

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Thematic Group on Ecosystem Restoration

Under the mandate of the Biodiversity Task Force of the Western Balkans (BDTF WB)

1. Background & Rationale

The Thematic Group on Ecosystem Restoration (TG-ER) is established under the Biodiversity Task Force of the Western Balkans (BDTF WB) to provide guidance for ecosystem restoration efforts across the region. The group will support the development and implementation of key regional policy documents, including the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Report and subsequent, Forest Landscape Restoration Plan, and other ecosystem restoration-related activities under the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB).

2. Objectives

The TG-ER will:

- Provide technical and scientific input on ecosystem restoration, supporting the alignment of national policies with the GAWB, EU and international restoration frameworks.
- Contribute to the development, review, and implementation of the Western Balkans Forest Landscape Restoration Plan.
- Offer expert analysis on best practices and methodologies for ecosystem and landscape restoration.
- Enhance regional cooperation on ecosystem restoration through engagement with state institutions, academia, and non-governmental organizations.

3. Membership & Selection Criteria

- Members shall be recognized experts in ecosystem restoration, including specialists from forestry, agriculture, hydrology, soil science, landscape planning, and conservation science.
- Membership will be voluntary, with individuals acting in their personal capacity rather than as institutional representatives.
- Selection will be based on technical expertise, geographical representation, and sectoral diversity, particularly emphasizing expertise in forest and landscape restoration, wetland rehabilitation, and NbS for degraded ecosystems.
- Selection criteria and the nomination of the TG-BC members will be endorsed by the BDTF WB.

4. Structure & Governance

- The TG-BC will provide inputs to IUCN, in its role as the Secretariat of the BDTF WB, for consideration by BDTF WB members.

- The TG-ER will convene meetings at least twice per year in a virtual format, with additional online meetings as needed. Face-to-face meetings will be the exception rather than the rule and will be organized only when necessary.

5. Participation & Contribution

- Members are expected to actively participate in discussions, contributing their technical expertise and perspectives.
- Members will be required to review meeting documents in advance and prepare their technical input where relevant.
- Participation is not expected to be time-consuming; emphasis will be placed on providing guidance during discussions rather than preparing substantial written outputs.
- Members may be invited to share case studies, best practices, or emerging challenges relevant to ecosystem restoration.

6. Engagement & Sustainability

To maintain motivation and engagement, the following approaches will be adopted:

- **Recognition & Visibility:**
 - Acknowledgment of members' contributions in BDTF WB reports, strategic plans, and relevant policy documents.
 - Opportunities to represent TG-ER in regional and international ecosystem restoration discussions.
- **Knowledge Exchange & Networking:**
 - Linkages with IUCN Commissions, global ecosystem restoration initiatives, and research networks for professional exchange.
- **Capacity Building & Professional Development:**
 - Opportunities to participate in training sessions, workshops, and knowledge-sharing events hosted by IUCN or partner organizations.
 - Access to expert roundtables and webinars with international restoration leaders.
- **Supportive Secretariat Role:**
 - IUCN, as the Secretariat of the BDTF WB, will provide logistical support for meetings and facilitate continuous communication among members.
 - A dedicated coordination platform (e.g., online workspace or mailing group) will be maintained to streamline communication, updates, and document sharing.

7. Responsiveness to BDTF WB

- The TG-ER will provide inputs to BDTF WB in a light and practical manner, ensuring that key discussions, insights, and recommendations are conveyed effectively.
- The group will be, in coordination with IUCN, responsive to requests and directions from the BDTF WB, ensuring that its technical input aligns with the evolving needs of restoration policy and governance in the region
- The BDTF WB may request ad-hoc consultations with TG-ER members to provide expert perspectives on emerging restoration issues.