



Terms of Reference (ToR)

WB6 FLR Plan Consultant

About IUCN

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is the largest professional global conservation network dealing with the environment and sustainable development, with more than 1,400 member organizations and over 17,000 scientists and experts, grouped in seven Commissions across 160 countries. With IUCN's member organisations including states and government agencies at the national and subnational levels, NGOs large and small, indigenous peoples' organisations, scientific and academic institutions and business associations, IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.

The IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) promotes IUCN's mission and implements the IUCN Programme with the aim of long-term protection of biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus, North and Central Asia. ECARO's administrative region is part of the IUCN Statutory Region East Europe, North and Central Asia.

Background information

Climate change is increasing the frequency, intensity and magnitude of disasters, leading to a higher number of casualties as well as property and economic losses. Nature can provide cost-effective, no-regret solutions, which help increase community resilience beyond their capacity to absorb and recover from a single disaster, such as a flood or drought. IUCN has been at the forefront of developing the concept of [Nature-based Solutions](#) and updated version of the [Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#). Evidence shows that beyond the positive impact on societies and improved management of disaster risks, Nature-based Solutions benefit habitats and biodiversity as well as support climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Countries in the Western Balkans are among the most vulnerable with respect to climate change impacts affecting numerous sectors and domains. Yet, while Nature-based Solutions are increasingly used and integrated into climate change policy and action planning globally, in particular, in relation to disaster risk reduction and community resilience, in the Western Balkans, the value derived from deploying Nature-based Solutions in response to societal challenges remain underexplored. The contributions of ecosystems and biodiversity towards climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction have not been recognised or sufficiently reflected in relevant strategies and policies in the region. Policies and planning approaches are often fragmented or do not consider capacity gaps with regards to their implementation.

In order to change this picture in the Western Balkans region, the IUCN ECARO is implementing the project – [ADAPT 2.0: Nature-based Solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Western Balkans](#), which aims to enhance understanding of NbS for climate change mitigation and adaptation, while promoting their integration into regional policies and practices. The project facilitates regional cooperation by embedding NbS into policies and practice aligned with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB) and supports the development of strategic frameworks such as the Western Balkans Forest Landscape Restoration Plan. ADAPT 2.0 aims to catalyse opportunities for deploying NbS on the ground in the Western Balkans, with a long-term focus. One of its key goals is to establish a regional fund by the end of the project to mobilise resources for future NbS development and implementation, in line with regional restoration plans. This project provides a significant contribution to the implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB) Action Plan, particularly under Pillar 5 (Protection of Nature and Biodiversity), for which IUCN has been designated as the main regional coordinator.

The GAWB is a regional policy adopted in November 2020 to strengthen regional cooperation and to move towards a climate-neutral economy by 2050. In October 2021, WB leaders reiterated the commitment to implement the GAWB and its Action Plan through the Brdo Declaration, while the GAWB Action Plan has been

revised through Dubrovnik Declaration, which is endorsed in October 2025. The GAWB and its Action Plan transpose the ambition of the EU Green Deal at regional level and represents the most important regional environmental process at the moment. The GAWB has a high level of ambition to reducing environmental degradation, conserving biodiversity and creating a resource-efficient circular economy, sustainable food chains and transition from fossil-based production to renewable energy systems. By adopting the GAWB, WB' economies took on the obligation to put sustainable development, resource efficiency, nature protection and climate action at the heart of all economic activities and align with the EU's objectives. The GAWB considers main political processes and dynamics in the region, international frameworks and agreements, the most recent policy developments and in particular, legislative and non-legislative acts adopted at the EU level, such as EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, European Energy and Climate Policy Framework for 2030, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), the Paris Agreement etc.

To support the Western Balkans' economies in meeting the actions defined through the GAWB, the ADAPT 2.0 project is implementing the *Action 39. Develop and begin implementation of a WB6 Forest Landscape Restoration Plan*, by developing the following documents:

1. Restoration Opportunities Assessment Report is a data-driven document that will identify the extent of forest landscape degradation and priority sites and habitats for ecosystem restoration in the region. This Report is under development by IUCN ECARO and should serve as a basis for preparation of a regional Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) Plan.
2. WB6 Forest Landscape Restoration Plan (WB6 FLR Plan) should be developed in broad consultation process, and should provide clear actions for improving the state of forest landscapes, particularly in areas essential for the biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation, and, thus, enhance regional cooperation in improving the state of forest ecosystems. Furthermore, the FLR Plan will provide specific recommendations to be further applied by each WB6 FLR plans and relevant sectoral policies. It should also serve as a high-level strategic platform to guide coordinated action among the WB6, promote regional integration, and contribute to achieving the goals of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and the GAWB.

To ensure that all relevant and up-to-date information is captured in the WB6 FLR Plan, ADAPT 2.0 envisages conducting a comprehensive consultation process for its preparation. The consultations should engage government institutions and public enterprises, academia, civil society organizations (CSOs), and experts from all fields relevant to forest landscape restoration (FLR), particularly biodiversity conservation, forestry, agriculture, natural resource management, and disaster risk reduction.

The consultation process should include, at a minimum, consultations with:

- Western Balkans' Biodiversity Task Force (BDTF) – a body of technical experts having the advisory role to the Regional Working Group on Environment. BDTF is composed of focal points and deputy focal points with specialized expertise in biodiversity and related intervention fields, nominated by the Governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia.
- Thematic Group on Ecosystem Restoration (TG ER) – established under the BDTF to provide strategic, technical, and scientific guidance for ecosystem restoration efforts across the region. The group counts 9 members from academia, CSOs and international organisations.
- NbS Community of Practice (NbS CoP) – a robust network of professionals, researchers, community leaders, and civil society organizations focused on advancing and implementing Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to address the environmental, social, and economic challenges specific to the Western Balkans. The mission of CoP NbS is to enhance the understanding, development, and application of NbS through the exchange of knowledge, sharing of best practices, innovative solutions, and collaborative efforts.
- Representatives of governmental institutions and public enterprises in charge of biodiversity conservation, forestry, agriculture, natural resource management and disaster risk reduction from all Western Balkans economies.

The ADAPT 2.0 project ensures funds for organization of consultation meetings with all listed stakeholder groups. Consultation process should be conducted from December 2025 until end of March 2026. The first

consultation meeting that will gather representatives of TG ER and NbS CoP, will take place on 9th and 10th December 2025 in Belgrade, Serbia.

Scope of work

The purpose of this consultancy is to prepare the draft of the WB6 Forest Landscape Restoration Plan, building on the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Report. This regional plan should include the following core components:

- a) A shared **regional vision and mission** for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use by 2030;
- b) **Strategic goals and measurable targets**, aligned with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the GBF and other relevant international agreements;
- c) **Time-bound actions and regional commitments** to be delivered by 2030, including timeline and milestones to guide delivery and assess progress;
- d) **Indicators and monitoring framework** at both regional and national levels to track progress and identify implementation gaps;
- e) **Assessment of financing needs** and identification of financial instruments and mechanisms to support implementation;
- f) **Implementation mechanisms and institutional roles**, including stakeholder participation models and opportunities for regional cooperation.

Therefore, the IUCN is seeking qualified experts to prepare the FLR Plan by delivering the tasks listed below. The consultant is expected to work closely and in coordination with IUCN ECARO team, IUCN expert teams, RCC, and other experts.

Specific tasks

1. Refined Methodology and the Work Plan

The Consultant should develop a detailed methodology with the timeline that describes steps and methods to be applied in the process of preparation the WB6 FLR Plan. The task should be conducted in coordination with IUCN to ensure coherence with the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Report and should identify additional sources of information and relevant ongoing regional initiatives.

2. Stakeholder engagement and consultations

The Consultant should develop a methodology to describe the participatory consultation process that will be developed as part of the WB6 FLR Plan preparation. This approach should include all stakeholder groups mentioned above, as well as other relevant stakeholders who could secure comprehensive information needed to define all elements of the WB6 FLR Plan, and to describe the consultation methods that will be applied in the process.

The Consultant should also support IUCN in organization and facilitation of consultation meetings. The Consultant should assist the IUCN project team in preparing meetings' material and presentations in advance of consultation meetings.

The Consultant should ensure that diverse inputs are reflected in the WB6 FLR Plan document and appropriately documented.

3. Core Strategic Elements

Following the first round of consultations with all relevant stakeholders, the Consultant should prepare **an initial draft** of WB6 FLR Plan core components including: vision and mission, strategic goals and measurable targets, with implementation milestones to be achieved by 2030, as well as indicators for monitoring and reporting. The Consultant should ensure that core components are aligned with relevant regional and international agreements, and findings from the ROAR Report.

4. Preparing the WB6 FLR Plan

The Consultant should prepare **a draft version** of the WB6 FLR Plan that includes all core components, integrating findings from consultations, the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Report, and other relevant

sources. The document should be submitted for a review and feedback from IUCN, RCC, BDFT WB, and RWG GAWB.

After revision, the Consultant should produce **a final version** of the WB6 FLR Plan, incorporating all inputs from the validation process. This document should also include Executive Summary and supporting annexes, as well as a summary of stakeholder consultations.

Expected deliverables and tentative timeframe

	Task	Deliverable	Tentative timeline
1	Refined Methodology and the Work Plan	- Refined methodology document including Workplan	One week after signing the contract
2	Stakeholder engagement and consultations	- Methodology on stakeholder engagement	Two weeks after signing the contract
		- Meeting material and presentations for consultation meetings, participation in and facilitation of the meetings, preparing meeting reports	After signing the contract until 31 May 2026
3	Core Strategic Elements	- Initial draft of WB6 FLR Plan core components	31 March 2026
4	Preparing the WB6 FLR Plan	- Draft version of the WB6 FLR Plan	15 April 2026
		- Final version of the WB6 FLR Plan	5 June 2026

The tasks, deliverables and timelines presented above have been prepared in accordance with the current project work plan and logframe. Tasks, deliverables and timeframes may be adjusted in accordance with adaptive project management and updated yearly work plan and logframe, as well as the best practices for implementation of required research. This will be done in consultation between the FLR Plan Consultant and the IUCN project team.

Duration of the assignment

The duration of this assignment will last over the period from the signing of the contract until **15 June 2026**.

Meetings and travel

The Consultant should participate in a regular online meetings with the IUCN project team. Moreover, the Consultant is required to participate in a series of in-person meetings and consultations with stakeholders. This will require travel that will be subject to IUCN Travel Policy for Non-Staff.

When possible, in-person meetings will be prioritized, but if not possible due to legitimate reasons and in line with prior agreement with the IUCN ECARO team, virtual meetings and validations will take place.

The Consultant might be asked to present its work on WB6 FLR Plan development during two ADAPT 2.0 project events – the Western Balkans Restoration Conference and the FLR training – in spring 2026.

Responsibilities and communication

The consultant is mandated by IUCN for all the tasks and deliverables mentioned in above sections. All deliverables need to be submitted to IUCN ECARO in English by the given deadline.

Pricing information

The maximum available budget for this consultancy is estimated at **EUR 31,000**, including VAT and all assignment-related travel costs.

Payment Schedule

The Timetable below summarizes the chronological order of deliverables and indicates milestones at which IUCN will pay the Consultant.

Deliverable	Milestone payment
First instalment upon delivery of the following deliverables: 1. Refined methodology document including Workplan 2. Methodology on stakeholder engagement 3. Meeting materials, presentations for consultation meetings, and participation in/facilitation of the meetings held by 15 th December 2025, meeting reports	20%
Second instalment upon delivery of the following deliverables: 1. Meeting material and presentations for consultation meetings, and participation in the meetings held by 31 st March 2026 2. Initial draft of WB6 FLR Plan core components	30%
Third instalment upon delivery of the following deliverables: 1. Draft version of the WB6 FLR Plan 2. Final version of the WB6 FLR Plan	50%

Required qualifications

This call is open to a consultancy company or a team of experts with the following expertise:

- Minimum of 10 years of relevant experience in fields relevant to forest landscape restoration including biodiversity conservation, natural resources management, and environmental sciences.
- Demonstrating experience in biodiversity, natural resource management and environmental policy development and strategic planning in the Western Balkans region.
- In-depth knowledge of biodiversity and forestry governance systems, legislative and institutional frameworks in the Western Balkans' economies.
- Proven knowledge of global, EU and regional frameworks and conventions relevant for biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation, including the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the EU Green Deal, the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, UNCCD, UNFCCC and UNDRR.
- Proven expertise and knowledge about financial mechanisms for forest landscape restoration, including EU funding instruments and international financial frameworks.
- Demonstrated experience working with government institutions, international organizations, CSOs, academia and other key FLR stakeholders in the Western Balkans.
- Proven experience in facilitating stakeholder consultations, including participatory workshops and multi-actor dialogues.
- Fluency in written and spoken English.
- Knowledge of other Western Balkans' languages is desirable.

Consultancy companies submitting an offer must demonstrate that the expert(s) assigned to this task meet the aforementioned criteria. Proven experience of the company, without clear evidence that the team members themselves possess the required expertise, will not be considered relevant.

Key resources

1. [Green Agenda for the Western Balkans](#)
2. [Revised Green Agenda Action Plan \(2025–2030\)](#)
3. [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#)
4. [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)
5. [Forest Landscape Restoration | IUCN](#)
6. [ADAPT project](#)