



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

Mid-Term Evaluation Report

Table of Contents

Director's Message	4
Summary of findings	5
Acronyms and abbreviations	6
1. Introduction	7
1.1. The IUCN Programme 2017–2020	7
1.2. Mid-term review	8
1.3. IUCN Members and Commission experts	8
2. IUCN Impact in the ECA region	11
Programme Area 1: Valuing and conserving nature	11
Programme Area 2: Effective and equitable governance of nature's use	13
Programme Area 3: Deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development	14
3. One Programme approach	16
3.1. The use of IUCN knowledge products	16
3.2. Collaboration within IUCN	17
3.3. Communication	17
3.4. Walking the talk	18
4. Outlook	20
4.1. Regional priorities	20
4.2. The IUCN Programme 2017-2020 in 2019 and 2020	24
Programme Area 1: Valuing and conserving nature	25
Programme Area 2: Effective and equitable governance of nature's use	26
Programme Area 3: Deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development	26
4.3. The road to the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020	26
4.3.1 IUCN Draft Programme 2021-2024	26
4.3.2 Regional Conservation Forum	28
4.3.3 Motions	28
4.3.4 The IUCN World Conservation Congress	29
5. Conclusions	30

Director's Message

Dear Members, Commission experts,

It gives me an immense pleasure to present the mid-term review of the IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia on behalf of the entire ECARO team. This review comes as a joint effort to take stock of the progress of our regional programme after its four years of existence, identify major gaps and opportunities in our work in the region, understand the scale of our outreach and impact and assess partnership potential.

Initiated halfway into the IUCN Programme 2017-2020, the mid-term review aimed at receiving feedback from IUCN Members and Commissions on several key aspects of our work, such as IUCN's impact in the region, the One Programme Approach and regional outlook. It also intended to shed light on the Union-wide process leading to the 2021-2024 programme cycle, including the recent Regional Conservation Forum and the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille in June 2020.

The past four years were marked by programme consolidation and development. Our focus was on ensuring a smooth transition from operating in South-Eastern Europe only to what has become one of the biggest and most diverse geographic regions of IUCN, encompassing South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus, North and Central Asia, while at the same time maintaining sound operations and exercising financial prudence in order to enable programme development.

This was a challenging task and we would not be able to come this far if we had not worked closely with our Members and Commission experts in raising the profile of IUCN in the region, building new partnerships and opening new thematic chapters in our work. With the regional programme almost doubling its size over the last two years and the ongoing programme cycle phasing out next year, we have reached a point at which we needed to once again look into the needs and priorities of the region and re-assess the role of IUCN in an ever-growing realm of environmental challenges.

We have reached out to you, dear Members and Commissions, as there was no other way to have a healthy review of IUCN's operations but to get your views and feedback on our work and results, discuss gaps and opportunities and identify major areas for improvement. We trust that by combining the online survey, frequent email exchange and face-to-face dialogue at the Regional Conservation Forum in Rotterdam, we were able to grasp the essence of your sentiment about the implementation of the IUCN Programme 2017-2020 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and jointly set out major directions for our work into the next quadrennial.

Once again, I thank you for all your support in enabling IUCN's operations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia over the past four years and invite you to be as critical and rigorous as possible in reviewing our work and providing sound advice as we go forward.



*Yours sincerely,
Boris Erg*

IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Summary of findings

This mid-term review report will serve as a guide for IUCN ECARO's work in relation to the implementation of the IUCN Programme 2017-2020 and preparations for the IUCN Programme 2021-2024. As such, it highlights areas for improvement, especially for the achievement of the One Programme approach, for serving Members in the ECA region better and for increased collaboration between all three IUCN constituent parts.

A key to the success of IUCN is to tap into its unique potential as a membership Union. This report shows that IUCN ECARO can do more to increase collaboration with and between Members and Commissions in the Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia (ECA) region, including through joint project development, the organisation of events, development of knowledge products and policy interventions. The Secretariat is well-placed to facilitate and convene knowledge exchange, capacity building interventions and discussions on priority issues in the region, including through peer-to-peer cross-fertilisation in an effort to strengthen regional cooperation.

To truly act as “one”, the report demonstrates, it will be necessary to communicate effectively using various means, including social media and the IUCN ECARO newsletter “A Voice for Nature”. Communication should not only focus on providing information and access to knowledge products, tools and methodologies developed by IUCN, but also on featuring activities of IUCN Members and disseminating news from Commissions highlighting their contribution to the IUCN Programme. In this way, a strong, impactful Union can be built.

Consultations with Members and Commission experts from the ECA region, as highlighted in this report, revealed a relatively low level of knowledge or interest in IUCN governance issues. However, engaging with such issues is essential if ECA Members wish to call attention to pressing issues in the region and to influence the global conservation debate. More information on matters related to IUCN governance should be made available to Members, so that they have the tools to shape IUCN priorities and policies, in particular in preparation for the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020.

The report further notes a number of thematic priorities that are specific to the ECA region. Transboundary cooperation and the establishment of effective regional platforms will be a critical step towards tackling key biodiversity and conservation challenges. Knowledge, awareness and capacities to fully realise nature's contribution to human well-being are generally low and should form an important area for capacity building going forward. This is also the case in relation to ensuring the effectiveness and enforcement of existing laws, regulations and management plans, with a view to strengthening policy coherence across sectors. Support for the diversification of funding sources and increased capacities and skills for financial planning is another area of great importance in the coming years.

The results presented in this report, contribute to the development of IUCN ECARO's programmatic activities and provide the backdrop for strategic priority setting and organisational development. They will help to raise the profile of issues faced in the ECA region and support Members in their conservation efforts.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AICS	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
BDTF	Biodiversity Task Force for South Eastern Europe
BfN	German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany
CAMI	Central Asian Mammals Initiative
CAREC	Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia
CEC	IUCN Commission on Education and Communication
CEESP	IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy
CEM	IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EAZA	European Association of Zoos and Aquaria
ECA	Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia region
ECARO	IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia
ENA	Europe and North Asia
FAO	UN Food and Agricultural Organization
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
INCA	Institute for Nature Conservation of Albania
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KBA	Key Biodiversity Area
NAPA	National Agency for Protected Areas of Albania
NbS	Nature-based solutions
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ORF BD	Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Biodiversity
PA	Protected Area
RAPA	Regional Agency for Protected Areas in Albania
RCF	Regional Conservation Forum
RWG Env	Regional Working Group Environment
SBI	Società Botanica Italiana
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEE	South East Europe
SSC	IUCN Species Survival Commission
SOS	Save Our Species
UBA	German Environment Agency
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WB	World Bank
WCC	IUCN World Conservation Congress
WCEL	IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law
WCPA	IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas
WGWAP	Western Gray Whale Advisory Panel
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

1. Introduction

The IUCN Programme provides the framework for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the conservation work undertaken by the Commissions and the Secretariat with and on behalf of IUCN Members. Although initially established in Belgrade, Serbia as the IUCN Programme Office for South-Eastern Europe (IUCN SEE) in 2004, the IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (IUCN ECARO) has started to facilitate the implementation of the IUCN Programme since 2015 in a much wider region. Today, ECARO's administrative region includes much of South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus, North and Central Asia.

1.1. The IUCN Programme 2017–2020

IUCN's programme cycle is quadrennial. The current IUCN Programme runs from 2017 to 2020. This Programme was approved by Member organizations at IUCN's World Conservation Congress in September 2016 in Hawaii, USA, as a result of a nine-month consultation process with IUCN Members and Commissions.

The [IUCN Programme 2017-2020](#) has three Programme Areas and is implemented through the combined force of the Secretariat working together with six IUCN Commissions and more than 1,300 Members globally.

Programme Area 1. Valuing and Conserving Nature enhances IUCN's heartland work on biodiversity conservation, emphasising both tangible and intangible values of nature. This Programme Area contributes to SDG 15: Life on Earth. It addresses both the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss and works to improve the status of biodiversity. It also aims to increase the value of nature to society and contributes to the development and implementation of effective gender-sensitive policies and legal frameworks for conserving nature. Addressing gaps in necessary legislation and ensuring enforcement of existing law is critical.

Programme Area 2. Effective and Equitable Governance of Nature's Use consolidates IUCN's work on people-nature relations, rights and responsibilities and the political economy of nature. It works to enhance environmental governance mechanisms and systems at all levels.

Programme Area 3. Deploying Nature-based Solutions to Address Societal Challenges expands IUCN's work on nature's contribution to tackling problems of sustainable development. It promotes engagement with a number of sectors, including land-use, natural resources, health and urban development. It further supports the role played by the business sector in developing, testing and promoting business solutions that build on Nature-based Solutions.

As the IUCN Programme 2017-2020 slowly draws to a close, the new [IUCN Programme 2021-2024](#) has been drafted and was [consulted with Members through several phases](#) from December 2018 to September 2019. It was presented during the 2019 Regional Conservation Forum (RCF) in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, and will be finalised during the [IUCN World Conservation Congress \(WCC\)](#) in 2020 in Marseille, France. An outline of the process towards the WCC is given in section 4.3 below.

1.2. Mid-term review

To plan for the last two years of the current programme's cycle, IUCN ECARO has undertaken a mid-term review of its programme delivery thus far. Overall, the IUCN ECARO mid-term review report will serve as a guide for identification of the region's most pressing conservation needs and possible thematic priorities for IUCN's engagement, while shedding additional light on the potential operational structures required for the successful implementation of the current and future programme.

The review consisted of an overview of all projects conducted (entirely or partially) within 2017 and 2018, as well as an online survey used to consult with IUCN Members and IUCN Commissions active in the Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia (ECA) region. The online survey was conducted through SurveyMonkey between February and March 2019 and included 30 questions grouped in the following sections:

- General introduction (identification of the respondents);
- Collaboration across IUCN (evaluation of current level of collaboration between the IUCN Secretariat, Members and Commission members);
- IUCN Programme and regional priorities;
- Preparation for IUCN's World Conservation Congress 2020; and
- Communication.

The response rate to the survey was rather low (Table 1), which unfortunately limits generalisation of our findings to the wider Member and Commission expert base. Explanations for the low response rate may be that the survey was rather lengthy, which may have discouraged respondents to answer all questions, or that the engagement between the regional office and both its Members and Commission experts in the region is insufficient. This signal has been noted and strengthening these relationships will be a guiding principle throughout this report and in planning the future work of IUCN ECARO

Table 1: Mid-term review survey response rate

	Received the survey	Responded (to all questions)	Percentage
IUCN Members	51	7	13.73%
IUCN Commission Members	408	19	4.66%
TOTAL	459	26	5.66%

The survey results help us understand the current level of programme implementation, ascertain how IUCN ECARO can better serve its Members and plan the remainder of activities until 2020. The survey findings were discussed at the RCF that was held 1-3 July 2019 in Rotterdam, which gathered IUCN Constituents from the region to prepare for IUCN's WCC in 2020 in Marseille and to discuss the draft IUCN Programme 2021-2024. In addition, Members had the opportunity to present motions for the next IUCN Congress and raise and discuss broader environmental and sustainable development issues. The insights gained from these discussions have been incorporated in this report. However, they have not been included in the quantitative analyses of the survey results. The report also includes an overview of the conservation priorities in the region that emerged from the survey as well as through the facilitated discussions at the RCF and engagement with Members in the region.

1.3. IUCN Members and Commission experts

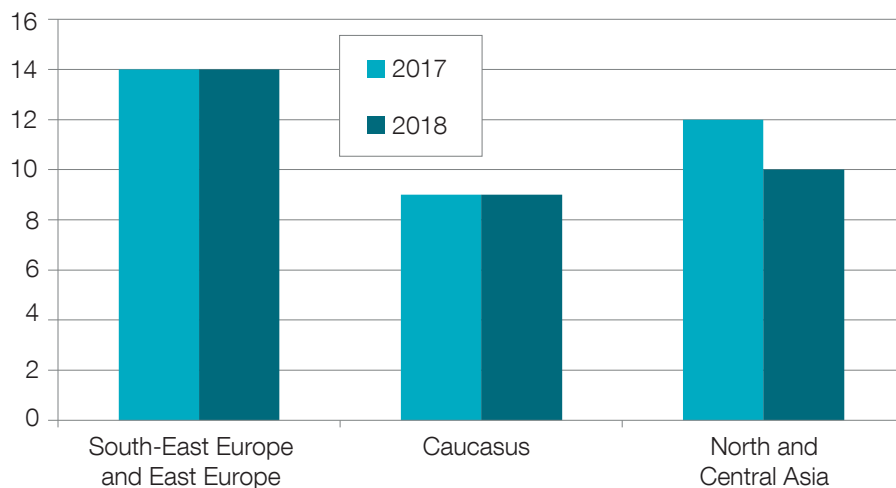
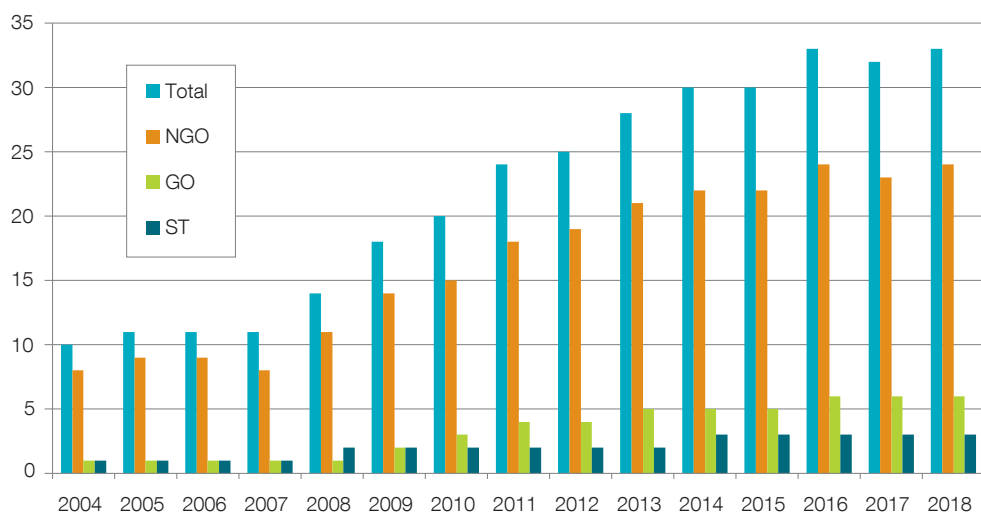
IUCN's ever-growing influence is a result of its mobilisation of own network of Members and Commission experts. The diverse nature of IUCN's membership base counting over 1,300 organisations gives the Union

a unique, neutral vantage point, while the six Commissions, uniting over 10,000 volunteer experts from a range of disciplines, provide the Union with sound know-how and convincing policy advice on conservation issues.

Based on the survey results, Members mainly benefit from information and knowledge, project participation and IUCN's credibility. On the other hand, influencing high-level decision-making, access to funding or input to the Union's strategic directions and governance were perceived as less important benefits. This seems to suggest that IUCN is considered more useful to practical day-to-day activities than for contributing to conservation policy and priorities at a regional level.

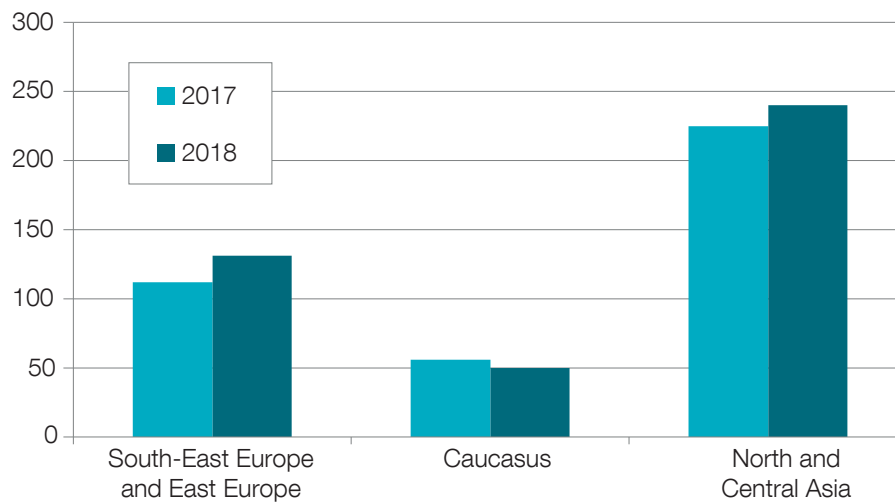
The Union, driven by its mission, reflects the diverse needs of its vast membership and its commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of the earth's resources.

IUCN Membership in the ECA region has grown at a steady pace since the establishment of the SEE Programme Office and later Regional Office.

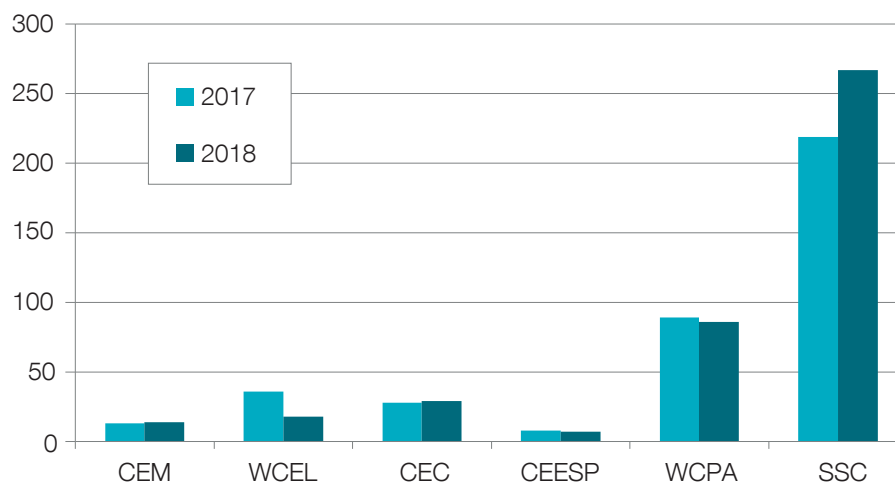


The only officially recognised National Committee of IUCN Members in the ECA region is the National Committee of Russia.

The membership evolution in the ECA region is on a steady growth when it comes to the number of experts engaged with IUCN Commissions, totalling from 393 Commission members in 2017 to 421 in 2018, which represents an increase of 6.65%.



The comparative analysis of the membership numbers by Commission, however, show a decrease of members in most of the Commissions in the ECA region, SSC being the only exemption with a membership increase of 18%.



These figures clearly indicate the need for ECARO to increase efforts in mobilising the IUCN network of experts and Members, both existing and potential. By ensuring stronger presence and nurturing a more vibrant network, the constituency will be able to position IUCN to ensure successful programme delivery.

2. IUCN Impact in the ECA region

This section describes the impact of IUCN in the Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia region for the first two years of the current IUCN Programme 2017-2020. Each Programme Area will be considered in turn and relevant projects and activities highlighted. While the focus is on activities carried out by IUCN ECARO, each section will also highlight contributions by Members and Commission experts based on responses received to the survey. The survey data revealed that just over half of the Member respondents felt they have contributed to the implementation of the current IUCN Programme in the region, whereas only one quarter of Commission expert respondents felt they did.



Map: Engagement through projects in the region, 2017-2018

Programme Area 1: Valuing and conserving nature

1. NaturAL

A colourful portfolio of activities to prepare the groundwork for the introduction of Natura2000 to Albania. Strengthening capacities of scientists, national and local government officials and the local community on approaches to protected area management, day-to-day operations, communications, etc.

2. Living Buna

Ensuring long-term conservation of species and habitats in the Buna River Velipoja Protected Landscape, and conducting a comprehensive evaluation of ecosystem services.

3. Towards strengthened governance of the Lake Ohrid region

Supporting the Government of Albania in the preparation of the nomination file for the World Heritage Committee to extend the already inscribed site to the Albanian part of the lake.

4. Achieving Biodiversity Conservation in North Macedonia

IUCN is coordinating the national Red List process in North Macedonia, which commenced in November 2017. The activities included a 4-day Red List Assessor workshop that trained the experts to conduct species assessments.

5. World Heritage in Central Asia

IUCN is leading the process of identifying natural sites in Central Asia with potential for World Heritage nomination, while helping the national authorities to improve the World Heritage sites nomination process and site management. One of the expected results is the new Thematic Study for World Heritage in Central Asia.

6. Training Module on Initiating Transboundary Conservation

Developed in partnership with the IUCN WCPA Transboundary Conservation Specialist Group, this new IUCN knowledge product aims to build capacity of experts and practitioners for assessing feasibility and initiating transboundary conservation.

Contributions by IUCN Members and Commission experts

Under the programme area 'Valuing and conserving nature', Member respondents to the survey contributed mostly through working on protected areas, biodiversity-related conventions and Red Lists and to a lesser extent on Key Biodiversity Areas, Red List of Ecosystems and illegal trade. Commission expert respondents felt they contributed mostly through working on the IUCN Red List, protected areas, and Key Biodiversity Areas, as well as on biodiversity-related conventions, invasive alien species and World Heritage.

Diversity of amphibian reproductive centres in Djerdap National Park by PhD Jelka Crnobrnja-Isailović, SSC Member, Serbia

Activities of the experts working in Djerdap National Park, Serbia, in 2018 focused on the mapping of amphibian breeding sites and listing of the occurring amphibian species in those sites. They also worked to recognise the most threatened sites amongst them, while also noting down phenological changes amphibians' reproductive sites. It was evident that the buffer zone around the National Park plays a crucial role, as it hosts reproductive centers that are valuable for maintaining diversity of amphibians in the park. Impacts of climate change on earlier desiccation of some shallow ponds were evident, causing the disruption of early breeding of anuran species. In addition, some of previously quite permanent small ponds were drying out, indicating the need for introducing conservation measures. In cooperation with management of Djerdap National Park, experts are trying to create a solid foundation to assure continuous monitoring of amphibian breeding sites in this area in order to maintain rich local biodiversity. One of the main conclusions is that environmental stochasticity nowadays can influence the erosion of local amphibians (and perhaps even reptiles).



© Jelka Crnobrnja-Isailović

Programme Area 2: Effective and equitable governance of nature's use

7. Towards Strengthened Conservation Planning in South-Eastern Europe

IUCN facilitated exchange of knowledge and capacity building with the objective to develop and nurture partnerships between governments, civil society, local communities and the private sector, aiming to contribute to achieving a more integrated approach to sustainable development, policy making and implementation.

8. Biodiversity Task Force (BD TF) for South-East Europe

This regional institutional network for cooperation on biodiversity-related issues in South-East Europe was established in 2017, supported by IUCN as its Secretariat. Its objective is to advise on how to mainstream biodiversity concerns in the South East Europe 2020 Strategy and to enable the participating economies to progress towards international biodiversity commitments.

9. Western Gray Whale Advisory Panel

The IUCN-led Western Gray Whale Advisory Panel (WGWAP) has been providing independent advice to Sakhalin Energy and other interested actors on the conservation of whales and marine habitat for 12 years. Under a new agreement, the Panel will continue to do so until 2021.

10. enviroLENS

In late 2018, IUCN started an innovative Horizon 2020 project “Copernicus for environmental law enforcement” that will demonstrate and promote the use of Earth Observation services as direct evidence for environmental law enforcement. IUCN will test this approach through three selected use cases.

Civil society for environmentally sound socio-economic development by INCA

Through this regional project (2016-2019) that covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey, selected civil society organizations (CSOs) are recognised as key stakeholders and included in decision-making processes that contribute to the sustainable use of natural assets.

INCA Albania is building the capacity of CSOs on lobbying and advocacy, improving regulatory frameworks for SEAs and EIAs and influencing related public consultation processes to include CSO participation. To date, INCA has (1) conducted stakeholder analysis (including media) and in-depth analysis of Albania's regulatory framework; (2) drafted policy recommendations based on the analysis and contributed to drafting a manual on best practices for public participation; (3) provided technical mentoring and supported project's visibility activities; and (4) oversaw issuance of two competitive grants to CSOs in Albania and monitored their implementation. Lastly, INCA contributes to a regional CSO network by supporting its members and attending and developing content for regional trainings and networking meetings.



©INCA

Fruit Gardens by IDEA

This initiative of IDEA, the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan and FAO establishes fruit gardens for low-income residents of Azerbaijan, aiming to improve the welfare of families in need and to help them generate revenue in a sustainable way. Sizeable land plots are allocated as gardens and divided equally among several local low-income families, to grow and harvest the trees for their own financial benefit. Thousands of fruit-bearing trees, such as hazelnut, pomegranate, apricot, feijoa, persimmon, walnut and apple trees are planted on these land plots with the help of hundreds of young IDEA volunteers. Fruit gardens have already been established and presented to 63 families in 19 districts of Azerbaijan since 2017. The project is set to continue and cover all districts of the country in subsequent years.



© Sabina Gasimova

Photo: Sabina Gasimova©....

Contributions by IUCN Members and Commission experts

Under the programme area ‘Promoting and supporting effective and equitable governance of nature’s use’, Member respondents to the survey mostly contributed through working on transboundary conservation and developing the natural resource governance framework. To a lesser extent, they also covered environmental agreements, biodiversity-friendly business and gender topics. Commission expert respondents contributed mostly through working on natural resource governance, transboundary conservation, environmental agreements, biodiversity friendly business and the Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas.

Programme Area 3: Deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development

11. Agriculture and Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction in the Western Balkans

As part of the ongoing efforts to strengthen the application of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in the region, IUCN partnered with GIZ, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) to deliver a series of trainings on ecosystem services, ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction and NbS for flood prevention.

12. Central Asia Nexus Dialogue

IUCN has partnered with the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) to facilitate productive and regular multi-sectoral dialogues and enhance cooperation on issues relating to water, energy and food across the five Central Asian states.

Contributions by IUCN Members and Commission experts

Under the third programme area 'Deploying nature-based solutions to address societal challenges including climate change, food security and economic and social development', Member respondents to the survey mostly contributed through working on Nature-based Solutions, ecosystem-based adaptation, forest landscape restoration and water governance. Commission expert respondents contributed mostly through working on ecosystem-based adaptation, forest landscape restoration and legal, policy and institutional mechanisms.

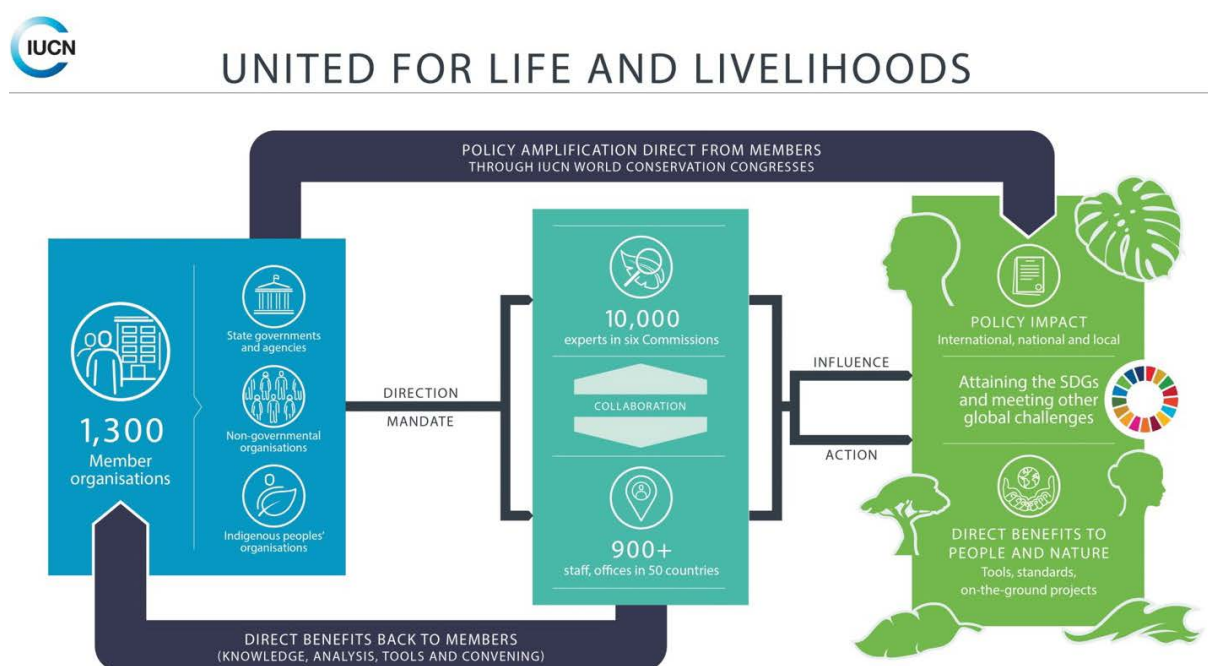


Divjaka-Karavasta National Park, Albania © Arber Xhaferaj

3. One Programme approach

IUCN ECARO strives to increase the collaboration between Members, Commissions and the Secretariat, based on the understanding that partnerships provide greater access to knowledge, technical expertise and relevant networks to promote nature conservation and sustainable development more broadly (Figure 1). This is referred to as the “One Programme Approach”: *working as one Union by drawing on the expertise and networks of Members and Commission experts*. The evaluation of the One Programme approach in the ECA region was an important component of the Member and Commission expert survey. The sections below touch upon some of the findings, while bearing in mind that the low response rate to the survey may be distorting the results slightly.

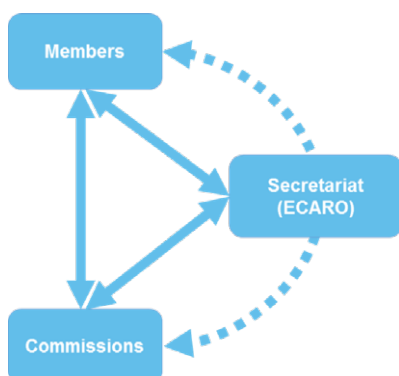
Figure 1: IUCN working as one



3.1. The use of IUCN knowledge products

A considerable proportion (85%) of IUCN Member and Commission expert respondents indicated that they use IUCN knowledge products. Those who do not, listed low awareness and language as potential barriers, as well as the tools being too general to be applied in specific situations, or national or regional legislation superseding them. Of all IUCN knowledge tools, both Member and Commission expert respondents mostly used the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Member respondents also used the Key Biodiversity Area Standard, the Red List of Ecosystems and to a lesser extent the Protected Areas Governance Standard and IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas, while Commission expert respondents made use of the Protected Area Governance and Key Biodiversity Standards and less so the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems and the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas. Commission expert respondents further used other IUCN publications, such as IUCN Protected Area and World Heritage publications and the recent report on oil palm. It is logical that the older and more established tools (i.e. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and the Protected Area Categories) are more widely used than more recent tools (e.g. IUCN Red List of Ecosystems and IUCN Green List Standards).

3.2. Collaboration within IUCN



Collaboration within IUCN occurs between all combinations of its components: Members, Commission experts and the Secretariat (ECARO). Member respondents collaborated more often with IUCN ECARO than Commission expert respondents. On average 24% of Member respondents collaborated often and 38% on some occasions with IUCN ECARO. They were generally satisfied with this level of collaboration. On the other hand, 73% of Commission expert respondents indicated to have never collaborated with IUCN ECARO and were generally dissatisfied with this level of collaboration. These figures indicate that there is room for improvement in the collaboration with ECARO, especially with Commission experts.

Both Member and Commission expert respondents collaborated with IUCN ECARO mostly on outreach, project implementation and organisation of joint events. Some Commission expert respondents provided expert advice or participated in conferences with IUCN ECARO. Respondents ranked access to new funding, capacity building and networking as approximately equally important benefits from collaborating with IUCN ECARO. As a possible starting point for improving collaboration, Member respondents suggested joint project development, joint meetings/events and policy interventions as primary ways to increase and strengthen collaboration. Collaboration with Commission expert respondents could be strengthened mostly through increased communication, increased involvement of Members and Commission experts in activities and increased participation in events.

As a Union of Members, IUCN also provides opportunities for collaboration between Members and Commissions. The survey revealed that both Member and Commission expert respondents perceived collaborating with (other) IUCN Members as slightly beneficial for networking and fundraising, with slightly more advantage for collaborating Members. Commission expert respondents rarely collaborated with Members, and if they did, it was most often for the development of knowledge tools, such as the IUCN Red List. Member respondents sometimes collaborated with other Members on project development and implementation, capacity building, outreach, knowledge tools and events.

The majority of Member and Commission expert respondents were not satisfied with the level of collaboration with (other) IUCN Members (57% and 66% respectively). The survey provided a number of ideas on possible starting points. Both Member and Commission expert respondents indicated that collaboration between them could be enhanced by IUCN ECARO providing networking opportunities (e.g. annual meetings, regional meetings, database on skills and knowledge available, visits of experts to Members and vice versa, etc.) and encouraging involvement of Members and Commission experts in each other's project activities. Member respondents further considered capacity building as a tool to increase collaboration with Commissions, while Commission expert respondents indicated better communication, information sharing and joint project development as additional promising options. All these options will be explored as these contribute to more coordinated and collaborative impact of IUCN as a whole and in the ECA region in particular.

3.3. Communication

Arguably the most important factor in collaboration is communication. The survey also provided Members and Commission experts with a possibility to evaluate the communication between all IUCN components. To receive information about IUCN ECARO, both Member and Commission expert respondents preferred either email or face-to-face interaction at meetings. Member respondents were also interested in using the website to obtain information, while Commission experts indicated using the newsletters more often. Despite the latter, less than half of the Commission expert respondents are subscribed to [‘A Voice for](#)



Meeting in Turkmenistan © Serdar Allekow

Nature, while all Member respondents are. Two thirds of the Commission expert respondents, who are not subscribed, were not aware of the newsletter or did not pay attention to it thus far. Social media was a preferred information channel for about one quarter of the respondents, but more so among the Commission experts than among the Member respondents.

For receiving more general IUCN-related information, both Member and Commission expert respondents indicated email, internet and social media as the preferred channels, more so than TV, printed media and radio. Member respondents indicated to prefer internet as the most important channel, whereas Commission experts preferred largely to receive information via email. For example, while over half of the Member respondents visited the website at least monthly, only one quarter of the Commission experts did so. Both Member and Commission expert respondents most often visited the News, Publications and Projects pages of the IUCN website. Member respondents also frequently visited the Vacancies page, while the Commissions page was more visited by the Commission expert respondents, who also indicated the use of the IUCN Red List website.

In future communications, the vast majority of Member respondents would like to know more about other Members' activities, IUCN ECARO's activities, news from the Commissions and fundraising opportunities. Commission expert respondents are mostly interested to learn about IUCN ECARO's activities, activities of Members and to a lesser extent the IUCN Programme, news from the Commissions and fundraising. Only about 20% of the respondents showed interest in IUCN governance information (e.g. the IUCN World Conservation Congress and the Regional Conservation Forum). Members showed slightly more interest for this topic than Commission experts. In their own communications, only 20% of the respondents indicated to make reference to the IUCN Programme 2017-2020, and less than half of the Member respondents make use of the Member logo.

3.4. Walking the talk

The Member and Commission expert survey results show that the One Programme approach is working to some extent in the ECA region, but leaves room for improvement. The uptake of IUCN's knowledge products and the Member satisfaction with the collaboration with ECARO are encouraging. However, the

low response rate to the survey could be an indication that IUCN ECARO is not engaging closely enough with its constituents in the region.

Members and Commission experts have been involved in ECARO activities, leading to perceived benefits such as increased opportunities for funding, capacity building and networking. ECARO aims to facilitate the identification of opportunities to collaborate through the newsletter 'A Voice for Nature', where information on Members' and Commissions' activities are presented, however, there is room for improvement. Suggested ways to better involve Members and Commission experts include better communication, joint project development, joint events and providing support for policy interventions. ECARO will increase its efforts to involve its constituents in project development, but does not have the capacity to follow in detail the activities of every Member and Commission expert. Requests for collaboration are welcomed, where project ideas that are closely aligned with the IUCN Programme are most likely to be considered.

The survey results further showed that the connections among Members, as well as between Members and Commission experts are relatively weak and benefits from collaboration limited. Respondents suggested facilitating exchange of knowledge and experience between Members and Commission experts through more frequent regional meetings and by highlighting Members' activities. As mentioned, this happens through the newsletter 'A Voice for Nature' - still, proactive engagement of all sides is welcomed. Whereas ECARO will endeavour to connect Members with Commission experts in the region through regional meetings, each of the Commissions' websites also provides ways for searching for specific expertise available within the Commissions.

Important benefits of being an IUCN Member include the collective voice that IUCN provides to shape the conservation priorities and the influence IUCN provides to support policy development. To make use of these, involvement in IUCN's governance processes (e.g. the IUCN Programme and IUCN World Conservation Congress) is necessary. IUCN's governance structure is set up to reflect the diverse needs of its membership. Remarkably, neither Member nor Commission expert respondents take a strong interest in IUCN governance topics, even though these provide a direct opportunity for Members to elevate regional conservation challenges to a global interest, potentially increasing funding opportunities. Motions are an excellent example of such an opportunity. Only when our constituents seize the opportunity to let their voice be heard, can ECARO facilitate their case.



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4. Outlook

4.1. Regional priorities

This section reflects on some of the emerging issues and priorities in the ECA region identified as part of the mid-term review survey, facilitated discussions at the Regional Conservation Forum in July 2019 and exchanges with partners in the region.

As highlighted by IPBES¹, biodiversity and ecosystem functions are deteriorating at an increasing pace. Overall, the trends and status of biodiversity is reported as negative for the ECA region. Some key drivers of global changes include a growing human population, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, effects of climate change, an increase in natural disasters and extreme events, far reaching biodiversity loss as well as political instability, changing markets, technological innovation and new diseases that impact human health and well-being. Additionally, a number of institutional and governance challenges have been observed, where environmental problems appear to become increasingly complex. Specifically, increased resource extraction, pollution and invasive species pose significant threats on ecosystem health and biodiversity in the region. The average abundance of native species in most major land-based habitats has fallen by at least 20%, mostly since 1900. More than 40% of amphibian species, almost 33% of reef forming corals and more than a third of all marine mammals are threatened. This is exacerbated by climate change. Often, the impacts of these drivers are not immediately visible, which decreases the response rate. Biodiversity and nature's contributions to people are our common heritage and humanity's most important life-supporting 'safety net'. But our safety net is stretched almost to breaking point.

Yet, nature's contribution to solving or mitigating impacts of global challenges and trends has not been fully acknowledged and capacities for identifying and deploying solutions in the ECA region are overall low. Especially links between climate change, biodiversity and human well-being, including the contribution of Nature-based Solutions, remain underexplored and undervalued. According to the most recent Global Risk Report 2019, three environmental risks are deemed as most likely to occur, namely extreme weather events, failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation and natural disasters. The ECA region is particularly vulnerable to these environmental impacts, with potentially devastating consequences for regional, national and local economies, societies and livelihoods.

Sustainability challenges vary from region to region, as well as within the ECA region. Therefore, IUCN ECARO asked Members and Commission experts to provide feedback on challenges faced in the region. Feedback was also gathered during the 2019 Regional Conservation Forum. Building on the answers from the survey, the discussion focussed not only on specific themes and critical gaps, but also on how to operationalise activities in the region and on means to increase collaboration towards a true One Programme approach.

Respondents to the mid-term review survey cited **habitat loss, poor freshwater management and low environmental awareness** as the three most pressing nature conservation challenges in the region. **Habitat degradation, poaching, climate change, poor governance and air quality** were identified as important challenges as well. These issues were further explored during the RCF, with a particular focus on land and water, oceans, climate change and governance.

The ECA region is rich in natural ecosystems and biodiversity. The unique landscapes and species found in the region, therefore, require particular protection. Their contribution towards ecosystem and human

¹ IPBES (2018): The IPBES regional assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services for Europe and Central Asia. Rounsevell, M., Fischer, M., Torre-Marín Rando, A. and Mader, A. (eds.). Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Bonn, Germany.



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health needs to be emphasised more explicitly and the benefits of nature, for instance for climate change mitigation and adaptation, should be assessed, so that the richness of forests, water resources, wetlands, etc. can be preserved adequately. One step towards biodiversity conservation is the updating and alignment of national **Red Lists** with international standards, so that they can inform national policy and ecosystem management.

Restoration of ecosystems provides one means of increasing connectivity and addresses cross-border issues. Generally, stronger links between climate change and biodiversity, including conservation efforts, should be forged, including building resilience for nature and local communities. Similarly, to avoid and reduce impacts of linear infrastructure development and poor freshwater management on habitat connectivity, **ecological networks** are important and should be strengthened, with special attention given to freshwater basins and migratory routes. This requires **landscape-scale approaches** to conservation, which are currently not yet commonly used in the region. Such approaches have the potential to improve spatial planning and land management, especially outside protected areas.

Climate change poses a particular threat for the ECA region. Any interventions should include both mitigation and adaptation measures that particularly relate to the reduction of climate risks. In the ECA region, cross-border cooperation should be considered as a key challenge, but also solution to climate change induced impacts and pressures. IUCN could serve as a key facilitator for such cooperation. More needs to be done to build capacities on communicating the value of nature for climate change mitigation, utilising **Nature-based Solutions** for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and general adaptation to changes. Capacities and knowledge need to be built to emphasise communicating the contribution of nature towards climate mitigation and conservation, which then may lead to an increase in coverage and greater management effectiveness.

One topic that received particular attention in discussions at the RCF relates to **Protected Areas (PA) governance and management effectiveness**. Generally, the value and contribution of PAs for the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, for the wellbeing of humans as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation, has not yet been sufficiently recognised or explored in the ECA region. Although management plans are in place, these are often not effectively implemented or enforced and frequently fail

to monitor the effect of management interventions on natural diversity. Another aspect that may increase management effectiveness is to increase participation, especially of local communities, NGOs, private landowners, etc. and to integrate a financing plan, drawing on a diverse range of funding sources, into PA management plans.

To generate the necessary political will for change, capacity building efforts and environmental education are perceived as a key prerequisite. These should highlight the intrinsic and cultural values of existing natural systems, especially for indigenous peoples. **Capacity and knowledge** gaps in the ECA region pertain to the risks and threats stemming from climate change and how these may change ecosystems and impact biodiversity and humans in the region. The understanding of interlinkages between nature, nature conservation and protection of livelihoods, including gains in terms of employment, socio-economic development, etc. are not well developed in the region. Knowledge, institutional and human capacities in this regard need to be strengthened. There is also a need for enhanced capacity for biodiversity monitoring, mainstreaming natural diversity into other sectors and use of IUCN knowledge tools (e.g. IUCN Red List). A major knowledge gap has been identified in relation to the status of natural diversity in the marine environment. One incentive to expand knowledge in this area in the ECA region, which may also inspire action, is a focus on land-based impacts on marine life, such as marine litter.

Poor **governance** was raised as a key challenge for the region. Governance concerns itself with legal and policy challenges. It also considers who should be involved, when and how. A great governance challenge is to ensure enforcement and compliance of existing frameworks, strategies, policies, laws, etc. A focus on existing tools and approaches, ensuring their availability and accessibility, may increase governance and management effectiveness. Specific indicators should be employed to monitor and evaluate compliance and effectiveness. Another issue pertains to policy coherence across different sectors as well as cross-sectoral integration more broadly. Regarding the promotion of landscape-scale approaches, spatial planning could serve as a suitable entry point for integration across sectors.



Ulcinj, Montenegro © Andrea Strauss

In the long-term, the engagement and communication with local communities in an effort towards co-governance should be increased. To address cross-sectoral challenges, better coordination between sectoral projects and different types of donors is necessary (e.g. environmental and economic goals should be reconciled). In the ECA region, this is highly influenced by geopolitics. Due to the transboundary nature of many environmental issues and ecosystems, one proposal is to establish more **regional platforms** for knowledge exchange, capacity building and decision-making. Just as important is to increase the **participation of youth** and a focus on raising awareness and increasing engagement of people living in urban areas, as a response to increased migration to cities. The latter could be achieved through the conservation of natural diversity in and around urban areas.

It is important to reflect on the region's socio-economic realities, which impact **investments** in nature conservation and management as well as the level of capacities. There is a need to better integrate nature conservation activities with socio-economic development goals and to diversify funding sources. Specifically, there is a need to increase capacities for financial planning to tap into different investment options, including involvement of the private sector.

Although, responses here have been grouped together, it may be beneficial to consider each sub-region of ECA and its specific challenges. The Western Balkans are increasingly prone to climate induced risks of floods, extended periods of drought, soil erosion and forest fires that affect people's livelihoods. Therefore, taking measures for climate mitigation and adaptation will be a key priority in the coming years. In Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, land-use change constitutes a key driver for losses of biodiversity and vital ecosystem functions, while Central Asia is also faced with increased water stress, droughts and heat spells. The European Commission, in its [Larger than Tigers](#) report, indicates that agricultural expansion and land-use change, extractive industries and infrastructure as well as freshwater management are very significant direct threats to biodiversity in Central Asia. These do not only increase pressure on the environmental sustainability, but also on the socio-economic development of the region.

Other trends that should be followed closely relate to the Belt and Road initiative, primarily focussing on Central Asia, the recent Astana Resolution on Forest Landscape Restoration, involving the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, aligning activities with the aims of achieving land degradation neutrality and decoupling economic growth objectives from environmental sustainability activities.

During the RCF, views were gathered on how to best move the **implementation** of the current programme forward and what steps would be necessary to operationalise the next programme, based on the priorities identified. Enhancing cooperation and communication between Members, Commissions and the IUCN Secretariat should be a major priority, especially with a view to the One Programme approach. This also includes the means to strengthen the internal IUCN networks in the region, i.e. through regional committees or other networking platforms.

The ECA region is highly diverse - in culture and language. Often, language is a major barrier, including for engagement and communication with the IUCN Secretariat. This is particularly the case for Central Asia, where Russian is the main language of operation. To improve collaboration between the IUCN Secretariat, Members and Commissions, it may be useful to appoint sub-region or country focal points. The Biodiversity Task Force, which facilitates cooperation and joint decision-making of stakeholders in the Western Balkan region on biodiversity issues, serves as a successful example of regional cooperation.

Cooperation with Members and Commissions should be given priority over cooperation within the Secretariat. This could be strengthened by establishing branch/country offices or specific focal points for each sub-region - Central Asia, South Caucasus, Western Balkans, etc. This would enable the development of country plans, increase exchange with Members and enhance coordination at country level. This includes the IUCN Secretariat utilising its convening ability at different levels. The Secretariat should also be vigilant of competing for the same donor-funding as Members. Instead greater emphasis could be placed on providing knowledge and strengthening capacities of Members as well as on IUCN's facilitator role. As part



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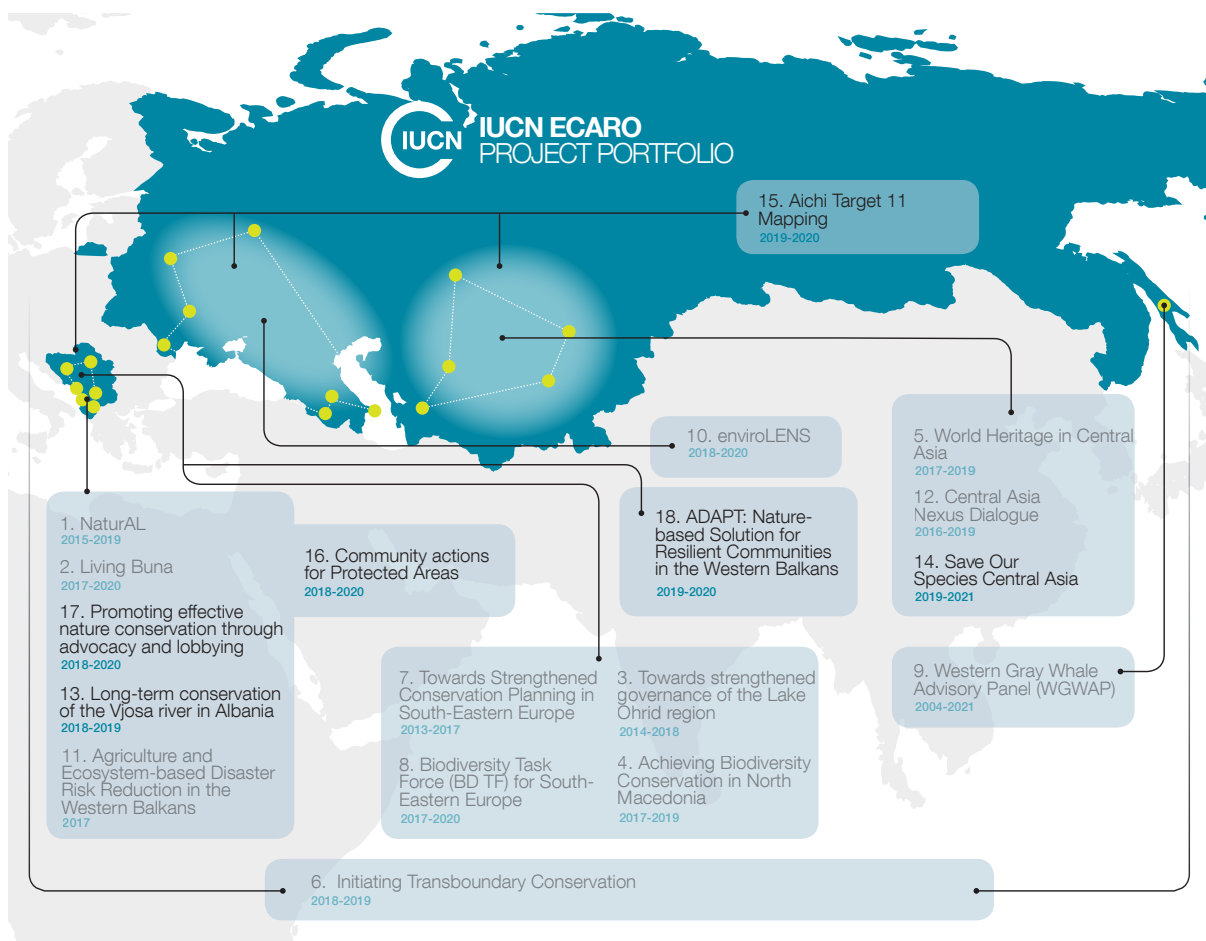
of this, Members are encouraged to decide on how they would like to organise themselves in the region - e.g. regional committees, etc.

More effort should be made to engage new Members as well as grassroots organisations. There is a lot of potential to share knowledge and tools that are produced through IUCN more effectively in the region. Additionally, existing networks (e.g. EAZA) could be utilised more strategically. Related to governance, transboundary initiatives are an important area of engagement and cooperation with Members and Commissions. Additionally, enhanced country-to-country, peer-to-peer cross-fertilisation would enable the building of capacities and strengthen regional cooperation. This would further allow for cooperation beyond projects and instead encourage strategic discussions on challenges faced by the region. This could for instance include IUCN supporting Members in their communication with decision makers in relation to economic issues (e.g. natural capital) and lobbying governments to provide more state budget for nature conservation. Additionally, IUCN could help encourage policy for a suitable environment in which NGOs can exist and operate effectively.

Through the formulation and implementation of its quadrennial programmes IUCN aims to contribute to progress in addressing these challenges. The remaining one and a half year in the IUCN Programme 2017-2020 leaves limited time for action, but the initiatives that are set to take off during this period are presented in the next section. The draft IUCN Programme 2021-2024 will offer further opportunities to address the challenges faced in the region. However, to highlight the conservation issues of the ECA region, input from Members is crucial, both during the consultation phase of the draft programme (until 30 September 2019), as well as through the submission of motions at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2020. The road to the WCC is outlined in section 4.3 below.

4.2. The IUCN Programme 2017-2020 in 2019 and 2020

The second half of the IUCN Programme 2017-2020 will see the continuation of many ongoing efforts and the start of a number of new initiatives within IUCN ECARO. Each of these are nested in one of the three Programme Areas: Valuing and conserving nature, Effective and equitable governance of nature's use, and Deploying Nature-based Solutions to address societal challenges. The projects cover an array of different topics and approaches, tackling the priority challenges in the region from different angles.



Map: Engagement through projects in the region, 2017-2020

Programme Area 1: Valuing and conserving nature

13. Long-term conservation of the Vjosa river in Albania

The Vjosa river is one of Europe's last largely free flowing rivers. The project aims to protect it and to prevent any further impact to its dynamics from hydropower development or river deviation, by mobilising and empowering the local population.

14. Save Our Species Central Asia

The Save Our Species (SOS) Central Asia granting scheme will support the [Central Asia Mammal Initiative](#) (CAMI) to reverse the population decline of migratory mammal species in four countries of the region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). It will initially focus on the Goitered Gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*), which inhabits mostly lowlands, and the Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*), characteristic for high mountain landscapes.

15. Aichi Target 11 Mapping for Eastern Europe and Central Asia

The main objective is the establishment of two regional networks: Central and Eastern Europe and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, through which governments, international organizations, NGOs, experts and donors will support implementation of priority actions to achieve Target 11 and enhance protected areas management and governance.

Programme Area 2: Effective and equitable governance of nature's use

16. Community actions for Protected Areas

In view of Albania's accession to the European Network Natura2000, a project will be implemented to improve the management and governance of the several protected areas in Albania, focusing on sustainable financing systems and communication and awareness raising.

17. Promoting effective nature conservation through advocacy and lobbying

IUCN will empower Albanian environmental CSOs to promote effective nature conservation at national level by producing advocacy and lobbying tools and providing training. This will strengthen the skills and active role of CSOs to enforce the law, tackle corruption and reduce the negative impact on the nature conservation and protected area management.

Programme Area 3: Deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development

18. ADAPT: Nature-based Solutions for resilient societies in the Western Balkans

Strengthen knowledge generation and management on the state of ecosystems and Nature-based Solutions in the Western Balkans, integrate them into national policy and planning and demonstrate the value of ecosystem-based approaches by implementing pilot projects.

4.3. The road to the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020

Figure 2: Timeline and key dates



4.3.1 IUCN Draft Programme 2021-2024

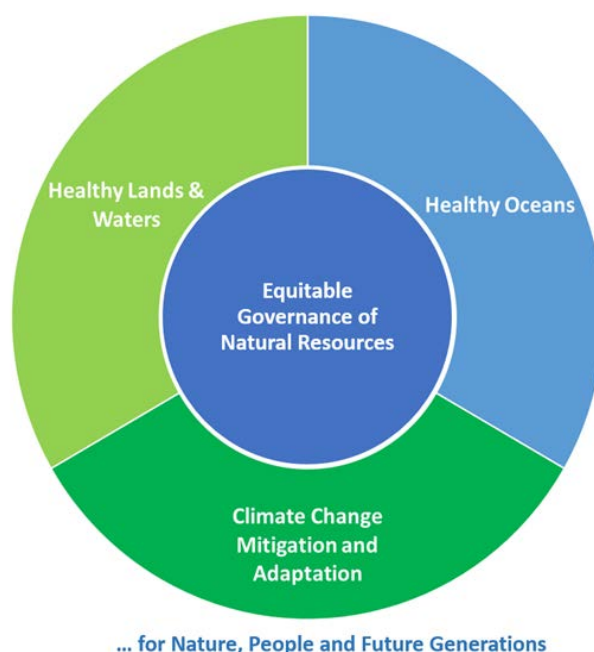
The IUCN Programme provides the framework for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the conservation work undertaken by IUCN. At the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille, Members will vote to adopt the Programme.

The current draft Programme, which was presented to Members and discussed at the Regional Conservation Forum, consists of four broad priority areas:

- **Healthy Land and Waters:** ecological integrity of natural landscapes that are fully understood, valued and conserved by a diverse set of actors;
- **Healthy Oceans:** ecological integrity of oceans and increased coastal resilience;
- **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation:** reduce risks posed by climate change to the world's natural systems and responsibly harness the full potential of these natural systems in achieving a low-greenhouse gas emission, climate-resilient, biodiversity-rich future; and
- **Equitable Governance of Natural Resources:** good governance and the rule of law foster healthy ecosystems and biodiversity while contributing to the realisation of human rights, social equity, gender equality, rights of nature and resilience to global changes.

These Programme Areas are rooted in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). IUCN's core foundational expertise lies in fostering the SDGs related to the biosphere, life on land and under water, and climate change. Simultaneously, threats and opportunities for the biosphere will only be achieved if the SDGs underpinning more just and equitable societies and economies, including peace, justice and strong institutions, which interact with the social and economic goals.

Figure 3: Draft IUCN 2021-2024 Programme Areas



Strategic Objectives under each Programme Area are formulated in terms of the change IUCN would like to see and are generally organised with three main directions in mind: to protect, to restore and to sustainably use nature and natural resources.

While the Programme Areas are a tool to guide and streamline actions, it is emphasised that all Programme Areas and Strategic Objectives are interconnected and complementary. Any actions planned are therefore likely to contribute to multiple Programme Areas.

Update on the programme development is [available at the WCC website](#).

4.3.2 Regional Conservation Forum

The [IUCN Regional Conservation Forum 2019](#) brought IUCN Members from Europe, North and Central Asia to Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1-3 July. On the first day, the wider conservation community and renowned experts were invited to join discussions on the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework and share their knowledge in eight parallel thematic sessions. During the following two days, IUCN Members and Commissions discussed the draft IUCN Programme for 2021-2024, regional work plans and concrete actions, gearing up for the 2020 IUCN Congress in Marseille, France. IUCN Members learned about the IUCN governance reforms and the updates regarding the Members Assembly, to be held as part of the next IUCN Congress, where they will elect the IUCN Council, approve the IUCN Programme, adopt motions defining the general policy of IUCN and amend IUCN Statutes.

Held every four years, the RCF is a place for IUCN Members to come together, share ideas and agree on the issues of relevance to their regions. The results of these discussions have been incorporated into this report (section 4.1 above). The RCF is also an opportunity to develop and find co-sponsors for motions to be discussed and voted on at the WCC as well as to provide feedback on the IUCN Programme 2021-2024.

4.3.3 Motions

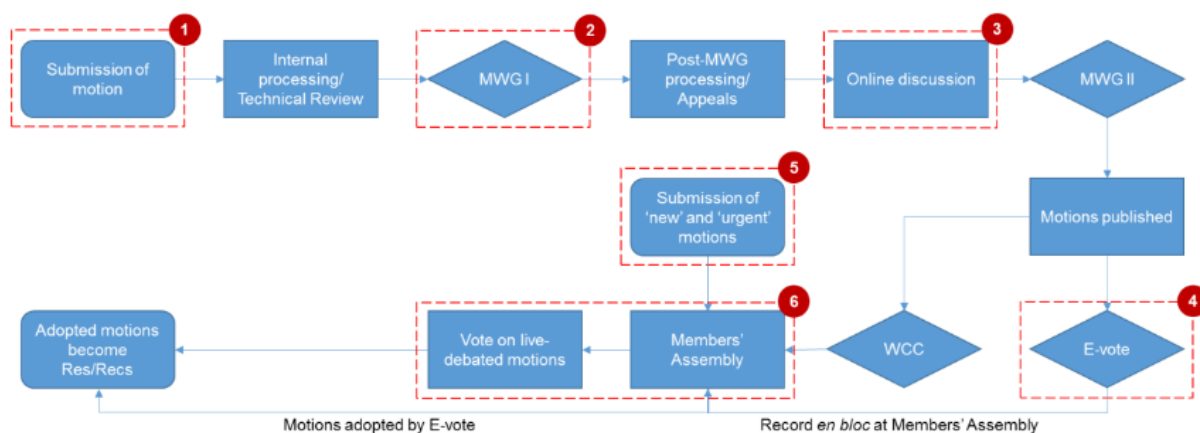
IUCN Members can submit draft motions. They can address any matter related to IUCN's objectives and of regional or global importance. They can advance IUCN's Mission and significantly influence the global conservation agenda. The accepted motions will be discussed and voted at the IUCN WCC in 2020 (Figure 4). Once a motion is approved, it becomes either a resolution, which is directed towards IUCN, or a recommendation, which is directed to third parties and may address any matter of importance to IUCN's objectives. Motions may be proposed by Council or by any Member eligible to vote with the co-sponsorship of at least five other Members from at least two regions ([more information can be found here](#)). All submitted motions will be discussed online prior to the IUCN Congress. A number of motions will also be voted on electronically before arriving in Marseille in June 2020. The content of draft motions initiated by Europe, Central and North Asia was discussed during the RCF. The proponents had the opportunity to seek support from other Members.

Resolutions and recommendations can be a powerful tool of advocacy, campaigns, research or other activities of IUCN Members. They are one means by which Members can guide IUCN policy, influence the IUCN Programme 2021-2024 and call on third parties. The collection of IUCN resolutions and recommendations can be [found here](#).



Lake Goygol, Azerbaijan © tycson1 / Shutterstock.com

Figure 4: Motions process workflow (1. submission of motions; 2. Consideration by Motions Working Group; 3. Online discussion; 4. Electronic vote; 5. Submission of 'new' and 'urgent' motions; 6. Discussion and vote of certain motions on-site)



From the survey conducted in preparation for this report, IUCN Member and Commission expert respondents suggested motions on the following topics:

- addressing mini-hydropower plants in the Balkan region;
- addressing the inadequate use and destruction of freshwater resources in general;
- illegal killing and trade in wildlife; and
- conservation of small mammals as an overlooked species group with importance for ecosystem function.

4.3.4 The IUCN World Conservation Congress



The IUCN World Conservation Congress is where the world comes together to set priorities and drive conservation and sustainable development action. The event has three main components: The Members' Assembly, where 1.300+ IUCN Members vote on priority actions; the Forum, a global marketplace of conservation science and innovation; and the Exhibition, where exhibitors can showcase their work to Congress participants and the public.

In particular, IUCN Congress 2020 will address seven themes: Landscapes, Freshwater, Oceans, Climate Change, Rights and Governance, Economic and Financial Systems and Knowledge, Innovation and Technology. It is the largest marketplace for conservation and sustainable development science, practice and policy, allowing scientists, policy experts, business leaders and professionals to share experiences, innovation and latest research.

5. Conclusions

Four years into the existence of IUCN ECARO, it is valuable to take stock of achievements as well as evaluate areas for improvement. This report highlighted a number of different issues that will inform priorities and discussions going forward. Engagement with Members and Commissions will play a key role in advancing the One Programme approach and to promoting issues and addressing the challenges faced in the ECA region.

It is important to draw on existing fora, such as IUCN's [Panorama](#) platform, a global hub for sharing experiences with a wide variety of conservation solutions in different settings, to call attention to conservation issues and possible solutions. Especially, the upcoming IUCN World Conservation Congress is considered a milestone in setting the agenda, not only for IUCN as a whole, but in particular for IUCN ECARO, for the years to come. This report may inform discussions at the WCC and help to call attention to specific topics and questions relevant to the context of the region.



Mutnovsky Volcano, Kamchatka, Russia © IUCN/Boris Erg



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