



### LENA -Local Economy and Nature Conservation in the Danube Region

**Duration:** 1 January 2017 – 30 June 2019

**Budget:** ~ 2.45 Mio EUR, ~ 2.1 Mio EUR co-financed by the EU ERDF and IPA

**Lead Partner:** WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme Bulgaria

**Project Partners:** 13 partners from 7 Danube Countries: Belene Municipality (BG), Ivanovo Municipality (BG), Vukovar Srijem County (CR), West Pannon Regional and Economic Development Public Non-profit (HU), WWF – World Wide Fund for Nature Hungary (HU), Danube Office Ulm (DE), City of Tuttlingen (DE), Comana Nature Park (RO), Giurgiu County Council (RO), WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme Romania (RO), Business Support Centre, Kranj, Regional Development Agency (SI), GMO-Free Danube Soya (RS)

**Associated Strategic Partners:** DANUBEPARKS – Danube River Network of Protected Areas (AT), Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning, Construction and Environmental Protection Vojvodina (RS), Association of Hungarian Nature Parks (HU), Centre for Regional Studies (UA)

**DTP Programme Area 2:** Environment and culture responsible Danube region

**DTP Specific Objective 2.2:** Foster sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources

#### Context - needs and challenges

There are 70 national parks and more than 1000 Natura 2000 areas, covering a large spectrum of ecosystem services in the Danube region. Due to the protection status regulations, these areas are often regarded as hampering local development, while their intrinsic economic potential is usually overlooked, even though growing studies confirm the multiple benefits, including social and economic, of Natura 2000 sites. Also, while economic development indicators differ widely between the upper and lower Danube, the fate of many rural communities along the Danube and its tributaries is comparable and thus the context in which protected areas are locally embedded.

LENA works with 11 protected areas, covering more than 375,000 ha and more than 15 Natura 2000 sites, chosen based on outstanding nature values and untapped potential for sustainable economic use of these values. The project covers approximately half a million people, most of them living in communities with low economic status (monthly income ranging between 200 and 500 EUR), struggling with out-migration and ageing population. The partnership will provide innovative solutions supporting livelihoods and business opportunities through intact natural and cultural heritage, and smart use of ecosystem services and products.

## Objectives

LENA's main objective is to strengthen joint and integrated approaches and policies for the conservation and sustainable use of protected areas, in particular Natura 2000 sites, along the Danube and its tributaries, while creating new income opportunities in the nature-based economic sector and upscaling impacts across the region. The specific objectives are to:

- 1) Foster knowledge generation and empowerment through pilot actions
- 2) Develop tools for sustainable resource use in protected areas and
- 3) Improve framework conditions for sustainable use of protected areas.

This will contribute to a) gaining the buy-in of local stakeholders to nature conservation, b) empowering local entrepreneurs to profit from natural heritage sites in a way that protects natural resources, c) creating shared know-how about effective sustainable use approaches for protected areas, and d) shaping policies for a better enabling framework for sustainable use of protected areas.

## Major actions

- (1) Tools for management of natural heritage. 4 guidance documents will be developed based on the experience gained from the 11 pilot sites and will focus on communication to local people the value of nature for the economy, developing capacity for sustainable use of the natural and cultural heritage, increasing market access of sustainably sourced nature products and mobilizing finances for conservation and nature-based jobs.
- (2) Human capital actions will focus on creating tourism and sustainable transport opportunities through training Danube tourist guides and enhancing e-mobility.
- (3) Natural capital actions will focus on creating opportunities for sustainable income-generation and natural resource management targeting agriculture, wild plants and fisheries.
- (4) Nature policy. The project will work on policy level to provide recommendations for strategic action on the integrated approach to nature conservation, management of natural resources and green job creation integrating overall results of the project.

## Pilot sites

Nature Park Persina (BG), Rusenski Lom Nature Park (BG), Dunav-Vucovar N2000 site (HR), Nature Park Szatmar-Beregi (HU), Nature Park Comana (RO) and Ciocanesti N2000 site (RO), National Park Triglav (SI), Landschaftspark Junge Donau (DE), Special Nature Reserve Gornje Podunavlje (RS), National Park Fruska Gora (RS) and Special Nature Reserve Deliblato Sands (RS).

## Contacts

Nelly Papazova, Project Manager, WWF DCP Bulgaria, [npapazova@wwfdcp.bg](mailto:npapazova@wwfdcp.bg)

Apostol Dyankov, Project Co-Manager, WWF DCP Bulgaria, [adyankov@wwfdcp.bg](mailto:adyankov@wwfdcp.bg),

Raina Popova, Project Coordinator, WWF DCP Bulgaria, [rpopova@wwfdcp.bg](mailto:rpopova@wwfdcp.bg)

Maria Kachamakova, Technical Assistant, WWF DCP Bulgaria, [mkachamakova@wwfdcp.bg](mailto:mkachamakova@wwfdcp.bg)