in recognition of valuable experience in working with communities throughout our region, the Ocean Practice engaged the WWF Mediterranean Marine team to lead the development of the WWF global Coastal Communities Initiative.

We fought a new battle for bluefin tuna, this time against the MSC certification of a Japanese company fishing bluefin in the northeast Atlantic, revealing troubling weaknesses in the MSC assessment process. Other top predators, sharks, are in a dramatic state of decline in the Mediterranean, as shown by a WWF report. Following pressure from WWF and other groups, for the first time ICCAT established a Total Allowable Catch for the blue shark in the Atlantic: WWF recommended much stricter measures, but it is a start.

In the growing movement against plastic pollution in our region, eight Mediterranean cities joined WWF's Plastic Smart Cities initiative, including Tangier, Monastir and Hammamet.

The conservation of freshwater ecosystems did not stop. The process to create the world's first five-country UNESCO biosphere reserve along the Mura-Drava-Danube rivers, crossing Austria, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Hungary, is one step from completion. This gigantic reserve, protecting almost one million hectares of precious river, wetland and floodplain habitats, is expected to be formally declared in 2021. In the Sebou basin (Morocco) the Water Fund - initiated by WWF - distributed the first set of grants for local community restoration and water management projects. In Ghar El Melah lagoon (Tunisia) WWF brought together farmers, fishers and tourism businesses to design a recovery plan for this internationally important wetland. We also created a data base of small island wetlands, leading the way to protecting and restoring these so-far neglected habitats, while training and nurturing a new generation of botanists to support land-use decision making with reliable information on plant species and plant ecosystem services. In the effort to protect all free running rivers in the region, WWF Adria continued using all possible tools that can lead to durable protection: two successes included the protection of the Zeta River in Montenegro as a nature park and the Krupa River in Croatia as a cultural heritage site. Questioning the entire system of subsidies for small hydropower plants comes next in WWF Adria's strategy.

No summary of the past year's work would be complete without mentioning the stakeholder platform created by WWF Adria across Slovenia and Croatia to support large carnivore conservation in this critical transboundary region, along with the advances in the conservation of the Iberian wolf made by WWF|ANP in Portugal and their crucial reports on forest fires.

I hope you enjoy reading more in detail of all these and many other FY20 results. We have challenging times ahead but much that we can build on to protect and restore the natural riches of the Mediterranean.

Paolo Lombardi, Director, WWF Mediterranean

# WWF ADRIA

## HIGHLIGHTS

- The world's first five-country UNESCO biosphere reserve, Mura-Drava-Danube, protecting almost one million hectares of precious river, wetland and floodplain habitats, endorsed by Austria, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Hungary is expected to be formally declared at the next UNESCO meeting.
- We launched a Blue Business Incubator on Lastovo, with eight business ideas set to demonstrate that a sustainable blue economy can drive islands to self-sufficiency and sustainability.
- We set forest and aquaculture sectors on a path towards sustainability: a national FSC standard was adopted in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the largest Croatian aquaculture producer is now ASC certified.
- Environmental education is entering the formal education system: over 65% of participating schools decided to continue with the WWF Nature Academy approach; climate change integrated in curricula of high school and university education in Serbia.
- We found a winning approach for protecting free-flowing rivers: a durable river protection mechanism applied in Montenegro and Croatia, while the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia are questioning the efficacy of subsidies for small hydropower plants.
- A crucial requirement for human/wildlife coexistence was enabled: with open and inclusive dialogue we brought key stakeholders together to co-develop solutions, increasing mutual understanding and building trust.
- We established the WWF Adria Partnership Group, bringing together WWF Network offices interested in supporting our mission.
- Individual digital fundraising is proving to be a smart bet: in slightly over 6 months of implementation and despite Covid-19, we concluded the year with over 8.000 EUR income donated by 307 individual donors.

## CONSERVATION IMPACT

The eight countries of the Western Balkans are a treasure trove of biological diversity and immense natural values: charismatic wildlife, breathtaking forest landscapes and seascapes, as yet unexplored karst underground, free-flowing rivers and wetlands weave a mosaic of important ecosystems that also serve the health and well-being of people. The region is in a state of socioeconomic development. An acceptance of the rights and responsibilities associated with democracy has yet to fully permeate our societies; duty bearers need to improve the transparency and inclusiveness of their decision-making models, and rights holders, especially local communities, must rise to the challenge of proactive participation in those processes. Sustainable development principles need to be fully internalized in the approaches to natural resources management and economic and infrastructure development, to ensure that impacts on the environment and nature are avoided or minimized to acceptable levels.

To tackle these challenges, and successfully deliver on WWF's global mission to build healthy and resilient ecosystems while improving the quality of life, WWF Adria's work is designed to:

- i) protect and restore biodiversity,
- ii) create equitable and transparent natural resources governance models,
- iii) facilitate the transformation of businesses towards sustainability, and
- iv) grow and empower conservation constituencies.

It is accordingly arranged towards the achievement of four main goals. Through the passionate and ambitious work of our team, this year WWF Adria made successful progress towards achieving our mission for the conservation of forests, seas, fresh water, protected areas and wildlife, as well as addressing climate change and unsustainable consumption.



## Goal 1: Key species, habitats and ecosystems are protected and recovering

### KEY OUTCOMES

This year, the final step was made towards securing the long-term conservation of the Mura-Drava-Danube riverine landscape. The declaration was signed by all relevant countries and the proclamation of the world's first five-country UNESCO biosphere reserve Mura-Drava-Danube is set to take place at the next UNESCO meeting. Once declared a protected area, this transboundary biosphere reserve (TBR) will stretch over 930,000 hectares across five European countries, united in a joint effort to protect the key ecological features of the area and sustainably manage its resources and support the well-being of local communities. This success comes after several years of joint advocacy efforts by WWF Adria, WWF Austria and WWF Central and Eastern Europe, and is a testimony to perseverance and a shared goal.

While awaiting the formal decision on the TBR declaration, we worked to improve the conservation status of the core zone of the future TBR. On river Drava, this included habitat management measures for riverine birds and habitat restoration measures to open side channels and reconnect them to the main channel of the Drava, carried out jointly with the water management agency. It also included taking the Croatian Ministry of Environment and Energy to court over sand mining in the Drava. Destructive dredging began under cover of the COVID-19 emergency although no environmental impact assessment study was carried out. WWF Adria mobilized Friends of the Earth Croatia, the Association BIOM, and the Croatian Society for Birds and Nature Protection to file a joint lawsuit demanding an immediate halt to sand mining activities and revoking the permit. We are waiting for the trial to start.

Our work continues on the protection of charismatic species and improvement of human/wildlife coexistence. We ran a series of workshops in Croatia and Slovenia for hunters, farmers, and representatives of rural communities on one side, and public institutions, inspections, and local and national government representatives on the other; we were able to increase their awareness, understanding and appreciation of the key ecosystem roles provided by large carnivores (bear, wolf and lynx). We also engaged with over 900 individual stakeholders and started an open and inclusive dialogue into the need to co-create and implement measures to minimize human-wildlife conflict. To that end, a national large carnivore monitoring committee was founded in Croatia by the Ministry of Agriculture and with the support of WWF Adria; similar discussions are underway in Slovenia.

During this extensive stakeholder engagement, we also advocated for the transboundary management of large carnivore populations as the foundation to ensuring that these charismatic species continue roaming across the Western Balkans and beyond. Our efforts resulted in the development of a management plan and guidelines for wolf population management between Croatia and Slovenia, and an agreement to do the same for bear and lynx. We aim to capitalize on the interest of these two countries by mobilizing support for the regional platform on the coexistence between people and large carnivores in the Dinaric region.



*In Montenegro and Croatia, the two karstic beauties, rivers Zeta (pictured left) and Krupa, are safe from any future degradation. They are the first examples of durable river protection mechanisms in the region, serving as a roadmap for other countries to follow.*

## ***Goal 2: Good governance systems are in place that enable sustainable management and use of natural resources***

### **KEY OUTCOMES**

Building on the previous year's result of establishing four local co-management platforms and a national platform in Croatia, WWF Adria was able to successfully demonstrate their crucial value for managing fishery resources. Co-management platforms in marine protected areas Telašćica and Lastovo Islands provided the necessary space for open and constructive dialogue among stakeholders that overcame local conflicts around fishery measures, thus paving the way to develop fishery management plans in the two marine nature parks. We reached an agreement and pushed the Ministry of Agriculture to institutionalize that agreement in a decree on fishery measures in special areas. Once endorsed, this decree will serve the dual purpose of contributing to the recovery of fish stocks in the Adriatic Sea, as well as to the improvement of the conservation status of MPAs by limiting damaging activities.

Jointly with European WWF offices, WWF Adria helped save the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the key piece of EU legislation for managing water resources, from weakening its standards, as was advocated by several EU member states and industrial lobbies. To complement the protection offered by the WFD, especially in non-EU member states which have yet to fully implement the Directive, we increased our engagement on setting up durable river protection mechanisms (DRPM), which we had started in the previous year. DRPMs are envisaged as any form of legal protection granted to a river to protect it from all destructive activities, and our two successes include protection of the Zeta River in Montenegro as a nature park and the Krupa River in Croatia as a cultural heritage site. The concept was extremely well received in Croatia, where the Ministry of Environment and Energy decided to form and chair an interdisciplinary working group to develop DRPM into a legally binding mechanism.

DRPM will ensure that free flowing rivers remain in their natural state. To protect and appropriately manage other freshwater resources, WWF Adria is seeking to incorporate the polluter pays principle in the environmental permits of hydropower plants (HP). We are piloting that approach in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where we are working with the Federal Ministry of the Environment to integrate the requirement for restoration of Hutovo Blato wetlands in the environmental permit of HP Čapljina. Over past years, our research clearly demonstrated links between wetland degradation and operation of the hydropower plant; we co-developed a restoration plan with experts, and this year a roadmap was finally agreed that requires the energy company, that owns and operates the HP plant in question, to invest financial resources in restoration. Once fully implemented, this approach will set a precedent by accepting that degradation caused by HP operations constitutes pollution,

and by prescribing environmental restoration measures as a condition for permitting the renewal process of hydropower infrastructure. This can be replicated in other ecosystems degraded by hydropower operations across the Western Balkans. WWF Adria has started to prepare for this through mapping of opportunities and stakeholders, as well as more widely through the Living European Rivers Initiative, jointly implemented by WWF offices across Europe.

Addressing existing threats to freshwater resources also included structured engagement on exposing subsidies for small hydropower (sHP) development as perverse incentives benefitting only a few individuals at the expense of society at large. Socio-economic, environmental and legal studies using cases from Montenegro, Albania, Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina provided ample evidence that the costs of sHP plants (subsidies) outweigh their benefits (employment, electricity contribution, taxes and energy fees), thus supporting our call to eliminate any form of incentive for construction of these types of energy facilities. Our message was widely shared, reaching over 4 million people, and resulting in extensive support from other NGOs, academia, professional organizations and individuals. The first results are optimistic: the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the decision to stop further sHP development and revise the current system of granting concessions; the Government of Montenegro approached us for direct consultation on the need to improve their legal system, while several Serbian municipalities decided to stop issuing building permits for sHP projects.

WWF Adria also contributed to improving the management of natural resources in the sectors of forestry and protected areas. The FSC certification of over 242,000 hectares of forests in Bosnia and Herzegovina was used to identify high conservation value forest areas and co-develop and adopt management guidelines in a participatory approach with government, expert institutions, forest management companies, academia and NGOs. For protected areas, we focused on minimizing the impacts of tourism. With experts, PA stakeholders and institutions we co-developed guidelines for decision makers on sustainable tourism principles and monitoring of impacts on biodiversity in protected areas and Natura 2000 sites. The resulting manual is expected to contribute to improving conservation status through better management practices, and was widely shared with expert audiences and practitioners via the [CEETO Network](#) (193 registered users), [Parks Dinarides](#) (90 protected areas members), and nature conservation professionals in Croatia (412 representatives of institutions, NGOs, private sector).



## TRANSFORMATION FOR FORESTS

The forestry sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina had a real reason to rejoice this year. The first ever FSC standard in the Adria region, acquired by Bosnia and Herzegovina, was celebrated by forestry and timber companies, experts and scientists and civil society organizations and institutions. Getting FSC certification will be easier now for companies dealing with wood production in this country and should pave the way for their access to international markets. Improving the environmental, social and economic performance of forest governance and management, this standard guarantees that the forests in a certain enterprise are managed in a transparent manner, in accordance with key international regulations and domestic legislation, including a higher degree of nature protection. After more than 242,000 ha of forests were certified within the IKEA-funded project towards responsible forest management in Bosnia and Herzegovina, FSC certification comes as the cherry on top of our forestry work. The FSC national standard is the result of the efforts of an unusually big working group gathered and led by WWF Adria and our partners, the Faculty of Forestry of the University of Sarajevo.





### ***Goal 3: Business practices are transformed towards sustainability and corporate and social responsibility***

#### **KEY OUTCOMES**

Economic well-being can be a powerful driver for conservation. WWF Adria is working to bring nature-oriented and sustainable opportunities to local communities to mobilize them towards conserving biodiversity and ‘thinking green’.

We have aligned all field marine conservation activities with Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE) principles and launched a Local Blue Business Incubator (BBI) in Lastovo Islands Nature Park as a pilot for local SBE development. The BBI will facilitate development of local businesses that support local livelihoods, while contributing to conservation (e.g., organic agriculture, sustainable tourism, sustainable waste management, renewable energy and electric transport). In addition to securing the backing of local government and Lastovo Islands Nature Park management for the BBI initiative, we successfully mobilized business development expertise to support the design and evolution of business ideas – ImpactHub Zagreb, Cooperative for Ethical Finance, PEAK DMC, SMILO and VertigoLab are our partners in this endeavor. Focused and structured engagement with the local community resulted in eight viable business ideas entering BBI, which will be further improved and implemented in the upcoming period. These business ideas are building up the vision of Lastovo as a smart and sustainable island, while the whole concept proves that all local needs (energy, water, waste, food, and business) can be met through SBE principles and supported by community resource sharing and clean technologies.

In terrestrial ecosystems, WWF Adria demonstrated the possibilities of sustainable development for the mutual benefit of both protected areas and local communities: the co-creation of over 35 distinct opportunities with local stakeholders – such as sustainable tourism packages for wildlife watching, nature trails, local arts & crafts businesses incorporated into the tourist offer of PAs – directly benefited over 500 members of local rural communities (PAs in the region are typically found in rural areas where opportunities for local development are scarce and limited).

Protected areas can play an important role in their local areas, showcasing opportunities for sustainable development, maintaining and improving local well-being by protecting nature and planning the long-term, sustainable use of natural capital. WWF Adria continues to develop and demonstrate such opportunities; our TBR Mura-Drava-Danube initiative is looking at supporting sustainable development in the biosphere reserve where we facilitated the creation of a sustainable business product – the Amazon of Europe Bike Trail. It is still in the design phase, but once fully realized the trail will help boost local business development and generate income, a portion of which will be directed to nature conservation activities.

Economic development, as well, poses a significant pressure on natural resources in the Western Balkans, and WWF Adria is working with the fisheries, food, forestry and energy sectors across the region to transform their practices towards sustainability. We are focusing on pilot examples in each sector, to serve as ‘proof of concept’ for the system-level paradigm shift and to facilitate replication and up-scaling.

In the forestry sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we brokered the development and adoption of the FSC National Forest Stewardship Standard, making this country the first in our region to have [tailor-made standards](#) that will ensure sustainable, transparent and participatory management and use of forest resources.

This year also saw the finalization of the Aquaculture Standards Certification (ASC) process of Cromaris, which was supported by WWF Adria. Cromaris is the largest sea bass/bream aquaculture company in Croatia, holding over 80% of total national production. By ASC-certifying its production process, Cromaris committed to an environmentally acceptable farming process and set a new standard in Croatian marine aquaculture sector for others to follow.

Capitalizing on the good relations and trust established with the small pelagic fishery in Croatia, we were able to identify the key requirement for sardine and anchovy fisheries to join our fishery improvement project (FIP) – market access security. The FIP is looking to optimize fishing measures and improve fishing practices towards supporting fish stock recovery in the Adriatic, which will require upfront financial investment by the fishery. In order to push them into the process, we focused our efforts on creating the demand for FIP products – managing to secure the interest of several international market players which we now have to translate into practical cooperation.

We cooperated with the hospitality industry to reduce their ecological footprint through reduction of food waste. We successfully applied the HotelKitchen approach, originally developed by WWF US, to three hotels: two in Croatia and one in Serbia. Systematic awareness raising of hotel staff about food waste, capacity building to understand possible approaches to minimizing waste and reusing food, and co-development of tailor-made solutions resulted in a measurable decrease in food waste. We are currently in negotiations with the Croatian environmental protection and energy efficiency fund to replicate and upscale this work nation-wide.



*With the announcement of plans for the massive reduction of the Košutnjak forest near Belgrade, WWF Adria joined over 35 local and national organizations in Serbia to save Košutnjak from destruction. The informal coalition prepared expert and legal arguments showing that the reconstruction plan is damaging to nature, in breach of national legislation, and against public interest. Over 75,000 signatures were collected and 7,000 individual official complaints were submitted to decision makers.*

#### **Goal 4: Civil society is educated and empowered to engage in environmental stewardship and decision making**

##### **KEY OUTCOMES**

Building up the environmental constituency across our region is a crucial element of any work that we do; awareness raising activities, capacity building opportunities, education and direct support to locally-led initiatives are ways of mobilizing the wider public to stand up for their rights to a healthy and safe environment.

The Nature Academy continues to be our success story, providing hands-on, experiential learning about nature conservation topics, co-designed by a participating school and its nearby protected area. This eight-month environmental education program develops key competencies of teachers and their students that lead to active citizenship for nature conservation, while protected area staff receive training on nature interpretation, development and implementation of education activities. This program was run successfully in nine protected areas across the region with over 25 schools participating, benefitting over 4,000 local school children. Over 65% of the participating schools decided to continue with the Nature Academy approach on their own. And three new protected areas and nine new schools joined this program, with implementation to start soon.

Young people in the Western Balkans are increasingly concerned about the climate crisis; WWF Adria designed a holistic plan to further educate youth on climate change, empower them to act and harness their creativity in seeking solutions. As a first step, we successfully incorporated a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Climate Change, Risks and Challenges into the education system in Serbia, adding climate change to the national high school curricula, and as a topic for undergraduate studies at the University of Belgrade. With ImpactHub Belgrade, we started a mentoring

program for young start-up businesses to integrate climate change and sustainability aspects in their business ideas; five start-ups have been selected and are about to enter the mentoring phase, and will eventually serve as examples of adaptive strategies to the world with a changing climate.

WWF Adria contributed with knowledge, expertise and finances to support civil society and local community empowerment. Many of those initiatives were local in character, seeking to address a very particular challenge, such as supporting legal actions against sHP development in Albania (2 cases), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2 cases) and Serbia (4 cases), tackling environmental crime issues in Albania and non-transparent spatial planning process related to protected areas in Serbia (2 cases). These initiatives are ongoing, but their underlying problems have a common thread – lack of transparency, inclusion and good governance principles in environmental decision making, both at the level of designing legislation and its practical application. Addressing this requires a concerted effort, which is why WWF Adria continued to participate in the existing Coalition 27 in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as initiating similar platforms in Kosovo and North Macedonia, and providing expert advice for the creation of a coalition in Albania.



## FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE

As a regional organization working across as many as eight countries, there are always going to be challenges, especially in an election year such as this one. These risks are constant, and we are experienced at planning our work to accommodate delays brought about by changes in country leadership.

The prevailing sentiment that the environment is low on the agenda of decision makers was confirmed at the EU-Western Balkans Summit held in Zagreb (in May 2020 via video conference). Organized under the auspices of Croatian EU Presidency, the Summit was meant to reconfirm mutual commitment towards Western Balkan countries' EU integration. The resulting Declaration failed to recognize the environment and nature as key elements for building a stronger, just and more resilient future, without reference to even the European Green Deal/Green Agenda. Establishing the green agenda prominently in public discourse will require developing compelling stories and evidence showing direct threats to human well-being and breach of basic democratic principles of fairness and transparency. To this end we started approaching investigative journalists to collaborate on reporting on corruption and perverse incentives in the environment sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic, fortunately, did not lead to significant negative impacts to our work. In the short term (from the outbreak to the end of the year), we were able to adjust implementation of our ongoing initiatives to ensure continuity, such as transferring to virtual setting or implementing actions in a different order (e.g. postponing workshops until in-person gatherings are possible, focusing on desk research and analyses). However, if restrictions to travel and gatherings continue over the next year, the disruption to our work – which rests on in-person engagement with local communities and stakeholders – will be more difficult to offset.



*Today's young people will be tomorrow's stewards of our planet. The future of all life depends on them gaining the knowledge, skills and passion to build a more sustainable future. WWF Adria's video Connecting to Nature through Education has an inspiring message: protected areas are nature's schools – there is no better place to understand the connection between nature and people.*

## TOGETHER POSSIBLE

While our primary interest is to establish WWF Adria in the Western Balkans as a dependable, inclusive and transparent partner, our work is also designed to support delivery of the WWF Network's global goals; we are actively contributing to the successful implementation of several joint initiatives:

- With WWF Austria and WWF Central and Eastern Europe, we are working to declare Mura-Drava-Danube the first five-country UNESCO biosphere reserve, and secure sustainable management of that transboundary protected area.
- As a member of the Living European Rivers (LER) Initiative, WWF Adria is spearheading work on minimizing and eliminating impacts of hydropower on rivers and wetlands. LER is a pan-European effort aiming to deliver measurable conservation and restoration of freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity.
- WWF Adria is part of the Mediterranean Marine Initiative (MMI), a joint effort to secure long-term conservation and recovery of invaluable marine ecosystems, with a pan-Mediterranean scale of work and funding.

Many WWF offices have recognized WWF Adria as a trusted partner, able to deliver on highly complex issues. These offices extend their support to WWF Adria as advisers, funders, project partners and capacity builders: WWF Austria (TBR MDD, fisheries); WWF Japan (fisheries), WWF Sweden (forest management, protected areas governance), WWF Netherlands (freshwater conservation and restoration), WWF US (climate change education, food waste), WWF Germany (climate change education, wildlife conservation), WWF Switzerland (freshwater ecosystems restoration). We are committed to maintaining and growing these partnerships, to harness the power of the WWF Network and bring the latest knowledge and most advanced solutions to our region.

## COMMUNICATIONS WINS

Communications are an integral element of achieving conservation impact, helping us to shape messages, run successful advocacy campaigns, and reach out to mobilize engagement across the wide spectrum of society.

The year ended with amazing news from Bosnia and Herzegovina. After years of fighting to ensure sustainable hydropower development, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina stopped all small hydropower (sHP) projects and is seeking ways to eliminate related subsidies. This decision was the first major result in an ongoing advocacy and communications campaign coordinated by WWF Adria to stop subsidizing sHP development in the Western Balkans. Throughout the year our message was the subject of more than 400 national, regional, and international news articles, TV reports and radio shows. More than 4 million people around the region are aware of the need to remove subsidies and end all sHP projects to preserve the last free-flowing rivers in Europe.

Communications also help us to promote our mission and solutions, raise awareness on the beauty and importance of nature that surrounds us, and on behavior that is damaging for biodiversity, ecosystems and the well-being of local communities.

It is never easy to raise awareness about sturgeons. Although described as “living fossils” from the Triassic period not many people are interested. That is why WWF Adria, in cooperation with the local community from Negotin in Serbia and the fledgling NGO Sturgeon Center, created a unique exhibition “[Sturgeons: A Migratory Treasure of the Danube](#)” that presents amazing facts about this iconic fish – from the fact that sturgeon once swam with dinosaurs, to their lack of scales and gigantic size. This first-ever virtual exhibition on sturgeons (in Serbian and English) opened in June 2020 and recorded around 1200 visits in its first two months.

We also developed the [first ever website](#) about large carnivores in Croatia and Slovenia that is accessible to all. People with visual impairments or other disabilities who understand Croatian or Slovenian, can learn about the lynx, wolf and bear in our region. For those who live in the areas of Croatia and Slovenia where large carnivores roam, but do not use the internet, we delivered (directly to their homes) a 16-page magazine including positive examples and good practices of humans coexisting with wildlife.

Today’s young people are tomorrow’s leaders. Educating them about sustainability and nature protection, and empowering them to act now plant the seeds of their lifelong passion for environmental stewardship. Our video [Connecting to Nature through Education](#) promotes protected areas as the best schools to learn about nature and the further development of the WWF Nature Academy. With KidHub in Belgrade, WWF Adria created digital content to engage and educate youth in Serbia about climate change. Five [online videos](#) explain climate change issues (e.g. nature protection, food, and renewable energy), and present a home challenge. Most successfully completed home challenges were recorded, and young climate heroes and heroines were presented on our [YouTube channel](#). The videos had around 2,000 views, and 77 applications were sent by children who took part in home challenges.

Bringing about a change in behavior works best when you can show an example of success. This year we focused on showcasing the champions of marine ecosystem conservation in Croatia, with videos about local communities engaged in nature conservation. Our heroes Helena and Ivica from Lastovo, who will be soon featured as [Ocean Witnesses](#), talk about their new activity in Lastovo – [fishing tourism](#), while Dražen from the Velebit Channel talks about [shrimp production](#). Both stories promote sustainable alternatives to traditional approaches, to ensure that the species they fish recover and remain abundant in the future.



*WWF Adria enriched its online presence with a podcast (Šum prirode - the sounds of nature) bringing conservation closer to the general public. Experts and enthusiasts share their stories and experiences on topics such as “Nature conservation for beginners”, “Why bees matter for biodiversity”, “River Watchers”, “What does nature sound like?”, “Ecology and Art” to name a few. The podcast is in local language, with some episodes available in English.*

## FUNDRAISING

### Securing funding for conservation work

Our team continued to rise to the challenge of securing funding. This year we started eight new projects with a cumulative total budget of over 4 million euros. Some of these projects were a continuation of previous work, enabling us to build on the great progress already underway in freshwater conservation, wildlife population management and protected areas governance. Others helped us move into new territory, such as fishery work in Albania, or new topics, including education and empowerment on climate change, and understanding human rights in conservation.

During the year we also received approval for six project proposals with a total cumulative budget of over 1.8 million euros. These projects will replenish funding to tackle hydropower impacts on free-flowing rivers and freshwater ecosystems, and help us increase sustainable management initiatives for TBR Mura-Drava-Danube. As well, these funds will enable us to address wildlife crime in new ways through capacity building of the judiciary, and protect vulnerable marine species by reducing bycatch and creating marine reserves/fishery restricted areas. These projects will kick off in the next year.

We currently have three project proposals awaiting decisions:

- “Climate Heroes – Youth Voices for Sustainable Living” was submitted jointly with WWF Bulgaria to the European Climate Initiative EUKI, with a total project budget of 650,000 euros. If approved, this funding will enable us to upscale our work on climate change awareness and empowerment of youth to engage in development of solutions. We are awaiting a decision on the full proposal.
- “Participatory Conservation and Restoration of Peatland Ecosystems in the Eurasian Region to establish an Intergovernmental body for the Eurasian Region” was submitted jointly with WWF Pakistan to the International Climate Initiative IKI, with a total budget of 19 million euros. If approved, this funding will be used to develop innovative, bankable solutions for effective carbon sequestration through peatland conservation and restoration. We are awaiting a decision on the concept note.
- “Protect Marine Ecosystems through Active Participation” was submitted jointly with NGO Sunce from Croatia to the Active Citizens Fund, with a total budget of 160,000 euros. The project aims to improve active participation of NGOs and the general public in decision-making processes related to marine governance in Croatia. If approved, WWF Adria will use funding to launch our work on maritime spatial planning. We are in the process of developing the full proposal.

### Individual Fundraising Journey

Listen carefully, open your eyes and swipe right to get a perfect gift... With a cute lynx photo, enough people swiped to assure us that individual digital fundraising was the right decision for WWF Adria. Without the financial and human capacity needed to implement Face-to-Face fundraising our end-target is a very brave one – to achieve financial sustainability in year 5 that will allow us to continue delivering impactful conservation on the ground.

The program was launched in November 2019 in Croatia only. We developed the [Adopt a better future website](#) featuring donation and adoption pages. In time, we developed separate pages for urgent campaigns, as well as quiz forms to additionally engage potential donors. The Christmas campaign focused on “last minute gifts”. With an investment of €1,100, it gained 100 donors and over €3,000. The Valentine’s Day campaign brought us even more donors – 107. Several significant days have since been celebrated: Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Earth Day, Biodiversity Day, Bee Day... Each campaign was supported with a special donor journey based on our strategy. At the end of this reporting year, we launched a pilot initiative to fundraise specifically for our marine conservation work. We created a video and a series of newsletters featuring our stakeholders and partners. We are eagerly awaiting the results of this pilot, to help shape the future of our individual fundraising.

We concluded the financial year 2020 with 307 donors and an income of €8,219, almost meeting our forecast. Looking forward, finding the right campaign to attract people who will trust us is the key priority. If the Covid-19 situation allows, we will run a pilot Face-to-Face campaign for Christmas, which might help us gain the trust of people and raise the number of monthly donors. Our focus is on securing the funds to continue this start-up, as it can’t be self-sustainable yet.





*The Adopt a better future website features donations and adoptions, urgent campaigns and quiz forms to engage potential donors. The Christmas campaign focused on “last minute gifts”. With an investment of €1,100, it gained 100 donors and over €3,000. The Valentine’s Day campaign brought us even more donors – 107. Several significant days have since been celebrated: Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Earth Day, Biodiversity Day, Bee Day... Each campaign was supported with a special donor journey based on our strategy.*

## WWF ADRIA - ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

WWF Adria continued to strengthen capacities to respond to the requirements of becoming an independent office within the WWF Network. Building on the findings of the audits from the previous year, we completed alignment of internal procedures with the Network guidelines in relation to compensation, travel, and procurement policies. We also developed a Partner assessment policy that sets out the principles, criteria, processes and roles that govern how WWF Adria evaluates opportunities for partnership with CSOs to ensure full compliance with WWF Network standards by partnering organizations.

Responding to the increased awareness in the WWF Network around safeguarding and risk management, WWF Adria completed a comprehensive risk registry, encompassing financial, HR, conservation and communications risks and mitigation measures. We also identified geographic locations - landscapes - where our conservation work is focused, so that we can assess our activities for their environmental and social impact, and determine if they need to be adjusted to better respond to local circumstances. A team has been set up, and screening exercises have started; the implications of their findings for our work will be known next year.

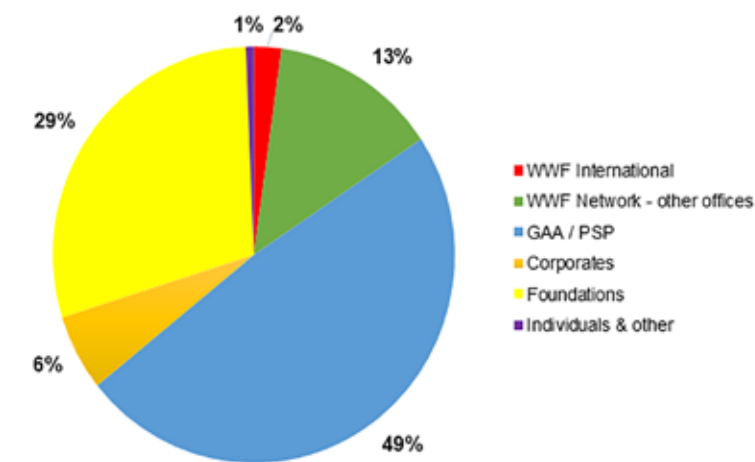
This year saw the formation of WWF Adria Partnership Group, a collaboration platform for WWF Adria and WWF Network offices interested in pursuing WWF’s mission and Global Goals within the geographic scope covered by WWF Adria. Current members of this group are WWF Sweden, Italy, Greece, Austria, Netherlands, Finland, and Poland, the regional offices Central and Eastern Europe, and Mediterranean, as well as the International Global Development Center and International Global Country Team.

Our team grew over the last year and now includes more than 60 people, with the welcome addition of a Human Resources Manager to support us in building an even stronger and mutually supportive team across all eight countries. The benefits were already felt, especially during the initial months of the Covid-19 pandemic.

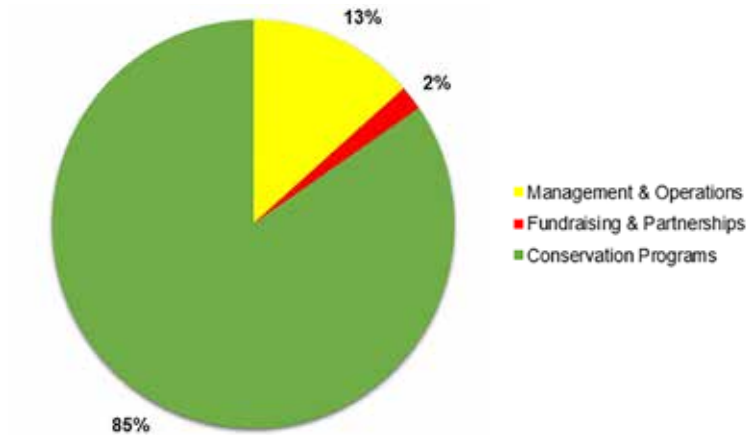
At the end of the year, our CEO stepped down for personal reasons. While unexpected, this development will not impact WWF Adria’s operations; an interim CEO will take over the management of the organization, while a recruitment process will be implemented immediately with a view to securing a permanent solution quickly in the new year.

# FINANCIALS

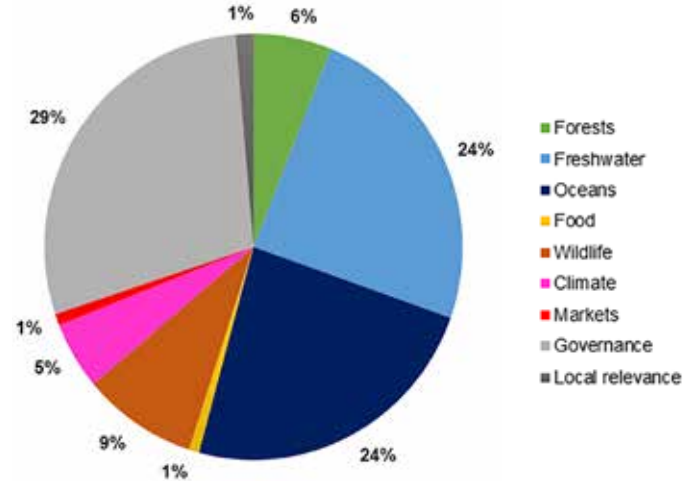
## FY20 TOTAL INCOME: 3.2 MILLION EUROS (BY DONOR TYPE)



## FY20 TOTAL EXPENDITURE: 3.4 MILLION EUROS



## FY20 CONSERVATION EXPENDITURE : BY GLOBAL GOALS



# GOVERNANCE

We are working to increase the engagement and influence of civil society and build constituencies for conservation and political will.

# PEOPLE

We are mobilizing people –communities, consumers, tourists, economic sectors – to make a positive difference together.

# SOLUTIONS

Co-management, sustainable standards, no-go areas, e-flow, PAs that benefit communities – these are some of the solutions we are working towards.

# ECONOMY

We are creating important tools to change economic drivers and incentives and demonstrate the value of the Mediterranean's natural capital.



#### Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

[www.wwf.adria.org](http://www.wwf.adria.org)