



Republic of
Serbia



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EU for Green Agenda in Serbia: Protecting and investing in biodiversity and water for enhanced climate resilience

Second Project Progress Report

to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

Reporting Period

21 December 2023 – 31 December 2024

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Implementing agency:

UNDP

Duration: 20 December 2022 – 20 December 2026

Total Budget: 1,807,128.19 USD

Note: The initial total budget of \$1,442,585.11 USD was increased by \$ 364,543.08 USD (excluding levy in the amount of \$ 3,645.43 USD) through an amendment to the Financing Agreement, according to the UNORE for SEK/USD currency exchange at the time of signing of the Amendment to the Financing Agreement.





Photo: Special Nature Reserve “Peštersko Polje” – Pavle Jovanović/UNDP

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Background

The overall objective of the project “EU for Green Agenda in Serbia: Protecting and investing in biodiversity and water for enhanced climate resilience” is to support the EU environmental reform and efficient, inclusive and sustainable implementation the Green Agenda in Serbia.

The project focuses on the conservation of wetland ecosystems in Serbia through strengthening policy and base-conditions for improving biodiversity and resilience to climate change. The project aims to support the implementation of Nature based Solutions (NbS) in wetlands through innovative pilot projects and promote opportunities for mobilisation and scale-up of biodiversity financing. Through capacity building, societal dialogue and cross-sectorial cooperation, the project is to establish strong partnerships between the public sector, private companies and civil society, thus accelerating green transformation. The main goal is to improve governance and management of ecosystems through increased capacities for planning, implementation and enforcement of nature, water and climate policies by 2026.

With this project, the Government of Sweden contributes directly to the Green Agenda initiative in Serbia by strengthening Pillar 4 - Protecting and Investing in Biodiversity and Ecosystems of the EU for Green Agenda in Serbia project.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia (INCS) and the Provincial Institute for Nature Conservation (PINC) are the main beneficiaries of this project, whereas the numerous stakeholders, including protected area managers, local self-government units, civil society organizations, scientific institutions and private companies, are also actively involved, most importantly through pilot project proposals addressing NbS in wetlands, biodiversity and climate resilience, with the goal of securing long-term sustainability of project results.

Summary of key project results in 2024

In the second year of implementation (2024), the project achieved considerable progress towards the project goal. The UNDP project team produced the first draft of the second bylaw planned by the project - the Decree on Appropriate Assessment. The UNDP project team submitted the first draft to the Ministry of Environmental Protection for further processing and organisation of the consultations with other relevant stakeholders in early 2025.

The UNDP project team has contracted the company (GSC Systems) which began the process of upgrading the field research application (TERENSKA) with elements relevant for wetland conservation, as well as the enhancement of the information systems for biodiversity data of both the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia (INCS) and the Provincial Institute for Nature Conservation (PINC). Furthermore, the project acquired additional IT equipment for these two institutions in 2024, to further facilitate the collection, transfer and storage processes for biodiversity data.

The UNDP Tech Cell, formally engaged by the project to develop a wetland conservation-oriented citizen science application, began work in 2024.

The project successfully implemented the Challenge Call for Innovative Solutions for the Protection, Preservation and Revitalization of Wetland Habitats, one of the key components providing direct support to practical measures for improving wetlands in Serbia. Twelve project proposals have entered the acceleration phase, with the decision on final selection for those to receive financial support to take place in the first quarter of 2025, followed immediately by their implementation.

The first revision of the project budget, approved by the Project Board in July 2024, made funds available for the development of the first National Wetland Inventory for Serbia, for which the UNDP project team produced Terms of Reference and published a call for offers, with the work expected to start in the first quarter of 2025.

The project entrusted the implementation of the communication plan developed last year to the company New Media Team following an open competitive process. The year 2024 saw the launch of the public awareness raising campaign entitled "This is not just a pond", with New Media Team developing several promotional materials, including key visuals, newsletters and social media posts for the campaign with the slogan. The campaign will continue throughout 2025.

In summary, 2024 was a crucial year for the establishment of the key processes that shall achieve the project results, with special emphasis on the Challenge Call process, Biodiversity data portal and information system development for two institutes, NWI development, communications and on-the-ground initiatives, thus contributing to our collective mission of improving the conditions for wetland and nature conservation in Serbia.

PROGRESS TOWARDS PROJECT RESULTS

The project results achieved in 2024, set according to the pre-defined annual targets, are given in Table 1 below, with additional information in the narrative. The financial data corresponding to the presented activities is given in the Financial Report in Annex A, where the actual expenditures and budget balance are given.

Table 1. Summary overview of the progress in 2024

EU for Green Agenda in Serbia: Get Started		
Output 1- Regulatory and strategic planning framework underpinning nature-water-climate nexus approach improved		
Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
1.1 Draft Law on Nature Protection aligned with the nature protection EU acquis and relevant MEAs	Final draft	Ongoing
1.2 # of adopted Bylaws	Working groups established	Bylaw 1 – Completed Bylaw 2 – Ongoing
1.3 # of trained staff of the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia and Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province using the tailor-made capacity building programme	15	Ongoing (UNEP)*
1.4 # of trained protected areas managers using the tailor-made capacity building programme	25	Ongoing (UNEP)*
1.5 # of trained staff of the water management authorities and agencies: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management-Republic Directorate for Water, Public Water Enterprises" Srbijavode" and "Vode Vojvodine" using tailor made capacity building programme	20	Ongoing (UNEP)*
1.6 # of trainings included in learning modules of NAPA	1	Ongoing
Output 2- Capacities on sustainable and participative management of protected areas and the water-related ecosystems are increased, as well as the capacities on NbS and gender-sensitive, climate adaptation planning		
Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
2.1 Assessment Report of protected area's role in achieving climate change adaptation and mitigation goals	1	Ongoing (UNEP)*

2.2 # of Nature based Solutions integrated in climate change mitigation and adaptation measures of NDCs	1	Ongoing
2.3 # of trained staff of competent authorities on Copernicus Services and Sectoral Information System (SIS)	20	Completed
2.4 # of trained persons on the use of Climate Atlas of Serbia and Disaster Risk Registry in 10 municipalities with focus on impacts of climate change on nature conservation and water management by promoting the multi-functional purpose of freshwater ecosystems	30	Completed
2.5 # of persons from the women's rights organizations trained on the protection of biodiversity, climate adaptation and mitigation	20	Ongoing (UNEP)*
2.6 # activities in synergy with other Swedish funded projects, ie Swedish expertise on spatial planning and nature management	10	Ongoing
2.7 Upgraded application for field research developed for Natura 2000 mapping purposes	1	Ongoing
2.8 Upgraded information systems and biodiversity databases in the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia and the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province	0	Ongoing
2.9 National wetland inventory completed according to the Ramsar Framework for Wetland Inventory	0	Ongoing
2.10 Updated Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) based on new data for Serbia	0	Ongoing
2.11 # of users of mobile application for citizens science	0	Ongoing
2.12 Wetland Restoration Action Plan completed	0	Ongoing (UNEP)*
EU for Green Agenda in Serbia: Take Action		
Output 3 - NbS implemented in pilot site		
Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
3.1 # of preselected pilot sites with high potential for climate adaptation through implementation of NbS	3	Ongoing (UNEP/UNDP)
3.2 Call for proposals for Nature based Solution challenge launched	1	Completed

3.3 # of identified pilot sites for potential implementation of NbS	0	Ongoing
3.4 # of NbS implemented	0	Ongoing
3.5 Assessment Report on sites with high protentional for implementation of NbS in the future	1	Ongoing
EU for Green Agenda in Serbia: Scale-up		
Output 4 - Additional financing identified for ecosystem restoration to increase the climate resilience of floodplains and related ecosystem services		
Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
4.1 National nature/biodiversity/ecosystems financing plan prepared	0	Ongoing **
4.2 Designed financing mechanism to support nature/biodiversity/ecosystem investments (e.g., investments into NbS and ecosystem maintenance/restauration)	0	Ongoing **
4.3 # of trained persons on gender-responsive budgeting for monitoring national spending of nature protection and climate change related funding	20	Ongoing (UNEP)*
4.4 Road map for gender mainstreaming in nature, water, and climate policies	1	Ongoing (UNEP)*
5.1 # of implemented campaigns and stakeholder dialogues	1	Ongoing

* UNEP as per UN2UN agreement is responsible for the implementation of the above listed activities.

** Activity done in conjunction with the BIOFIN project

A UN-to-UN Cooperation Agreement was signed in 2023 between UNEP and UNDP for the purpose of implementing several activities of the project. UNEP has so far reported a total spending of \$ 44, 646.00 USD from the first instalment of \$ 57,132.00 USD. The UNDP project team shall authorize the transfer of the second instalment amounting \$ 104, 220.00 USD to UNEP upon the submission of the revised report by UNEP, and its approval by UNDP.

PROJECT RESULTS IN 2024 - NARRATIVE OVERVIEW

EU FOR GREEN AGENDA IN SERBIA: GET STARTED

Output 1- Regulatory and strategic planning framework underpinning nature-water-climate nexus approach improved

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
1.1 Draft Law on Nature Protection aligned with the nature protection EU acquis and relevant MEAs	Final draft	Ongoing

The expert engaged by UNDP completed the *ex-post* regulatory impact analysis for the existing Law on Nature Protection in 2023, and the analysis was formally accepted by MEP in the first quarter of 2024. MEP was expected to establish a working group for the development of this legal act in 2024, however this has been postponed. The work on the new Law on Nature Protections shall take place in 2025, with the engagement of both international and national consultants with expertise in nature protection legislation development, in particular in relation to harmonization with the New EU Nature Restoration Law. The UNDP Project team prepared the draft ToRs for expert engagement for these tasks.

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
1.2 # of adopted Bylaws	Working groups established	Bylaw 1 - Completed Bylaw 2 – Ongoing

Following MEP's formal acceptance of the draft Decree on Ecological Network and the accompanying report developed by expert team engaged by UNDP in 2023, the working group (with the two state Institutes for Nature Conservation and the Biological Faculty of the University of Belgrade in particular) continued the necessary technical development of the Annexes which are an essential constituting element of the legal act, whose adoption is expected in 2025.

With regards to the second bylaw, the Decree on Appropriate Assessment, UNDP project team engaged both international and national consultants in 2024. international and national legal consultants have developed the draft provisions of the legal act and the accompanying report, which were submitted to MEP, awaiting formal approval and continuation of the consultation process with other relevant stakeholders. MEP has yet to establish a Working Group for the Decree on Appropriate Assessment, which is expected in the first quarter of 2025.

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
1.3 # of trained staff of the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia and Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province using the tailor made capacity building programme	15	Ongoing (UNEP)*
1.4 # of trained protected areas managers using the tailor made capacity building programme	25	Ongoing (UNEP)*
1.5 # of trained staff of the water management authorities and agencies: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water	20	Ongoing (UNEP)*

Management-Republic Directorate for Water, Public Water Enterprises" Srbijavode" and "Vode Vojvodine" using tailor made capacity building programme		
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** UNEP as per UN2UN agreement is responsible for the implementation of the above listed activities.*

In October 2024, UNEP, in cooperation with the Czech Ministry of Environmental Protection, supported capacity building for three representatives from Serbia (MEP, Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia and National Park Djerdap) in an International Course on Wetland Restoration in the Elbe River Basin. The course, part of the Carpathian Wetland Initiative, aimed to enhance cross-sectoral communication and cooperation, covering wetland restoration techniques, project planning, and public involvement, and included a study tour of successful restoration projects.

In late October 2024, UNEP organized a training for PA managers, tailored to the needs assessment conducted earlier in 2024. The workshop was attended by 35 participants, including representatives of protected area managers, Ministry for Environmental Protection, Institute for Nature Conservation, water management enterprises, IUCN ECARO and other relevant stakeholders.

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
1.6 # of trainings included in learning modules of NAPA	1	Ongoing

The material on Nature based Solutions developed by an international consultant engaged by UNDP in 2024, as a part of the online training for project applicants participating in the Challenge Call (see Output 3 below), shall be integrated into the learning module for Environment Protection of the National Public Administration Academy (NAPA) in 2025.

Output 2- Capacities on sustainable and participative management of protected areas and the water-related ecosystems are increased, as well as the capacities on NbS and gender-sensitive, climate adaptation planning

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
2.1 Assessment Report of protected area's role in achieving climate change adaptation and mitigation goals	1	Ongoing (UNEP)*

** UNEP as per UN2UN agreement is responsible for the implementation of the above listed activities.*

UNEP conducted a desk study of available data, reviewed relevant literature, and held consultations with relevant institutions and stakeholders. The Assessment Report on protected area's role in achieving climate change adaptation and mitigation goals is expected to be completed by UNEP in the first quarter of 2025.

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
2.3 # of trained staff of competent authorities on Copernicus Services and Sectoral Information System (SIS)	20	Completed

The UNDP project team completed the trainings on Copernicus Services and Sectoral Information System (SIS) in November of 2023 (please refer to annual report for 2023).

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
2.4 # of trained persons on the use of Climate Atlas of Serbia and Disaster Risk Registry in 10 municipalities with focus on impacts of climate change on nature conservation and water management by promoting the multi-functional purpose of freshwater ecosystems	30	Completed

The UNDP project team conducted the trainings on Use of Climate Atlas of Serbia and Disaster Risk Registry in October of 2023 (please refer to annual report for 2023). In addition, UNDP has organised a short training for MEP's IT staff on administering the Digital Atlas in 2024, at MEP's request,

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
<i>2.5 # of persons from the women's rights organizations trained on the protection of biodiversity, climate adaptation and mitigation</i>	20	Ongoing (UNEP)

UNEP supported capacity building for the Network of Women for Nature and Environmental Protection at their 6th meeting in Homolje in early November of 2024. The workshop was attended by 28 female eco-activists and experts in various environmental fields, focusing on global extractivism (the removal of natural resources particularly for export with minimal processing), and the exploitation of natural resources, with the focus on situations in Serbia, and ways of moving away from destructive practices and finding alternative solutions.

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
2.6 # activities in synergy with other Swedish funded projects, ie Swedish expertise on spatial planning and nature management	10	Ongoing

The UNDP Project team organized series of online meetings and consultations with representatives of INCS, PINC, RGZ, with the goal of facilitating the implementation of the upgrade of information system of INCS and PINC by GSC Systems (see output indicator 2.8 below) and of obligations stemming from the INSPIRE Directive.

The UNDP project team actively participated in several activities and events with IUCN, including those of the Swedish funded ADAPT project, e.g. at an international conference organized in September 2024 in Belgrade by the ADAPT: Nature-based Solutions for Climate in the Western Balkans.



Screenshots from the [promotional video of the ADAPT project](#)

Furthermore, the UNDP project team involved the IUCN ECARO representatives in all workshops and events organized by UNDP and/or UNEP, including those regarding the Challenge Call (please see Output 3.1 below).

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
2.7 Upgraded application for field research developed for Natura 2000 mapping purposes	0	Ongoing

UNDP has completed procurement process and has contracted the company GSC Systems for the task of upgrading the application for field research developed for Natura 2000 mapping purposes (TERENSKA) with elements relevant for wetland conservation, as well as for delivering the output 2.8 described below. GSC Systems has previously developed the TERENSKA field application for INCS and PINC through the EU funded project EU for Natura 2000 in Serbia”. The work on the application will continue throughout 2025, with finalization scheduled for the first quarter of 2026.

UNDP has acquired additional IT equipment relevant for biodiversity data collection in the field (namely mobile and tablet devices) for INCS and PINC

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
2.8 Upgraded information systems and biodiversity databases in the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia and the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province	0	Ongoing

The contract with GSC Systems mentioned above, includes the task of upgrading of the Information Systems of two Institutes for Nature Conservation, having the essential source code necessary for the upgrade of the INCS and PINC information systems, as well as the expertise and maintenance experience. This work is ongoing.

Furthermore, UNDP acquired a part of the necessary IT equipment for the improved functioning of the information systems (server and necessary software licences) for INCS and PINC in 2024.

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
2.9 National wetland inventory completed according to the Ramsar Framework for Wetland Inventory	0	Ongoing

UNDP project team prepared budget revision that included the allocation of unspent funds into the development of the First National Wetland Inventory (previously underbudgeted). Upon approval of the budget revision by Project Board, the UNDP project team has developed the Terms of Reference for procuring the service of inventory development, in line with the guidance document Convention on Wetlands Secretariat (RAMSAR) and in consultation with MEP and INCS. The UNDP project team has published the call for offers and work is expected to start upon selection of the adequate candidate company/institution in the first quarter of 2025.

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
2.11 # of users of mobile application for citizens science	0	Ongoing

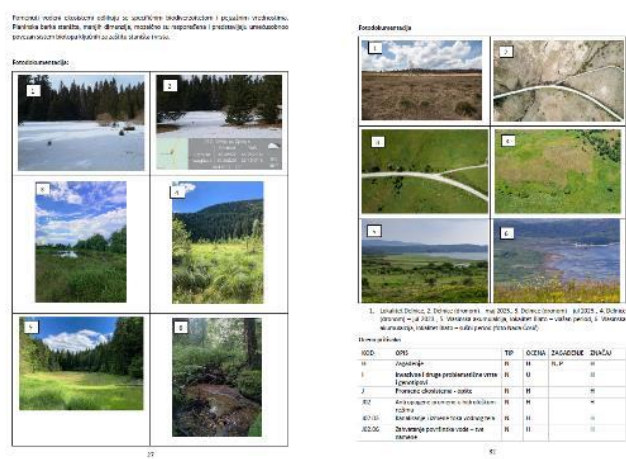
The UNDP project team engaged the UNDP Tech Cell to develop and promote the use of the citizen science application aimed at wetland conservation. The UNDP Tech Cell has previously developed similar environment protection related mobile applications for the Environmental Protection Agency and possesses the required know-how. During the ongoing development process, the UNDP Tech Cell together with the UNDP project team is conducting consultations with the Institute for Biological Research "Siniša Stanković", as experts and scientists from this institution have the relevant knowledge and experience in wetland conservation and citizen science applications.

EU for Green Agenda in Serbia: Take Action

Output 3 - NbS implemented in pilot site

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
3.1 # of preselected pilot sites with high potential for climate adaptation through implementation of NbS	3	Ongoing

Although primarily the task of UNEP, due to the considerable administrative delays experienced in 2023, UNDP has taken steps to ensure the completion of this activity. UNDP engaged a national consultant, a biologist from the Institute for Biological Research "Siniša Stanković", who prepared an illustrated 69-page report presenting all the necessary information collected and compiled for ten preselected pilot sites with high potential for climate adaptation through implementation of NbS. The document was made readily available by UNDP to all protected area managers and other stakeholders prior to the publishing of the Challenge Call for Innovative Solutions for the Protection, Preservation and Revitalization of Wetland Habitats. Furthermore, UNDP engaged a national consultant to assist in defining the selection criteria for the Challenge Call and an international consultant to guide the potential applicants through online workshops (see Output indicator 3.2 below)



Screenshots from the Report containing 10 potential pilot sites for implementing NbS in wetlands in Serbia

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
3.2 Call for proposals for Nature based Solution challenge launched	1	Ongoing

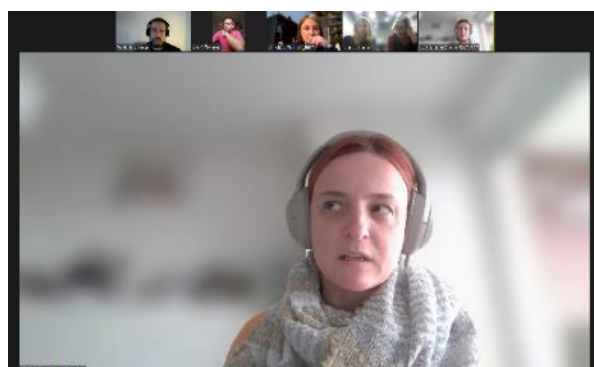
The UNDP project team has developed a [detailed guideline](#) for the Challenge Call for Innovative Solutions for the Protection, Preservation and Revitalization of Wetland Habitats, [published](#) the call on the 5th of June 2024, and distributed it through communication channels. UNDP organized an event in Belgrade for the World Environment Day on 5th of June, where the main part of the programme was the promotion of the Challenge Call. The event was attended by high level representatives from MEP, EUD, UNDP as well as by representatives from the stakeholders (protected area managers, civil society organizations, scientific community), and was disseminated by the media, including the [national television](#).



Photo and screenshot from the event held on the 5th of June where the Challenge Call was first announced and promoted

The Challenge Call deadline for submission of project proposals was 31. July 2024, whereby 27 initial (basic) applications were submitted, followed by the submission of 16 fully documented proposals. Twelve project proposals were selected for the acceleration phase, which was conducted from 31 October until 18 December 2024. UNDP in cooperation with

the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia in Belgrade organized the kick-off event where the project teams and mentors were introduced. During this period the selected teams received the continuous support by three mentors, experts in the field of biodiversity conservation, and a mentor to oversee the project writing process. The UNDP project team, in cooperation with UNEP, organized one online workshop on 15 August 2024 for the project teams that have submitted the initial project proposals with presentations from national consultants on and international consultant from the EU (Croatia and Slovakia) with guidelines and practical examples for implementing NbS in wetland conservation projects. The UNDP project team organized another online workshop on 15 November for the project teams that have taken participation in the acceleration phase, where the national and international consultant from the EU (Croatia) presented detailed NbS criteria as well as advice on pilot site selection and implementation wetland conservation projects. The UNDP project team organized a two-day workshop in Vršac on 19 and 20 November 2024 for the teams in accelerator, where experts presented key project components and guided practical exercises for the teams.



Screenshot from the online workshop on implementing NbS in wetlands and a photo from the workshop in Vršac

Following the acceleration process, the UNDP project team organized a final event in Belgrade (Impact Hub) on 18 December 2024, where eleven final project proposals were presented by teams to the representatives of from Sweden (donor), MEP, INCS, PINC and to other interested parties (IUCN ECARO, CSOs, scientific institutions). The final decision on which projects shall receive financial support will take place in the first quarter of 2025, after consideration and approval by the donor (Sweden) and MEP.



Photos from the event in Belgrade (ImpactHub) where the final project proposals were presented

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
3.5 Assessment Report on sites with high protentional for implementation of NbS in the future	1	Ongoing

A national expert engaged by the UNDP project team shall develop the Assessment Report on sites with high protentional for implementation of NbS in the future. A similar methodology used for pilot site selection done in 2023 (involving mandatory site visits for a certain number of sites) shall be applied to make this report more extensive, with more than 60 potential protected areas with wetlands already identified on the national level.

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
4.3 # of trained persons on gender-responsive budgeting for monitoring national spending of nature protection and climate change related funding	20	Ongoing (UNEP)*
4.4 Road map for gender mainstreaming in nature, water, and climate policies	1	Ongoing (UNEP)*

** UNEP as per UN2UN agreement is responsible for the implementation of the above listed activities.*

UNEP has reported delays in implementation of these activities, and they deferred and rescheduled the implementation of the activities to coincide with the second tranche as per UN2UN agreement, to be realized in 2025.

Output indicator	Target for 2024	Status
5.1 # of implemented campaigns and stakeholder dialogues	0	Ongoing

The UNDP project team wcontracted the New Media Team following a tender call procuring the service of implementing the Communications plan for the project and conducting the public awareness raising campaign and stakeholder dialogues. New Media Team developed key visuals, a project two-pager, a newsletter, social posts, press releases and other materials in 2024 contributing to greater for project visibility. The formal campaign with the slogan “[This is not just a pond](#)” has been initiated at the end of October 2024. The campaign has an accompanying web presentation made available through the web portal of the EUD (<https://europa.rs/ovonijesamobara/>).



Web presentation for the campaign "This is not just a pond" (left) and an example of a social media post (right)



Part of the project two-pager (left) and a page from the first Newsletter accompanying the campaign "This is not just a pond" (right)

RISKS AND CHALLENGES

Output 1- Regulatory and strategic planning framework underpinning nature-water-climate nexus approach improved

The risk “Lack of engagement in decision-making process” by the beneficiary (MEP) identified as a potential threat factor for activities 1.1 and 1.2, according to the experience in implementation in 2024 can be estimated as moderate. MEP has yet to formally initiate the

process of drafting the New Law on Nature Protection, and to establish formal working groups for both the Decree on Appropriate Assessment and the Law on Nature Protection.

A risk identified in 2024 is that of prolonged periods without formal feedback from MEP on the delivered draft of the Decree on Appropriate Assessment and accompanying report, involvement. This risk can be considered as moderate, whereas it can be mitigated efficiently through the greater engagement of MEP staff from the Sector for nature protection. This measure is applicable for both activity 1.1 and 1.2.

Output 2- Capacities on sustainable and participative management of protected areas and the water-related ecosystems are increased, as well as the capacities on NbS and gender-sensitive, climate adaptation planning

The risk initially defined in the ProDoc for activities 2.7 and 2.8 did not materialize. A potential risk for the upgrade of the information systems of INCS and PINC may lie in the delays in the realization of the necessary tasks by the INCS staff (polygon mapping, habitat categories, etc) in light of the work required for the upgrade of the information systems and the web-based component for exchange of biodiversity related data in line with the INSPIRE Directive.

The previously identified high risk of poor data availability for the activity 2.9 has been addressed and with the revision of the budget sufficient funds were made available for the development of the first National Wetlands Inventory, a task that shall take place in 2025.

The UNDP Project Team was in constant communication with national partners to ensure that implementation of activities is on track. The long-standing partnership with national partners and confirmation of commitment to the project goals guaranteed that no major hindrances to project implementation occurred.

LESSONS LEARNED

Output 1- Regulatory and strategic planning framework underpinning nature-water-climate nexus approach improved

The establishment of a Working Group and the continued engagement and communication of consultants with MEP staff (Sector for nature protection) needs to be ensured. The engagement of consultants prior to the formal establishment of the Working Group is beneficial, as much of the necessary preparatory material (legal background analysis and context for harmonizing with EU legislation) is then made ready for the Working Group, with the drafted provisions and necessary recommendations available when commencing work.

PARTNERSHIPS

Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP)

The UNDP Project Team maintains direct and permanent communication with the State Secretary of the Ministry for Environmental Protection responsible for the Sector for Nature Protection for all issues relevant for the project implementation. MEP nominated staff of the Sector for Nature Protection as contact persons for operational level communication, namely for policy development issues, but also for other operational issues (data exchange, joint participation at events, etc.). The cooperation in both 2023 and 2024 has been successful and has included active participation in meetings (especially those with engaged consultants for legislation development, including ex-post analysis of the Law on Nature Protection and the development of the decrees), workshops (gathering the project teams under the Challenge Call Accelerator, and workshops with protected area managers), events organized by the project (Challenge Call kick-off event, Accelerator kick off and final event) and consultations in development of Terms of Reference for expert engagement or procurement of services (such as the development of the National Wetland Inventory). The UNDP project team was also regularly invited to actively participate in events organized by MEP, such as the annual meeting of the protected area managers.

Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia (INCS) and Provincial Institute for Nature Conservation (PINC)

Both INCS and PINC have formally delegated contact persons for the purpose of the implementation of the project, for its entire duration. The communication and cooperation with both institutes at operational and higher formal level is highly satisfactory. Both INCS and PINC have actively participated in project events, and INCS has hosted project events, such as workshops under accelerator, with the provision of requested by INCS and PINC being timely and with sufficient detail.

Republic Geodetic Authority (RGZ)

RGZ has also delegated contact persons for the purpose of the implementation of this project, and the contacts have readily answered to all requests for data and provided insight to certain topics relevant for the project.

Managers of Protected areas

The UNDP project team engaged with the managers of protected areas, as a priority target group for this project, on a regular basis, in both preparatory phase of the Challenge Call (when discussing the conservation priorities, challenges and opportunities for active measures protecting biodiversity in potential pilot sites), as well as during the accelerator

(when discussing the progress with teams that applied and were selected under the Challenge Call). The project experienced a high level of responsiveness, especially from managers of protected wetland areas. Several protected area managers have integrated active wetland protection measures in their annual programmes for 2025, in accordance with the planned activities with which they applied for the Challenge Call with project proposals.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

In 2024 the project contributed to the achievement of SDG 5: Gender Equality through all activities. The UNDP project team mainly promoted gender integration through the promotion of women engagement within the expert teams and among the potential beneficiaries of the Call, ensuring equal gender representation and integration of social groups in the pilot projects to be supported through Challenge Call (which will be part of in the Performance Based Payment Agreements).

The engagement of national and international consultants in 2024, presented by gender:

Female (5): Duška Dimović, Tanja Vukov, Jelena Batica, Jasminka Radović, Ivana Korn Varga

Male (2): Zoran Sretić, Tomica Mišljenović,

PROJECT VISIBILITY

In 2024, the project visibility was recorded within the media reports on the World Environment Day (5 June 2024) – on that occasion, the UNDP project team announced the Challenge Call, and promoted the Call through the social media (including the posts related to wetlands and species conservation).

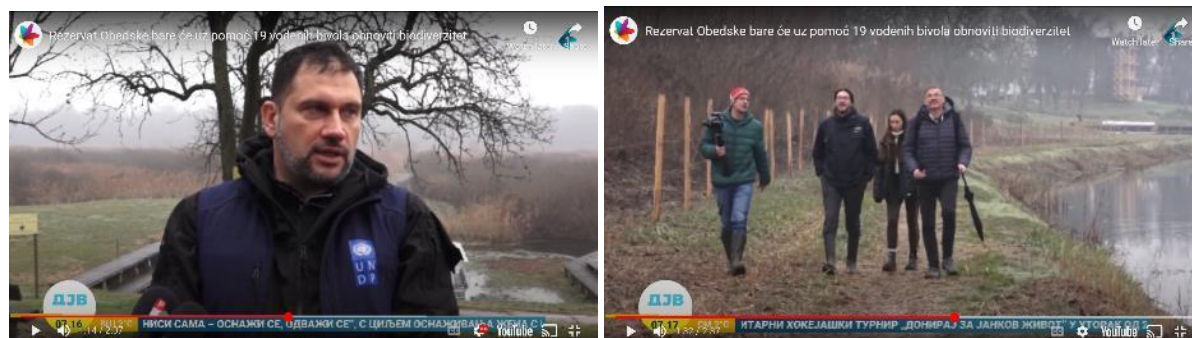
The project and the topic of wetland conservation also received media attention through a special TV 23- minute programme “[Ekologizacija](#)” on the national television (Radio Televizija Srbije), where the project goals were presented, as well as the Challenge Call.



Screenshot from the RTS TV programme “Ekologizacija”

UNDP team ensured additional [media coverage](#) on the topic of nature based solutions and wetland conservation related to the project during a site visit to a project utilizing water buffalo for wetland and wet meadow restoration. This particular project is supported by the

EUD through the Pillar 4 of the EU for Green Agenda in Serbia project – Biodiversity and Ecosystems.



Screenshot from the Radio Televizija Vojvodine reportage

The UNDP project team also presented the project to participants of several informative events, such as the IUCN ECARO ADAPT Conference held in Belgrade on 18 September 2024, where the Challenge Call was presented to all participants, and the hybrid event organized by American Chamber of Commerce at the end of December of 2024, when the projects in the Challenge Call accelerator were presented to representatives of 15 companies. UNDP also participated at the annual meeting of the protected area managers organized by MEP, and held on 24 September 2024 in Kladovo, where the Challenge Call concept and conditions were presented to all participants.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2025 the project will focus on:

Implementation of the projects selected through the Challenge Call.

Development of the National Wetland Inventory.

Assessment of sites with high protentional for implementation of NbS in the future.

The update of TERENSKA application and Information Systems of the two Institutes for Nature Conservation.

The development of a citizen science application for wetland conservation.

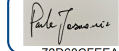
The development of the New Law on Nature Protection and the finalization of the draft of Decree on Appropriate Assessment.

Development of a national nature/biodiversity/ecosystems financing plan.

Continued implementation of a public awareness raising campaign and stakeholder dialogue.

Progress Report narrative prepared by:

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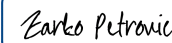
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ANNEX A - FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2024

ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TOTAL BUDGET 2023	TOTAL EXPENDITURE S 2023	TOTAL BALANCE 2023	TOTAL BUDGET 2024	TOTAL EXPENDITURE S 2024	TOTAL BALANCE 2024
A 1.1. Development of legislation following nature-water-climate synergy (contributing to implementation of Pillar 4 of the Green Agenda in Serbia "Protecting and investing in biodiversity and ecosystems")	UNDP	\$21,000.00	\$23,011.15	-\$2,011.15	\$51,800.00	\$11,750.76	\$40,049.24
A.1.2. Strengthening capacities of representatives of competent institutions to mainstream nature-water-climate synergy into implementation of policies (in Serbia "Protecting and investing in biodiversity and ecosystems")	UNDP	\$10,000.00	\$18,332.76	-\$8,332.76	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	UNEP	\$22,000.00	\$0.00	\$22,000.00	\$33,000.00	\$22,000.00	\$11,000.00
TOTAL FOR OUTPUT 1		\$53,000.00	\$41,343.91	\$11,656.09	\$84,800.00	\$33,750.76	\$51,049.24
A 2.1. Assessments of protected area's role in achieving climate change adaptation and mitigation goals	UNEP	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00

A 2.2. Strengthening the capacities of stakeholders for improved management of protected areas (contributing to implementation of Pillar 4 of the Green Agenda in Serbia "Protecting and investing in biodiversity and ecosystems")	UNDP	\$19,000.00	\$26,291.31	-\$7,291.31	\$20,700.00	\$9,637.51	\$11,062.49
	UNEP	\$5,400.00	\$0.00	\$5,400.00	\$9,000.00	\$1,070.00	\$7,930.00
A 2.3. Improving data, monitoring and reporting on nature, biodiversity and ecosystems	UNDP	\$43,000.00	\$6,353.10	\$36,646.90	\$55,000.00	\$68,319.03	-\$13,319.03
A 2.4. Preparation of National wetland inventory and Wetland Restoration Action Plan	UNDP	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$0.00	\$30,000.00
	UNEP	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$7,000.00	\$836.00	\$6,164.00
TOTAL FOR OUTPUT 2		\$78,400.00	\$32,644.41	\$45,755.59	\$126,700.00	\$84,862.54	\$41,837.46
A 3.1. Identification of pilot sites with high potential for climate adaptation through implementation of NbS (through stakeholder dialogue and by applying appropriate methodology)	UNEP	\$17,500.00	\$0.00	\$17,500.00	\$27,500.00	\$15,740.00	\$11,760.00

A 3.2. Implementation of the Challenge call for proposals for Nature based Solution	UNDP	\$13,000.00	\$4,379.21	\$8,620.79	\$55,471.70	\$37,331.52	\$18,140.18
A 3.3. conducting the assessment of sites with high potential for implementation of NbS in the future	UNDP	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$7,000.00	\$0.00	\$7,000.00
TOTAL FOR OUTPUT 3		\$30,500.00	\$4,379.21	\$26,120.79	\$89,971.70	\$53,071.52	\$36,900.18
4.1 Preparation the national nature/biodiversity/ecosystems financing plan in synergy with the UNDP-BioFin regional initiative, including the assessment of existing financing mechanisms	UNDP	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$18,000.00	\$4,389.22	\$13,610.78
4.2 Assess the existing and design new financing mechanism to support nature/biodiversity/ecosystem investments (e.g. investmets into NbS and ecosystem maintenance/restauration)	UNDP	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	\$1,950.76	\$8,049.24
4.3. Collecting data and development of a road map for gender mainstreaming in nature, water, and climate policies	UNEP	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$8,000.00	\$0.00	\$8,000.00

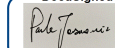
4.4. Training prepared and conducted on gender-responsive budgeting for monitoring national spending of nature protection and climate change related funding	UNEP	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$7,000.00	\$0.00	\$7,000.00
TOTAL FOR OUTPUT 4		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$43,000.00	\$6,339.98	\$36,660.02
A 5.1. Development of project communication plan	UNDP	\$10,000.00	\$10,558.15	-\$558.15	\$10,000.00	\$6,387.22	\$3,612.78
A 5.2. Implementation of project communication plan focusing on public campaigns and dialogues on nature-water-climate synergy from a vulnerable groups perspective	UNDP	\$20,000.00	\$7,815.47	\$12,184.53	\$23,000.00	\$14,932.66	\$8,067.34
TOTAL FOR OUTPUT 5		\$30,000.00	\$18,373.62	\$11,626.38	\$33,000.00	\$21,319.88	\$11,680.12
A 6.1. Project management	UNDP	\$12,843.53	\$12,843.53	\$0.00	\$17,170.96	\$17,170.96	\$0.00
TOTAL PROJECT OUTPUTS		\$204,743.53	\$109,584.68	\$95,158.85	\$394,642.66	\$216,515.64	\$178,127.02
General Management Services	UNDP	\$12,147.48	\$8,766.77	\$3,380.71	\$23,851.41	\$13,749.57	\$10,101.84
General Management Services	UNEP	\$4,232.00	\$0.00	\$4,232.00	\$7,720.00	\$3,571.68	\$4,148.32

Note: The amounts for UNEP expenditures reported in this Financial Report are based on the data provided by UNEP in the Semi-Annual Progress Report submitted on 03 December 2024

**Committed amount (contract with GSC Systems) until 2026*

Financial Report prepared by:

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