



ANNEX I – Description of the Action

EU for Nature

Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III)
Programming Framework for the period 2021-2027

W 3 - Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity
TP 1 - Environment and climate change

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Access and Benefit Sharing
ACAP	Community Action for the conservation of the Protected Areas of Albania
AICS	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
AIFIS	Albanian Inventory Forestry Information System
NAICT	National Agency of ICT
ASCS	Agency for the Support of Civil Society
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEPA	Communication, Education and Public Awareness
CREA	Council for Agriculture Research and Analysis of Agro-economy (Italy)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DCM	Decision of Council of Ministers
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GWP	Global Wildlife Program
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
MPA	Marine Protected Area
LOD	Reinforcement of Local Democracy
MAECI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MASAF	Ministry of agriculture, food sovereignty and forests of Italy
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
MTE	Ministry of Tourism and Environment
NAPA	National Agency of Protected Areas
NaturAI	Project “Strengthening of institutional capacities for nature protection: preparation of the Natura 2000 network”
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NbS	Nature-based Solutions

NIPAC	National IPA Coordinator
NP	National Park
NSDI	National Strategy for Development and Integration
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PA	Protected Areas
RAPAs	Regional Administrations for Protected Areas
SANE 27	Supporting Albanian Negotiations in Environment, Chapter 27
SCI	Sites of Community Interest
SDF	Standard Data Form
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
pSCI	potential Sites of Community Importance for Natura 2000
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

1. CONTEXT

Despite its relatively small size, Albania features a high diversity of ecosystems, habitats, and species¹. According to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the most significant factor responsible for endangering species in Albania is land conversion, resulting in habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation². As an economy in transition³ Albania is indeed following a fast development trajectory. Land has been, and continues to be, converted for commercial, tourism, recreational and residential purposes. Wetlands have been drained and residential or commercial areas and infrastructure investments are encroaching upon native habitats, posing a serious threat to its biodiversity. These impacts are aggravated by climate change, especially in the country's river basins and coastal area, as major climatic events have led to excessive flooding of large areas and erosion along the coastline⁴.

The [National Biodiversity Strategy and the Action Plan](#) (2012-2020) has defined the main directions for preserving biodiversity and habitats through the identification and proclamation as Protected Areas (PAs) in Albania.

Over the last decades, Albania has made considerable progress in its policy on environmental protection, including nature conservation.

Based on the study carried out for the entire network of PA in Albania, the National Territorial Council (NTC) approved with the Decision No. 10 of 28.12.2020 the boundaries of the PAs for the entire territory, their surfaces and their status including a Map to illustrate the changes. Based on this Decision 44 protected areas of II, IV, V Category were approved, including the existing 721 Natural Monuments (III Category), approved in May 2019. As required by the Law on Protected Areas, these PA require also the issuing of a DCM for their proclamation. With DCM No. 59 and 60 of 26.1.2022, 11 National Parks and 23 Natural Parks/Nature Manage Reserves had been approved. On 29.7.2022, a new Natural Park (Porto Palermo) was approved (category IV) as from the Category V PA only the Pishë Poro - Narta has been approved by a DCM on 26.10.2022 while 9 areas under category V are still under process for a final government approval (Table 1). The extent of the PAs network is estimated to cover 6,228.2 km² (also including the Municipal Nature Park) of marine and terrestrial habitats (appr. 21 % of national territory, from less than 6 per cent in 2005). In this regard, the country reached the 17 % objective of the 2020 Biodiversity Aichi Target, while also making progress regarding the establishment of Ramsar sites (4 sites comprise more than 98,000 ha), one Biosphere Reserve of Prespa and Ohrid area as UNESCO Nature Heritage site and Important Bird Areas, as well as participated in the Green Belt Initiative. Albania joined in February 2022 the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, pledging to protect at least 30 % of land and seas and promote nature-based solutions within the UN framework convention on climate change.

Table 1– The System of National Protected Areas in Albania (November 2022).

Nr.	CATEGORY	Surf. Ha	No.	% OVER TOTAL
II	National Park	299,273.2	11	10.4
III	Nature Monument	1,970.0	718	0.06
IV	Nature Park	222,582.7	24	7.76
V	Protected landscape	79,745.4	10	2.80
	TOTAL	599,846.3	763	21.02

To date, more than 20 PAs are equipped with an approved Management Plan but not all are in force, the below table shows the current situation:

¹ <https://www.cbd.int/countries/profile/?country=al>

² <https://www.cbd.int/countries/profile/?country=al>

³ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/albania/overview#1>

⁴ <https://floodlist.com/europe/albania-floods-january-2021>

Table 2 – The System of National Protected Areas in Albania (December 2021)

No.	Category	Management Plans	Year of Approval or drafted	Actual state of management plan
Category II				
1	NP	Butrint	2020	In force
2	NP	Shebenik - Jabllanicë	2018	In force
3	NP	Tomorri Mountain	2014	In force
4	NP	Prespa	2014	In force
5	NP	Bredhi i Hotovës-Dangëlli	2014	In force
6	NP	Divjaka - Karavasta	2015	In force
7	NMP	Karaburun - Sazan	2015	In force
8	NP	Dajti Mountain	2018	The Management Plan has been revised but not approved
9	NP	Albanian Alps	2018	The Management Plan has been drafted but not approved
10	NP	Llogora	2004	The deadline of the Management plan has expired
Category IV				
11	NMR/NP	Korab - Koritnik	2014	In force
12	NMR/NP	Mali me Gropa - Bizë - Martanesh	2014	The management plan for the status of Protected landscape is in power. The area will change the category in 2022.
13	NMR	Shkodra Lake	2012	In force
14	NMR	Kune - Vain – Tale Patok – Fushëkuqe - Ishëm	2010	The management plan timeframe has expired. Furthermore, the Kune Vain - Tale PA was merged with Patok - Fushë Kuqe - Ishëm.
15	NMR/NP	Blue Eye	2019	The Management Plan has been drafted, during the process of proclamation of Blue Eye as a Natural Park, but not approved.
16	NMR/NP	Qafshtama	2017	The Draft Plan has been drafted but not approved, when the PA had the status of National Park.
17	NMR	Porto Palermo	2015	Draft developed before becoming a PA.

No.	Category	Management Plans	Year of Approval or drafted	Actual state of management plan
18	NMR/NP	Karaburun	2004	The deadline of the Management plan has expired.
Category V				
19	PL	Pogradeci Lake	2014	In force
20	PL	Buna – Velipojë River	2018	In force
21	PL	Vjosë - Nartë	2004	The deadline of the Management plan has expired.
Category III				
22	NM	Black Cave (Pëllumbas)	March 2018	In force
23	NM	Delta e Përroit të Palasës	February 2018	In force
24	NM	“Pylli i Përzier” i Maliqit	Dec. 2017	In force

Source: UNDP/NAPA 2022

In January 2015, the Council of Ministers established the National Agency for Protected Areas (NAPA) with the mandate to preserve species, natural habitats, and biodiversity through the participatory management of PAs. Since 2017, NAPA has a status of a Directorate General under the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE) and is in control of the 12 Regional Administration of Protected Areas (RAPA). NAPA has the mandate to manage the network of protected areas, species, and natural habitats, preserving nature and biodiversity through the management of PAs and promoting the active participation of stakeholders in the management of PAs.

Since 2017, the Government of Albania (GoA) has approved a new Law on protected areas (PA) which has significantly improved the overall management effectiveness of the country’s system of PAs, by consolidating the legal context for the declaration, conservation, administration, management and use of the PAs and their natural and biological resources as well as facilitating conditions for the development of environmental tourism; public information and education and the generation of direct and indirect economic benefits by the local population as well as the public and private sectors.

However, according to the findings of an assessment of 51 PAs in Albania carried out in the framework of the [NaturAL](#) project⁵, applying the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)⁶, PAs in Albania are still poorly managed owing predominantly to chronic resource and capacity shortages.

The major strengths/advancements in the effective management of PAs recorded so far in Albania, as well as the main weaknesses/areas of improvement, can be summarised as follows:

- The ecological values within the existing PAs system in Albania are still in good condition. However, the current PA system is not ecological representative.

⁵ The EU-funded “Strengthening national capacity in nature protection - preparation for Natura 2000 network.” Project led by the Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (AICS).

⁶ The METT is an evaluation tool - developed by WWF and the World Bank, which follows the IUCN Framework for assessing Protected Area Management Effectiveness (IUCN PAME Framework), mostly focusing on context, planning, inputs, and process. For more information on the METT please visit: https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/content/documents/2016/mett_assessment_final-web.pdf

- The major threats to these ecological values come from illegal and/or unsustainable extraction of natural resources (logging, wood harvesting, mining, and quarrying, overfishing), wildfires, poor solid waste and wastewater management, dams, and hydrological modifications, illegal and/or unsustainable tourism activities. Corruption and weak law enforcement result in environmental crimes.
- PAs are not yet recognized by local communities as providers of significant ecosystem services to local communities, such as firewood, grazing of domestic animals, and medicinal plants. Hence, local communities and other economic sectors are not actively engaged in PA management planning and implementation.
- Not all PAs have a management plan and the existing are hardly implemented as they need further elaboration to be operational. No management protocols exist for tourism and community management, as well as a specific training module for community / local authorities and tourism management.
- PA management effectiveness is hard to assess due to a lack of harmonized data as monitoring/research activities are not performed at PA level or because the research activities carried out do not address management priorities and needs and they are conducted without the inclusion of all the interested stakeholders.
- PA management effectiveness is further hampered by a chronic lack of financial resources, appropriate availability and maintenance of infrastructure, equipment, and facilities (e.g., vehicles, monitoring equipment, telephone lines, access to the internet, computers, and basic office equipment). The financial sustainability of the Albanian PAs system has not been achieved yet due to a lack of specific secondary laws, poor capacity of relevant authorities to develop business plans to increase and diversify PAs' incomes through private-public partnerships, etc., and/or to develop project proposals and fundraise. While PAs have overall an adequate legal status, there is an urgent need to accelerate the issuing of secondary legislation allowing the relevant authority (NAPA) to regulate the incomes generated at PA level and the contribution from other international institutions.
- The NaturAL project has identified the need for new specialized positions and/or ensure specific training / tasks tailored to the needs of each PA to deal with tourism and community/local authorities management as well as enhancing their communication skills. Gender disparity is also widespread, with few women among the PA staff.

The establishment of the Natura 2000 network has also been initiated in Albania. A list of potential Natura 2000 Sites of Community Interest (SCI) has been drafted, including 43 sites and Standard Data Form (SDF) for 5 PAs have been prepared by the NaturAL project. The NaturAL project has also contributed to building the capacity of relevant authorities and scientific institutions in SCI identification and integration into the Natura 2000 network, through training, technical guidelines, tools, and field activities. Despite these advancements, the process has revealed significant knowledge gaps and a fragile institutional set up. Relevant authorities and scientific institutions should be provided with and trained on monitoring protocols designed to support the effective management of the sites, for them to become independent from international expertise/support soon. Capacity should also be built on Natura 2000 sites management and financing.

Some levels of preparation have been recorded in the EU assessment reports⁷. However, significant efforts are still needed to reinforce environmental protection and increase resilience to climate change. Specifically, based on the recent EU assessment reports, they have highlighted the following areas of concern:

- The legislation on strategic investment raises concerns for the protection of biodiversity, as it may lead to large tourism and industrial investments in protected areas.
- Good progress was made with the adoption of the set of rules for the management of revenues generated by fees paid in Protected Areas, and the establishment of the Special Fund for Protected Areas. An acceleration in the implementation of the set of rules should be considered.
- In January 2022, the government of Albania approved the revised delimitation of 34 protected areas. Although the total of the area under protection has increased to 21 % of the territory, this

⁷ SWD(2020) 354 final. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/101a425f-08ae-11eb-a511-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-210140240>

increase has happened in the interior of the country, while the coastal area under protection has shrank.

- Albania does not adequately ensure enforcement of the forest and logging laws, and prosecuted records of offenders and arsonists are little, considering the high number of intentional and unintentional fires in 2021 and 2022. No convictions on these cases have been reported.
- The moratorium on hunting was extended by an additional 5 years but, for conservation purposes, a law and plan enforcing the moratorium should also be adopted.
- Capacity for prevention and inspection of wildlife crimes should be ensured.

2. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTION

The **expected Impact (Overall Objective)** of the Action is to contribute to the protection and conservation of at least 25 per cent of the Albanian territory (at land and at sea) by 2030 through the establishment and the effective management of a system of Protected Areas (PA), including NATURA 2000 sites and other effective area-based conservation measures.

The Action will build on previous efforts (i.e., NaturaAI project, UNDP projects, SANE27, etc.) to advance the EU approximation process by enabling EU Nature Protection legislation implementation, enhanced capacities of relevant authorities, CSO, academia, and private sector, and providing necessary resources for new and existing PAs effective management.

The intervention logic underpinning the Action

The Action has been conceived cooperatively by the partners and all relevant authorities for nature protection in Albania to ensure that:

- The Action builds on the successes achieved so far (the advancement in EU Nature Protection acquis transposition, the provision of institutions and budgets necessary to carry out the laws and regulations, increased knowledge of the Albanian biological values and their distributions, among others),
- The Action addresses the major areas of improvements identified by previous efforts, and
- The Action swiftly advances the country towards the protection of at least 25 per cent of the Albanian territory (on land and at sea) through a system of effectively managed PAs.

To enhance the management effectiveness of the Albanian PAs (**Outcome/Specific Objective 1**) and ensure the effective protection and conservation of at least 25 per cent of the Albanian territory (**Impact/Overall Objective**), the following 7 Outputs have been identified to address the main areas of improvement recognized also by previous projects.

Output 1.1 will strengthen the institutional set up and advance the transposition of the EU Nature Protection *Acquis*, while continuously building the capacities of relevant institutions and authorities in PAs design and management. Technical assistance will be provided to review the Law on Protected Areas and to clarify the monitoring process, following the changes at the Environmental Inspectorate level, but also to precise the role of the Special Fund for Protected Areas. The Action will support the development and implementation of secondary legislation to ensure law is fully and properly complied with through necessary controls and penalties (Enforcement).

The management effectiveness of existing PAs and new ones will be enhanced by revising, updating, and developing new management plans (**Outputs 1.2**), by ensuring the effective monitoring of PAs performances through the establishment of Performance Monitoring Systems (**Output 1.3**), and by supporting the implementation of priority conservation and restoration activities at selected PAs (**Output 1.4**). Identification and selection of protected areas will be done during the inception phase in close cooperation with NAPA. Development of new data sets and GIS maps will be in line with all government requirements by cooperating with NAICT. Regarding the implementation of conservation and restoration activities will be done in

cooperation with NAPA and local government and the final handover will be accomplished with the beneficiaries like NAPA, RAPA, local government and/ or other stakeholders.

Management plans will be also developed for the sustainable management of priority habitats and species (**Output 1.2**), as well as that of timber and non-timber forest products (**Output 1.5**).

The crucial role of Albanian civil society organizations (CSO) as key agent for environmental protection and sustainable development will be further enhanced through a Small Grant Program in support to the implementation of innovative pilot actions to enhance PAs management (**Output 1.6**), as well as to implement [Nature-based Solutions \(NbS\)](#) and measures against environmental crime (**Output 1.7**). The criteria for protected areas, grants, monitoring and evaluation will be selected in the inception phase in close cooperation with MTE/NAPA, as well as local government. Cooperation will be established with ASCS. CSOs can indeed help enhance the effectiveness of the Albanian PAs i) by directly contributing to the implementation of the priority actions listed in the PA management plans (MP), such as education activities targeting visitors or school children, ii) by proposing innovative solutions to address priority concerns in the PAs, such as actions to prevent marine plastic litter, or iii) by developing/promoting Nature-based Solutions that contribute to the PA objectives.

During the duration of the Action, communications and public awareness activities will continue previous efforts aimed at ensuring a better understanding of the role of PAs/Natura 2000 network in protecting biodiversity and contributing to the sustainable development of Albania.

3. RELEVANCE OF THE ACTION

Relevance and complementarity with national strategies

The activities proposed in this Action has clearly reflected the actual situation in the nature protection sector, the recent development in the EU integration path and the areas of concern identified from the EU reports and from the assessment of level of preparation of the sector to meet the EU standards (Screening Preparatory Assessment) and the National Strategy on Biodiversity. The main areas of concerns that have been addressed are:

- In terms of **EU acquis and the Natura 2000**, Action will support through its activities the transposition of the remaining provisions in the Birds and Habitats directive and the transposition of related activities including the secondary legislation that will support them. Also, activities are dedicated specifically for the implementation issues that will arise from the full transposition of the EU Acquis on nature protection. There are specific activities that will support the whole process of Natura 2000 and research for completing the documentation of Natura 2000 potential sites is foreseen as well
- Preparation of up-to-date standardized Management Plans will enable a better categorization of the zoning inside the PA and as such an improved protection of PA against **large tourism and industrial investments in protected areas**. Also increasing the knowledge related to the habitats and species that are part of the pSCI will give further support to protect the areas against investment that can affect biodiversity values.
- Management Plans that are foreseen in the action and the completion of the legislative framework that is related to the management of funds will improve also the approach toward the **management of the revenues**.
- There are specific activities targeting the building capacities and providing equipment to the actors that area dealing with the enforcement issues. This activity will target both **wildlife crimes and illegal logging and arsonists**.
- In relation to **forest fires prevention**, Action has foreseen activities related to improving the situation related to the enforcement issues.

Lessons learned and links with previous financial assistance

The Action is the result of extensive discussions with all relevant stakeholders in the field of nature protection in Albania. It also builds on the outcomes, the lessons learned, the evaluation findings and conclusions of the NaturAL project, as well as the other past and ongoing projects in the field of nature conservation, following all the EU and National Strategies relevant for the sector in Albania.

The NaturAL project supported the designation of the Natura 2000 network by developing a preliminary list of Natura 2000 sites, and invested in 3 visitor centres, 8 rangers' buildings, equipment, tools, infrastructure, means of transport, knowledge, capacities, and skills in 10 Protected Areas, covering 66 % of the national territory under protection.

In order to improve the biodiversity conservation at the site level the NATURAL project implemented existing management plans in a number of protected areas (PAs) that have been selected as pilot sites.

The primary pilot sites:

- (1) Lake Shkodra Managed Natural Reserve (MNR)
- (2) Korab-Koritnik MNR
- (3) Divjaka-Karavasta National Park (NP)
- (4) Tomorri Mountain NP
- (5) Bredhi i Hotovës-Dangëlli NP

Limited actions have also been implemented in the following secondary pilot sites:

- (1) Buna River-Velipojë Protected Landscape (PL)
- (2) Dajti Mountain NP
- (3) Shebenik-Jabllanica NP
- (4) Vjosa-Narta PL
- (5) Llogara NP

Based on the recommendations of NaturAL the sustainability of the NATURA 2000 process mainly is challenged by the situation of financial resources needed to proceed with the implementation of the SDF procedures for the remaining 37 Sites of Community Interests and following next steps. On the other side, the still insufficient capacity for biodiversity monitoring hampers the integration of conservation provisions in the monitoring plans.

The financial sustainability and autonomy of NAPA is essential for continuing to enhance the management capacities of the local staffs and resources management based on income generation activities as well as to develop protected area business plans for increasing and diversifying the incomes mainly from the touristic industry.

This Action will address the main recommendations drawn from the evaluation of NaturAL, as follows: *Capacity building of the staff of relevant authorities, CSOs, and of representatives of key stakeholder groups*

Based on the findings of the capacity and resource needs assessment targeting the staff of relevant authorities and CSOs, and the representatives of key stakeholder groups (PA steering committees) a capacity building and career development certification program tailored to the priority needs of the target groups will be designed, developed, and delivered to complement/strengthen previous programs and further strengthen the effectiveness of PAs in Albania.

Management effectiveness of PA system

Support the revision and update of existing PA management plans, including business, communication, monitoring evaluation (M&E) plans, and develop of new management plans. In addition the specific Action Plans for the most vulnerable/important species will be developed and implemented. The national reference lists of habitats and species types occurring in Albania will be updated and an Interpretation Manual of Albanian Habitats with guidance on conservation measures will be also published. New data sets and GIS maps on the distribution of habitats and species for at least 10 selected sites as SCI from the Preliminary list of Natura 2000 sites will be created. The Natura 2000 Standard Data Form will be completed for selected sites and a Road map will be produced for the finalisation of the Natura 2000 network in Albania.

Tailored trainings in support to the enforcement of the legislation related to nature protection and biodiversity will be provided. PAs will have the necessary equipment to effectively monitor and enforce the law. A national-wide PA management effectiveness system (building on the METT-4 methodology) will be set up and relevant staff trained.

Financial sustainability of PA system and the relevant authorities

New legislation and bylaws will be developed to achieve full transposition of the EU Nature Protection Acquis and its implementation. A special focus on mechanisms and regulatory acts needed to ensure

financial sustainability of the relevant authorities and the PA system Public-private partnerships will be promoted to complement the Action in the implementation of the priority measures for the conservation and/or restoration of degraded habitats/ecosystems in selected PAs.

Work with local communities in and around PAs

Important technical and financial investments will be made to ensure the implementation of priority conservation measures and the restoration of degraded habitats/ecosystems from the management plans at selected PA level, in line with gender equity, livelihoods, and socio-economic criteria. The sustainable management of timber and non-timber forest products will be promoted as an important revenue generating source for local communities through the concerted development of the new Forest and Pasture MP and /or Forest Use MP for PAs, in close cooperation with relevant national and local authorities, experts, forest use associations and local users. Local CSOs, community associations, private actors with interests in the PAs will be actively called to contribute to the sustainable management of the PAs and its resources through a system of Grants that will be awarded to innovative pilot actions or Nature-based Solutions aimed at minimizing/preventing key threats, enhancing sustainable revenue generating activities, restoring degraded habitats, etc.

Links with other initiatives

The EU Environment Partnership Programme for Accession (EPPA) 2019-2022 in the Western Balkans and Turkey is the major driver of reform and development in environmental governance through compliance with the EU environmental acquis. The EPPA has provided support for the implementation of biodiversity strategies to the Ministries in the Region. The study on green infrastructure deployment and ecological connectivity status of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia provide a basis for defining concrete proposals and recommendations for the protection, development and improvement of ecological connectivity throughout the region.

The Swedish Government finances the programme "Supporting Albanian Negotiations in Environment, Chapter 27" (SANE27) aiming to strengthen the capacity and capability of the Albanian Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE) and other institutions to prepare for EU Chapter 27 negotiations. It developed the Need Assessment Documents for Chapter 27 identifying the main needs to close the gaps for the main 73 EU directives and legislations. SANE27 also supports the involvement of CSOs in the preparations for the negotiation process and building the capacities of stakeholders in preparation for EU negotiation, the screening process and requirements for EU directives and regulations. This Action shall address several gaps in implementation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives defined in the Needs Assessment Document developed by SANE27.

UNDP and GEF supported project "Enhancing Financial Sustainability of the Protected Areas System in Albania" the project assists the GoA in reducing existing funding gaps for the system of protected areas, improving the management of individual protected areas, improving cost-efficiencies in individual protected areas and building the financial management capacities of protected area staff in the NAPA etc.

Relevance and complementarity with EU policy and EU & other donors' assistance

Through its work in support to the full transposition of the EU Nature Protection Acquis, the Action will contribute to the IPA III objective, under Window 3, to gradually integrate the new policy dimensions of the EU structural and cohesion policy in the enlargement region with the objective to better support the beneficiaries' understanding of the structural EU policies, support the transfer of best practices from the EU structural instruments to the enlargement area and prepare the beneficiaries for accession.

The Action will also promote the EU green agenda (i.e., the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans and other relevant EU policies, including the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and relevant macro-regional strategies), as well as the development objectives of Albania (i.e., the Albanian Government Programme 2021-2025 and the National Plan for European Integration 2022-2024).

The proposed actions are also designed in a way to assess, address, mainstream and promote gender equality in nature conservation. The action will develop a baseline gender needs assessment proposing the methodology and concrete recommendations for gender actions. Throughout the implementation of this Action, gender analysis shall be carried out to ensure gender mainstreaming across activities, such as plans, the promotion campaign, development of policies, assessments or evaluations. At the global level, the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) represents the umbrella strategy to achieve a more sustainable future for the planet and to eradicate poverty and is fully embedded in the EU's policy framework..

The Action is in line with the [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#). The strategy contains specific commitments and actions to be delivered by 2030, including the establishment of a larger EU-wide network of protected areas on land and at sea, building upon existing Natura 2000 areas, with strict protection for areas of very high biodiversity and climate value. Moreover, a series of concrete commitments and actions shall be undertaken to restore degraded ecosystems across the EU by 2030, and to manage them sustainably, addressing the key drivers of biodiversity loss.

This programme is in line with the [Green Agenda for the Western Balkans](#). Mainstreaming biodiversity safeguards across all economic activities is one of its five pillars and is central to the European Green Deal. Protection of biodiversity is the fourth pillar of the Green Agenda, with actions such as protection and restoration plans, and nature-based solutions. The implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives, together with the enforcement of Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment Directives are seen as preconditions for further sustainable infrastructure development. The Green Agenda also emphasizes under Pillar I the deployment of nature-based solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The [National Plan for European Integration \(NPEI\) 2022-2024](#) defines as main priorities for the coming period: (i) Full alignment of national legislation with the legislation of the European Union (acquis), as far as the Birds and Habitats Directives are concerned, as well as the implementation of the aligned legal framework; (ii) Updating and revision of the document of strategic policies for the protection of biodiversity until 2030; (iii) Conducting inventories of habitats and species as an opportunity for more precise formulation of policies in the field of nature protection.

4. KEY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS AND BENEFICIARIES OF THE ACTION

The Action builds on previous projects led by the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania and extensive exchanges among all stakeholder groups relevant to PA management as listed below:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE)

The MTE oversees regulation concerning the environment, the sustainable use of natural resources, promotion of renewable resources, protection of nature and biodiversity, sustainable development and management of forestry and pastures, and the quality monitoring of water resources. It is the responsible authority for developing national legislation in compliance with EU nature protection *acquis*. It also defines the duties and responsibilities among the relevant authorities at the national level for the implementation of nature legislation and for the Birds and Habitats Directives (BHD).

The MTE is responsible for the Action. It is leading its development and it is the principal interlocutor. MTE is the Lead Beneficiary of the Action. Due to the close involvement of other national stakeholders, such as the National Agency for Protected Areas (NAPA), the National Environmental Agency (NEA), and the State Inspectorate of Territory Protection, as well as the municipalities in the PAs, the MTE will closely coordinate with them during the implementation of the activities.

The National Agency for Protected Areas (NAPA) and its Regional Administration of Protected Areas (RAPA)

Established in 2015 as a public state budgeted entity, designed as a dependent institution of the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE) NAPA employs 304 staff, of whom 24 are based in the

headquarters in Tirana and the rest are deployed in the 12 (counties) Regional Administration of Protected Areas (RAPA).

Each RAPA has a monitoring and a management section with a various number of specialists. NAPA is responsible for the effective management of the Albanian PAs system; for gathering and disseminating information related to PAs; promoting environmental education and public awareness for the protected areas in Albania; and supporting sustainable economic activities inside the PAs.

NAPA employs 304 staff, of which 24 are based in the headquarter in Tirana and the rest are organized into 12 regional directorates. As the operative arm of the MTE, NAPA and its RAPAs are the promoter and future implementer of the Action. They have actively contributed to the development of the Action by building on the achievements and experience from previous projects (in particular the [NaturAl](#) project). As the operative arm of the MTE, NAPA and its RAPAs are the promoter and implementer of the Action.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO)

It is responsible for national strategic coordination and planning, and regional development fund.

The Prime Minister Order (No 157) on 22 October 2018 revised the Integrated Policy Management Groups (IPMGs) and associated sectoral steering committees' structures for implementation of a broad sectoral/cross-sectoral approach to manage and coordinate policies of priority areas and sectors of special importance, as well as inter-sectoral programming through the formation of a sectoral / cross-sectoral management mechanism. The PMO is aware of the Action, supports its development, and will support its implementation.

The National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC) which is officially named 'State Agency for Strategic Programming and Assistance Coordination (SASPAC)', has the mandate for overall coordination of the programming of the IPA, as well as being the main counterpart of the European Commission for overall process of strategic planning, coordination of programming, monitoring of implementation, evaluation and reporting of IPA III assistance at programme level. For overall policy and assistance coordination the Government of Albania has an inter-institutional and operational organisational structure in place for managing the implementation of a broad sectoral/cross-sectoral approach through the Integrated Planning System (IPS), which acts as the main system that sets the tools and mechanisms for integrated public policy planning.

Other public institutions, such as the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MOI) for local Government Issues, etc.

PA management requires cross-sectorial participation and cooperation to harmonize/integrate policies, practices, and share data. This will result in policy consistency, realization of synergies and resolve conflicts.

The Sectoral steering committees (SSC) for Environment, Climate and Waste Management provide cooperation at the steering level, within the sectors of special importance for reforms and inter-institutional coordination. Thematic groups (TG) for Competitiveness and Innovation provide for cooperation at technical level including with development partners, within the specific sectors of the respective priority area.

Most of the relevant institutions and agencies directly or indirectly concerned by the management of the Albanian PAs have been addressed/engaged by past projects. As the Action is a continuation of past projects, they are informed and will be further engaged in the proposed new activities.

Relevant institutions for PAs will be called to contribute to the effective management PAs, improve enforcement, and enhance cross-sectorial synergies. They will benefit from training and awareness raising events.

The National Environment Agency

NEA is subordinate to the MTE and responsible for environmental protection. It is a public institution working in the whole territory through the Regional Environmental Directorates.

Its main mission is to support law enforcement on environmental protection, implementation of procedures related to environmental licences, and the collection and processing of information and other data on the environment at district and region level, as part of the national monitoring process.

Within its responsibilities, the National Environment Agency will support the implementation of the Action.

The National Forests Agency

Established in 2019 after the approval of the Forestry Policy Document, and subordinate to the MTE. In 2020 the new approved law on Forestry put a better frame for the work of the Agency. The Agency is responsible for guaranteeing the performance and standard for the national forest fund, establishing a suitable system for gathering the information and transferring know-how. Its work is linked with the local authorities that oversee the forest management.

The National Forests Agency will be called to participate and contribute to the Action at the relevant outputs, particularly through coordination and exchanges with the project team and Steering Committee.

The National Inspectorate of Territory Protection

The Inspectorate is subordinate to the Ministry of Interior and is responsible for controlling the territory in Albania, protection of territory and environment for illegal activities, and disciplining the construction work.

The National Inspectorate of Territory Protection will benefit from the training opportunities to enhance the nature protection law enforcement at PA level.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)

The MARD is the main government institution dealing with agriculture and rural development. The task included in this Ministry is the fishery sector. The Directorate for Fishery Aquaculture Policy and Program is part of the General Directorate of Regulation and Agriculture Compliance. It is responsible for providing all necessary services related to fishery infrastructure management and data on fishery and aquaculture, as well as ensuring law enforcement for the protection of fish resources in Albania.

The MARD will be called to participate and contribute to the Action, particularly through the PAs Steering Committees.

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy (MIE)

The MIE has four main pillars for his work: (i) energy, (ii) infrastructure development, (iii) industrial, (iv) urban development. The mission is to develop and implement policies for main infrastructure (road, water supply, wastewater, etc.), support of an efficient energy supply system in the country, utilization of energy and mineral resources in view of sustainable economic development and public utility, promotion of industrial development with environmentally friendly standards.

Local authorities

Local government authorities are responsible for planning and developing all socio-economic activities at local level. They are the main institutions managing most of the natural resources in their territory. There are 61 Municipalities in Albania. They play a central role in ensuring an effective management of PAs⁸. Municipalities play a central role in ensuring an effective management of PAs as they carry out socio-economic services in the local areas, promote the democratic process, serve as training ground for national political leaders and serve as medium of communication between the people and the higher tiers of government. Engagement, interest, and active contribution of municipalities to the Action varies from site to site. Special effort will be put to ensure full participation of relevant municipalities during the implementation of the Action. As key players in the effective management of PAs, local authorities will benefit from the Action, through training, awareness raising activities, and public-private partnerships.

Local communities

Communities living in, around or on the PA are directly affected by the PA establishment and management. Engagement, interest, and active contribution of local communities to the Action varies from site to site. Special effort will be put to ensure full participation of representatives of local communities during the implementation of the Action. As key players in the effective management of

⁸ This view is formalized in the so-called "Malawi principles" from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which stress that management should be decentralized to the lowest appropriate level (United Nations 1993), and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169, which states that indigenous people should be taken into account when decisions are made related to their livelihoods (The International Labour Organisation 1991).

PAs, local authorities will benefit from the Action, through training, awareness raising activities, and public-private partnerships.

Civil society organizations (CSOs)

Civil society has a powerful contribution to make in both framing and implementing effective sustainable-development policies. However, consultation and participation of CSOs in policy and decision-making processes in Albania remain low. Although the legal framework in place is considered progressive, its implementation is weak. CSOs are crucial partners of the Action as they have the flexibility, experience, and capacity to support the MTE and relevant authorities in delivering the Action, while keeping them accountable. Main CSO for PA management are aware of the Action and awaiting to be able to support its implementation.

Private Sector

Businesses might have an interest in the PAs as they operate around/within it, or are users of the natural resources protected by the PA. The private sector thus plays a crucial role in ensuring the effective management of PAs. Often, private sector support can leverage other donors and bilateral/multilateral grant support, creating a multiplier effect and enabling rapid scaling up. To date, businesses in relevant sectors for PAs (i.e., tourism, fisheries, agriculture, forestry) have been only marginally involved in the development of the Action. Efforts will be made to ensure increasing engagement, potentially leading to the signing of public-private partnership.

Scientific and technical research centres/Universities

Academia provides the scientific knowledge base at the basis of an effective PA management. Major Universities and research centres⁹ in Albania have been involved in previous projects (e.g., NaturAl) and are actively contributing to the development of the Action. The Action will help build the knowledge base on the Albanian biodiversity values, the capacity of local universities/research centres, as well as international exposure.

Media/Press

Journalism, news, and social media play an important role for creating environment awareness among people. Media have not been consulted during the Action preparation but will be an important player during its implementation to ensure public awareness of the role of PAs in sustaining the Albanian economy and society. Media/Press will benefit from the Action as they will be provided with increased knowledge about the Albanian biodiversity values and major threats to them, the role of PAs, and how the society can contribute to preserve biodiversity.

5. MAIN RISKS, MITIGATION STRATEGIES, AND ASSUMPTIONS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE ACTION

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
Lack of inter-institutional data sharing or collaboration.	M	A web-based platform will be created during the project to share data and information, as part of a dedicated management information system (MIS). Information technologies will be selected to suit the local context and do not restrict the transfer and communication of information. The existing experiences will be used.
Risk that the political commitments taken to improve the environment remain declarative and are not followed by a decisive course of actions.	M	Given the high number of social and economic sectors that play an important role in the environment and more broadly in addressing nature protection and climate action, effective policy coordination and implementation must be backed-up by a strong institutional cooperation and with a full involvement of stakeholders.

⁹ The Faculty of Natural Sciences (University of Tirana), the Faculty of Forest (Agriculture University), Centre for Flora and Fauna (Faculty of Natural Sciences), and several universities distribute in Albania are responsible for conducting scientific research, studies, and monitoring on biological elements (flora, fauna, habitats, forest, etc.)

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
Delays in the transposition of the relevant EU Directives into the national legislation	L	Engagement with the institutions from the beginning, including developing and supporting realistic transposition plans with on-going monitoring of progress.
High turnover of staff in the implementing agencies and lack of knowledge and experience in nature protection	H	As Albania starts the process of EU negotiations specific focus will be given to qualified staff contribution and in line with compliance in the area. In addition, technical guidelines will be developed to guide new staff that becomes involved in the action.
Lack of capacities and mechanisms to properly plan and mobilize funds for the long-term upscaling of conservation	M	A strategy to up-scale, sustain and to implement conservation measures will be developed. Assistance will be provided to support public institutions and authorities at all levels with medium term budget planning. The GoA approved in January 2021 the rules for the management of revenues generated by fees paid in PAs, and the establishment of the Special Fund for Protected Areas (SFPAs). This will allow the National Agency for Protected Areas (NAPA) to use the revenues generated by SFPAs and re-invest them in PAs.
Conflicting interests with other stakeholders (conservation vs use/development or wildlife vs humans) using the same shared natural resources.	M	These challenging situations will be mitigated by bringing people together in multi-stakeholder dialogues and through participatory PA management planning processes. On the other hand, efforts will be made in increasing the direct and indirect interest of the local communities in benefiting from the management of the areas by inviting relevant users groups to be part of the PA Management Committees, by ensuring their participation to training workshops to increase their understanding and awareness, and by promoting the development and implementation of circular and sustainable economic activities to the benefits of nature and communities through small grants and pilot projects.
Limited national technical capacity hinders project interventions.	M	The Action will initiate collaboration and foster exchange between national institutions and national/international research institutes. Bespoke technical assistance and training activities will be the backbone of the Action and intervene to ensure relevant institutions and authorities build and retain the capacity to effectively manage PAs.
		The income generated from the PAs will allow NAPA to employ extra staff and contract necessary expertise.
Limited commitment/buy-in from local communities.	L	PAs management committees will be renewed, and their role enhanced, with full participation of all stakeholder groups in the sustainable management of their territory/sea areas. Pilot actions implemented by CSOs will have to ensure the engagement of the PAs management as well as the participation of local communities and the business sector. Public-Private partnerships will be promoted as well.
Assumptions grouped by outputs		
Outcome 1		
In line with the EU accession process requirements, the Government of Albania (GoA) considers nature protection a priority.		
The national institutions shall ensure timely decision-making in the development of the relevant legislation and policy(es). Also, project decisions based on close cooperation and exchange with government authorities and concerned stakeholders shall be made in a timely manner to enable smooth implementation of the Action.		
The authorities shall ensure multi-stakeholder dialogue and the involvement of local communities, academia, and CSOs during the whole implementation of the Action through project established tools (PSC, thematic working groups, communication means, etc),		
There is a continuous commitment, steered and coordinated at the highest level of the government to ensure the implementation of the Action.		
The necessary domestic financial and administrative resources are effectively and efficiently mobilized.		

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
Output 1.1		
The GoA is fully committed to advance the EU accession process, providing human and financial resources to ensure the full transposition and effective implementation of the EU Nature Protection acquis.		
Output 1.2, 1.3, and 1.5		
The GoA is fully committed to implement the recommendations on improving the institutional capacities and on providing adequate budget allocations.		
Central government institutions and relevant on-going projects are ready to cooperate and share all the available technical, administrative, and institutional information regarding nature conservation.		
Output 1.4		
The main government partners dedicate sufficient time and staff at all levels to participate in and benefit from the project through project communication means and structure, as well as daily exchange with government partners on project progress..		
Output 1.4, 1.6, 1.7		
There is wide interest, participation, involvement, and commitment of the wider stakeholders, professional bodies, academia, local administrations, and CSOs The Government of Albania is committed to fight environmental crime in and out of the protected areas.		
NAPA/RAPA are fully dedicated and participate in the implementation of the communication and awareness campaign.		

6. ACTIVITY MATRIX

Activities	Description	Means	Duration	Key Performance Indicators	Assumptions
Output 1.1 - Strengthened capacities of the relevant institutions to effectively manage Protected Areas (PAs) according to the EU acquis and best practices.					
A. 1.1.1 Rapid assessment of the level of transposition and implementation of the EU Nature Protection Acquis (UNDP funded by Sida)	A functional analysis will be carried out of all the capacities existing in all ministries and agencies that are directly related with the transposition and implementation of Directives and Regulations (excluding two regulations EUTR and FLEGT).	Desk research with the use of technical expertise	6 months (YEAR 1 and 2)	Rapid assessment of the level of capacities and gaps in related public institutions related to the transposition and implementation of the EU Nature Protection Acquis completed	No radical changes in the institutional structure responsible for the nature protection policy making and implementation will happen during the project duration. The EU Accession process is a positive condition for the Activity.
A. 1.1.2 Support the development of new legislation to achieve full transposition of the EU Nature Protection acquis. (UNDP funded by Sida)	Some amendments in the Law on Protected Areas, Law on Biodiversity Protection and the related bylaws will be necessary to fulfil the transposition of the EU Nature Directives and enable the implementation of the EU Regulations. A plan for the implementation of BHD will be developed in line with the EU accession process.	Desk work with use of legal and environmental expertise	24 months (YEAR 1 and 2)	New legislation drafted A plan for the implementation of BHD prepared	The Ministry has the necessary readiness and capacities to follow the approval process. The EU Accession process is a positive condition for the Activity.
A. 1.1.3 Develop the secondary legislation, regulatory acts and mechanisms that are related to the implementation of nature legislation requirements. (UNDP funded by Sida)	Focus will be given on the secondary legislation (e.g., bylaws and relevant mechanism) that may be required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ by some of the Regulations (CITES, Zoo Directive, ABS, Seal etc.), to ensure their implementation, ▪ to build the financial management capacities of PAs, following the NAPA's Mid-Term Strategic Plan and Financial Plan for the PAs and enhancing its capacity to mobilise funding. The guidelines and implementing procedures detailed in the DCM no. 1156 and DCM 19 will be further developed and endorsed.	Desk work with use of IT, legal and environmental expertise	36 months (YEAR 2, 3 and 4)	Secondary legislation for an effective implementation of EU directives and regulations. Financial instruments/ mechanism for financial sustainability of PAs in place.	The MTE and related institutions have the necessary capacities to deal with the management of format and systems needed to implement such regulations. Political will and support provided by MTE
A. 1.1.4 Run a capacity and resource needs assessment targeting the PA Management Committees to ensure effective PA management and the implementation of Birds and Habitats Directive. (UNDP funded by EU)	A comprehensive assessment of all human and technical resources to ensure the effective management of PAs in Albania will be undertaken.	Desk research with the use of technical expertise	3 months (YEAR 1)	Capacity and resource needs assessment report finalised	No radical changes in the institutional structure responsible for the nature protection policy making and implementation will happen during the project duration.

Activities	Description	Means	Duration	Key Performance Indicators	Assumptions
A 1.1.5 Design, develop, and deliver a capacity building and career development certification program tailored to the priority needs of the target groups and aimed at further strengthening the effectiveness of PAs in Albania. (UNDP funded by EU)	Based on the needs assessment findings (A 1.1.4), a PA Management Capacity Building Training program, including a talent management strategy, will be developed targeting the relevant authorities for PA management, the PA Management Committee participants, as well as key stakeholders. At least 3 training workshops for 20 persons each will be organised per year. New manuals/modules will be developed and uploaded to the NAPA's e-learning platform (http://akzm.net/list-courses). A certification process for PAs and nature conservation staff, as well as a coordinated system of qualification for nature conservation professionals, will be also designed and institutionalised.	Desk work with the use of technical expertise Trainers and case studies Workshops logistics IT services Printing Travel	30 months (YEAR 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)	Manuals, toolkits, and training materials developed NAPA's e-learning platform updated At least 3 training per year At least 40 people trained per year	No radical changes in the institutional structure responsible for the nature protection policy making and implementation will happen during the project duration.
A 1.1.6 Assist the PAs management through the Youth4Nature Program. (UNDP funded by EU)	Based on UNDP experience, students or young graduates will be hired, based on an open procurement and established criteria. They will be involved in research work with Albanian University, follow Bachelor or Master degree works, monitoring, etc. They also will assist NAPA staff in different activities for example by helping with the Visitor Centres, while fostering participation, involvement and liaison among local partners, stakeholders and local institutions concerned. In addition they will get experience in NATURA 2000 research work.	Financial support to hire and equip the students/young graduates	30 months (YEAR 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)	At least 20 students/young graduates hired and equipped per year	An enabling legal framework is in place.
Output 1.2 - Revised and new protected areas management plans through assessment of biodiversity values and threats following Natura 2000 requirements.					
A 1.2.1 Support the revision and update of existing management plans, including business, communication, monitoring evaluation (M&E) plans. (UNDP funded by EU)	A detailed analysis of the existing Management Plans (MPs) will be carried out to identify gaps and areas of improvement/updates. The findings will be discussed with relevant authorities and respective Management Committees. Technical assistance will be provided to the Management Committees to fill the gaps and update the plans. Attention will be given to mainstreaming climate change to enhance the function of PAs as carbon sinks and their adaptability as required by the revised NDC for Albania (Nationally Determined Contribution). Up-to-date business plans will be also ensured for each MP, including the identification of opportunities for public-private-partnerships, gender equitable and inclusive community involvement, local private sector development opportunities.	Technical assistance (int and ntl experts)	24 months (YEAR 1, 2 and 3)	# number of MPs updated and completed Number and % of people engaged in management planning (Local government units (LGUs), FPUAs, Napas etc) and disaggregated by gender (the exact number to be decided during the inception phase)	No radical changes in the institutional structure responsible for the nature protection policy making and implementation will happen during the project duration.

Activities	Description	Means	Duration	Key Performance Indicators	Assumptions
A 1.2.2 Support the development of new management plans, including business, communication, M&E plans, for all PAs still lacking one. (UNDP funded by EU)	For those PAs that still don't have a MP, technical assistance will be provided to develop their 5-year MPs through participatory process. The MP will have clear annual action and business plans, as well as a communication strategy and Monitoring & Evaluation plans.	Technical assistance (int and ntl experts) Meeting logistics Printing Travel	24 months (YEAR 1, 2 and 3)	# number of new MPs completed Number and % of people engaged in management planning (LGUs, FPUAs, RAPAs etc) and disaggregated by gender. (the exact number to be decided during the inception phase)	No radical changes in the institutional structure responsible for the nature protection policy making and implementation will happen during the project duration.
A 1.2.3 Develop and implement specific Action Plans for the most vulnerable/important species. (UNDP funded by Sida)	Conservation Action Plans for 6 Species that have not been prepared and that are considered will be prepared in line with the EU and CBD requirements and in line with other countries.	Technical assistance (int and ntl experts) Meeting logistics Printing Travel	36 months (YEAR 2, 3, 4 and 5)	6 Species Conservation Action Plans drafted and submitted to MTE for adoption. Measures for Action Plans will be implemented	The MTE is willing to adopt Species Conservation Action Plans
A 1.2.4 Update the national reference lists of habitats and species types occurring in Albania. (UNDP funded by Sida)	The project will review existing data on habitat and species types from the reference lists and identify gaps. It will also support finalisation of the National reference lists of habitats and species types occurring in Albania through the contribution of other activities related to the Natura 2000.	Expert Meetings with technical experts and stakeholders (including at biogeographical level)	24 months (YEAR 4 and 5)	National reference lists of habitats and species types occurring in Albania finalised	Albania has the necessary human capacities to deal with the different types of habitats and species.
A 1.2.5 Develop and publish an Interpretation Manual of Albanian Habitats with guidance on conservation measures. (UNDP funded by Sida)	A habitat interpretation manual with specific notes on how to recognize habitats and determine their status (good, degraded) reflecting Albanian reality. The interpretation manual could also include guidance on management requirements/restrictions and conservation measures	Experts Meetings Printing, and design	10 months (YEAR 5)	Interpretation Manual of Albanian Habitats with guidance on conservation measures published	Albania has the necessary human capacities to deal with the different types of habitats and species and prepared this kind of manual.
A 1.2.6 Develop new data sets and GIS maps on distribution of habitats and species for at least 10 selected sites as SCI from the Preliminary list of Natura 2000 sites (UNDP funded by Sida)	The data collection activities will cover all species groups (plants, mammals, bird, reptiles, amphibians, fishes & invertebrates), but considering the huge existing knowledge gap on invertebrates, a particular attention should be placed on this vast group of species including many species listed in the Annex II and IV of the habitat Directive. Attention should be paid on developing the necessary missing expertise on the study of invertebrates by supporting specialisation of junior researchers. Research will also help to fill in ornithological data and identify Special Protected Areas (SPAs) according to Birds Directive.	Technical assistance (int and national experts) IT services Meetings logistics Equipment Travels Lab work	60 months (YEAR 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)	New data sets and GIS maps on distribution of habitats and species for at least 10 selected sites as SCI from the Preliminary list of Natura 2000 sites developed	Albania has the necessary human capacities, expertise and required time to deal with this load of work. Previous work carried out creates a positive condition
A 1.2.7 Complete the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form for selected sites (UNDP funded by Sida)	Based on the previous activity, the project will support the preparation of full data sets that will also include the Standard Data Forms and GIS data format for all selected sites. All data should be integrated into the information system.	Intl and national Experts IT expert Meetings logistics Equipment	6 months (YEAR 5)	Natura 2000 Standard Data Form for selected sites completed.	There is the required IT expertise and technical expertise to prepare the data

Activities	Description	Means	Duration	Key Performance Indicators	Assumptions
A 1.2.8 Develop a Road map for the finalisation of the Natura 2000 network in Albania (UNDP funded by Sida)	The project will support development of a “road map” for the establishment of the Natura 2000 network in Albania. This document will make a stock of existing knowledge and expertise and define the necessary resources (human and financial) and time frame to complete the process (national scale mapping of habitats and species, definition of sites, filling up the SDFs).	Expertise including technical biodiversity expertise	6 months (YEAR 5)	Road map on the finalisation of the Natura 2000 network in Albania developed	MTE is willing to comply with a roadmap related to the Natura 2000 process The EU Accession process is a positive condition for the Activity.
Output 1.3 - Performance monitoring system in place.					
A. 1.3.1 Preparation of a capacity building plan and delivery of related trainings for the enforcement of legislation related to nature protection and biodiversity (UNDP funded by Sida)	The project will give support for strengthening the capacities of the relevant authorities in preserving important habitats and species, including proper inspection and enforcement of the BHD. A brief assessment will allow to identify priority topics that might be addressed, such as conducting effective inspection and law enforcement and relevant reporting, appropriate assessment of plan and programs as required by Habitat directive (Art 6.3, 6.4), etc. Training workshops will be organised for target audience. Trainees will develop an effective and applicable monitoring program/ framework and respective protocols and tools for the maintenance of the species and habitats conservation status. Data assessed will be stored in a geo-referenced Information System which will constitute an organised repository of data for managing key numeric information allowing the establishment of an effective monitoring and reporting for the implementation of the BHD.	Desk work with the use of technical expertise IT services Printing Trainers and case studies Workshops logistics Travel	24 months (YEAR 3, 4 and 5)	Modules and manuals finalised Short term trainings, and on job support delivered At least 20 persons trained	There is a clear division of responsibilities for the nature and biodiversity law enforcement and inspection. Low turnover of staff.
A. 1.3.2 Provide necessary equipment to ensure effective monitoring and enforcement in the PA (UNDP funded by Sida)	Logistic SW/HW needs will be addressed by providing the necessary equipment for the monitoring, surveillance and law enforcement, reporting monitoring activities to relevant liable institutions.	Equipment	12 months (YEAR 2 and 4)	New equipment dedicated to monitoring and enforcement of the biodiversity are purchased	There are the necessary capacities and the proper procedures in place for the use of the equipment
A 1.3.3 Implement a national-wide PA management effectiveness system (building on the METT-4 methodology) (UNDP funded by EU)	The METT will be adopted as the official performance assessment tool for the system of PAs in Albania. NAPA will be assisted to apply this tool as an evaluation and reporting tool and ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation of PAs effectiveness against their objectives.	Intl and national Experts IT expert Meetings, logistics Equipment	60 months	Performance Monitor System developed	There are the necessary capacities and collaborations in place for the development of an effective system.
A 1.3.4 Conduct a training to introduce the Protected Areas Performance Monitoring System to relevant staff (UNDP funded by Sida)	Assist and build reporting capacities, through technical assistance, as required by EU quality international reporting.	Trainers and case studies Workshops logistics IT services Printing Travel	60 months	At least 2 training workshops organized per year	There are the necessary capacities and collaborations in place for the development of an effective system.

Activities	Description	Means	Duration	Key Performance Indicators	Assumptions
A 1.3.5 Ensure the participation of relevant staff in peer-to-peer exchanges of best practices in EU PAs/NATURA 2000. (UNDP funded by EU)	The engagement of Albanian stakeholders in peer-to-peer events, networks or workshops will be promoted and financially supported to enhance knowledge exchange.	Travel	24 months (YEAR 3 and 4)	At least 10 people attend 2 international events	No radical changes in the institutional structure responsible for the nature protection policy making and implementation will happen during the project duration.
Output 1.4 – Conservation and restoration measures foreseen in the management plans are implemented.					
A 1.4.1 Identify priority conservation measures and restoration of degraded habitats/ecosystems activities for immediate implementation form the management plans at selected PA level in line with gender equity, livelihood and socio economic criterial. (UNDP funded by EU)	Priority measures for the conservation and/or restoration of degraded habitats/ecosystems will be identified in the existing MPAs for immediate implementation in accordance with gender equity, livelihood, and socio-economic criteria. For each activity a clear timetable, budget and monitoring and evaluation plan will have to be drafted and approved by all interested parties.	Experts Meetings	6 months (YEAR 1)	List of priority activities to be supported by the Action	PAs have the human capacity and readiness to effectively implement the priority activities.
A 1.4.2 Support the implementation of selected priority measures from the MPAs (UNDP funded by EU)	From a preliminary analysis of the existing MPs activities related to habitat restorations and maintenance and supporting to sustainable traditional practices of local communities inside protected areas will be implemented	Investments (supplies and small works interventions), equipment, experts etc.	48 months (YEAR 2, 3, 4 and 5)	Equipment/services delivered Monitoring of implementation	PAs have the human capacity and readiness to effectively implement the priority activities.
A 1.4.3 Provide selected PAs with the equipment/resources needed to ensure effective management, monitoring in the PAs. (UNDP funded by EU)	Based on the needs assessment under A 1.1.4, PAs will be supplied with the required/needed equipment/resources.	Equipment	36 months (YEAR 2, 3 and 5)	At least 10 PA receive the necessary equipment/resources based on needs assessment	PAs have the human capacity and readiness to effectively implement the priority activities.
A 1.4.4 Identify ecosystem restoration activities to be implemented through small-scale works (AICS funded by EU)	Identify priority measures for the conservation and/or restoration of degraded habitats/ecosystems, monitor their implementation and draw key lessons learned to share them with relevant stakeholders for joint learning	Itl and ntl expertise Meetings Travels	60 months (YEAR 1,2,3,4,5)	At least 1 pilot action identified	To implement this Activity, AICS will seek the technical support, expertise and collaboration of the MASAF. Terms of cooperation with these public institutions will be set according to the Italian legislation (L.125/2014).
A 1.4.5 Implement small-scale works of ecosystem restoration (AICS funded by EU)	Forest management and reforestation/afforestation actions are implemented to improve adaptation capacities and to mitigate the widespread problem of soil erosion, caused by deforestation, fires, overgrazing and changing rainfall. Mixed techniques will be adopted, mostly based on the use of naturalistic engineering and nurseries, to reduce costs, environmental impact and allow easy implementation and reproducibility	Expertise, Equipment, Meeting	24 months (YEAR 3 and 4)	At least 3000 ha. of degraded habitats/ecosystems with restored habitats. The figure will be assessed	AICS will ensure the technical expertise with the Research Centre for Forestry and Wood within the Council for Agricultural Research and Analysis of Agricultural Economy (CREA).
A. 1.4.6 Awareness Raising to promote the role of PAs/Natura 2000 network in protecting Biodiversity and contributing to the sustainable development. (UNDP funded by EU)	Awareness raising activities, videos etc	Expertise, Audio visual products, Printing and Publishing	60 months	At least 5 videos, 10 publications, stories produced 20 activities	PAs have the human capacity and readiness to effectively engage
Output 1.5 - New management plans for the use of forest and non-timber forest products developed.					

Activities	Description	Means	Duration	Key Performance Indicators	Assumptions
A 1.5.1 Develop multifunctional forest management plans in selected forest formation within PAs .(AICS funded by EU)	Multifunctional forest management plans will be designed, with the inclusion of a database of forest and non-timber forest products for PA, mapping, and inventory Technical assistance will be provided to ensure that the national forest information system (AIFIS) establishes a standardised approach to ensure harmonised and comparative forest and pasture inventory at national level.	Int and national expertise IT services	60 months (YEAR 1, 2,3,4 and 5)	10,000 ha of forest areas with multifunctional management plans prepared	Actively involve NAPA and rely on key stakeholders, such as targeted municipalities and relevant forest use associations in the planning and decision-making process related to forest management. This will require close cooperation with the newly established National Forests Agency (NFA) and relevant municipalities. AICS will ensure the technical expertise in forest management with the Research Centre for Forestry and Wood within the Council for Agricultural Research and Analysis of Agricultural Economy (CREA).
A 1.5.2 Design and deliver capacity building activities targeting non-timber forest producers. (AICS funded by EU)	Major non-timber forest product producers will be supported and better organised with improved capacity for production and marketing.	Trainers and case studies Workshops logistics IT services Printing Travel	48 months (YEAR 1, 2, 3 and 4)	At least 10 training workshops for 20 non-timber forest producers organised	The beneficiaries have the absorption capacity in the ground to implement the grant scheme
Output 1.6 Support to civil society for environmental protection and restoration of protected areas					
A 1.6.1 Design, monitor, evaluate a Grant program in collaboration with MTE to identify and implement mechanisms in nature conservation and sustainable development of the PAs. (AICS funded by EU)	A Grant program will be designed and implemented in collaboration with MTE to identify and implement models of nature-based solutions and green infrastructure within protected areas and capacity building for topics related to the sustainable use of nature resources and their conservation. The grants and respective funds will be equally distributed geographically within the protected areas of the three macro-areas of Albania, north, center and south. Technical partnerships will be encouraged among the applicants and continuous monitoring activities will be ensured during the implementation phase	Expertise IT services Meetings Design and printing	60 months (YEAR 1-5)	# grants of up to 100.000 Euro/grant awarded Number of women and men directly benefitting from grants program (disaggregated by location, type of work done and organisations and/or individuals)	A multi criteria methodology will be applied to ensure quality in the process of planning and implementing projects and uniformity in the use of tools and documentation for the successful implementation and monitoring of projects and expenditure of funds allocated through the small grant program.
A 1.6.2 Implement the Grant program. (AICS funded by EU)	After the selection procedure, the funds are allocated to the implementing entities for the realization of the activities	Investments	18 months (YEAR 2 and 3)	Contracts signed with relevant partners, mid-term and final assessment reports completed, Activities are realized	The CSOs on nature protection have the absorption capacity in the ground to implement the grant scheme
Output 1.7 Nature-based solutions (focusing but not limited to nature protection /conservation and fighting of environmental crime) implemented					
A 1.7.1 Identify a activities to be implemented using nature-based solutions models (AICS funded by EU)	In the first year a baseline analysis to support the design of the nature-based solutions models will be conducted, identifying in accordance with project partners, institutions and relevant stakeholders the most relevant protected areas and the activities that will be implemented. Monitoring activities will be performed during the implementation phase	Int and national expertise Meetings Travels g	60 months (YEAR 1-5)	# nature-based activities – and their respective implementation sites - identified and agreed upon	To implement this Activity, AICS will seek the technical support, expertise, and collaboration of the University of Trento and the University of Genova (Italy).

Activities	Description	Means	Duration	Key Performance Indicators	Assumptions
A 1.7.2 Implement 6 activities using nature-based solutions models in selected PAs (AICS funded by EU)	After the activities are identified and agreed upon the different stakeholders, the implementation phase will start. The investments in the selected protected areas will be coordinated and monitored with the support of the technical experts and the involvement of the competent authorities, in order to ensure sustainability to the action and consolidate the ownership after completion of the project.	Expertise Meetings Equipment Works	36 months (YEAR 2,3 and 4)	# of nature based activities implemented in the selected sites	AICS will directly implement this activity with the support of procurement office and in coordination with international and local experts
A 1.7.3 Design and deliver capacity building activities on how Nature based solutions reduce/prevent environmental crime (AICS funded by EU)	Government institutions, professional bodies, private sector, academia, municipalities, and civil society organisations will be addressed with tailored programmes on the importance of NbS with relation to food security, climate change, water security, human health, disaster risk, social and economic development, tourism-related economic activities, effective Pas management and how to effectively tackle environmental crime	Trainers and case studies Workshops logistics IT services Printing Travel	60 months (YEAR 1,2,3,4 and 5)	At least 10 training workshops organised	The beneficiaries have the absorption capacity in the ground to implement the grant scheme

7. METHODOLOGY

This Action is financed by IPA-III funds and co-financed by Sida. The UNDP will implement the Action in association with AICS. UNDP will manage funds from IPA-III and Sida, while AICS will manage funds coming from IPA-III only. Both funds were committed following an assessment process that took into account the needs of the nature sector as a whole and tackling specific issues. As such, all activities to be funded by both sourced are complementary to each other and contribute to the Specific Objective of the Action.

The Action will deploy a combination of technical assistance, on-the-job training/capacity building activities, direct support to implementation, as well as communications initiatives to support the achievement of Outcome 1 - To improve the management effectiveness of the Albanian PAs.

To achieve Output 1.1, the Action will provide tailored technical assistance to strengthen the institutional set up and to advance the transposition of the EU Nature Protection *acquis*. International and local expertise will be mainly used to build and consolidate the capacities of relevant institutions and authorities, as well as key stakeholder groups (through the PAs management committees), through bespoke training programs and on-the-job assistance. A certification process for PAs and nature conservation staff, as well as a coordinated system of qualification for nature conservation professionals, will be also designed and institutionalized to validate the capacity acquired.

Building on previous successful experience of UNDP in cooperation with NAPA, young graduates from local Universities will be engaged in Visitors Centres operations at selected PAs, as well as daily the management activities which will involve juniors through Youth4Nature. This Program will link Universities through internships and further on direct involvement with protected areas of the young professionals to acquire hands-on experience in the various aspects of PA management, from biodiversity values monitoring to education activities at the visitor centres. The juniors are meant to fill the gap in human resources that all RAPAs are facing, while also to respond to the recommendations and lessons learned from the former Natural Project. Therefore, the background and hiring criteria will liaise up with disciplines like biology, nature science, tourism etc. They will get hands on experience by the ecosystem conservation and biodiversity protection experts involved with the project, and in a stepwise approach they get absorbed into RAPAs, attesting for sustainability of the action.

To achieve Output 1.2, technical assistance will be delivered to guide, inform, and support PAs authorities during the revision, updating, or development of the Management Plans (MP) for their sites. MP is the central mechanism to apply legislation and policy in each area. Management planning is a lengthy process that requires full commitment, coordination, and engagement of the relevant authorities, both at national and local level, and of representatives of all interested groups having a stake in the area. Experts will ensure that the impacts of Climate Change (CC) are correctly considered during the planning process to enhance both the function of PAs as carbon sinks and their CC adaptability, as required by the revised NDC for Albania (Nationally Determined Contribution). Annual Action and Business plans will complement the MP to ensure their effective implementation, including the identification of opportunities for public-private-partnerships, gender equitable and inclusive community involvement, and local private sector development opportunities. Technical expertise will be also used to build the knowledge base (i.e., data sets, GIS maps, manuals, actions plan) to support the process of establishing of the Natura 2000 network in Albania (Output 1.2). A “road map” for the establishment of the Natura 2000 network in Albania will make a stock of existing knowledge and expertise and define the necessary resources (human and financial) and time frame to complete the process (national scale mapping of habitats and species, definition of sites, filling up the SDFs). The staff of relevant authorities and key stakeholders will be invited to attend international peer-to-peer events and initiatives to enhance knowledge and experience sharing.

All the knowledge base that will be created through the scientific research in the pSCI for Habitats and Species will serve as a contribution to improve the PA Management Plans and the measures included in them. As such, it is important to have a synergy between the pSCI and PA that will be targeted from

the Action. This linkage will be identified and agreed during the Inception Phase in discussion with the beneficiaries as well.

Technical assistance and on-the-job training will be used to set up a system-wide PA management effectiveness system (Protected Areas Performance Monitoring System), building on the [Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool \(METT\)](#) and methodology (Output 1.3).

As the formulation of a PA MP does not end with the creation of the document itself, MP implementation will be ensured through direct investments and equipment (Output 1.4). Priority measures will be identified within the existing and new MPs and based on an agreed set of criteria (including, feasibility, national and local strategic priorities, replicability, etc.). Financial and technical support will be provided to the PAs for the implementation of the priority measures. From a preliminary analysis of existing MPs, the main areas of intervention identified so far are:

- *Habitat restorations and maintenance*
- *Supporting sustainable traditional practices*
- *Supporting working conditions and equipment for the PA administration*

Given the relevance of sustainable forest management within the PA system in Albania, the Action will provide technical assistance to develop multifunctional forest management plans in selected forest formation within Pas, ensuring a harmonized and comparative forest and pasture inventory is established at national level, while organizing and building the capacity of the local producers of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) (i.e., substances, materials and/or commodities obtained from forests other than timber) (Output 1.5).

Output 1.6 will further enhance the management effectiveness of PAs by investing in mechanisms for nature conservation and sustainable development developed and implemented by local CSOs or other actors through a Grant programme to the benefit of the PAs as well as the local communities.

In Output 1.7 six pilot activities will be identified and implemented using nature-based solutions models, consisting in specific hardware investments in selected sites within PAs, to be agreed following discussion and approval of all relevant parties. The proposed types of intervention should be in line with the strategic actions associated with the implementation of the Habitats (1992/43) and other related Directives of the EU and will concern both terrestrial and coastal/marine PAs. Capacity building activities will complete the action, targeting Nature based solutions potential in reduce and prevent environmental crime.

Finally, specific info, knowhow and evidences, pertinent to technical aspects of envisaged activities, will be delivered to diverse groups of intended stakeholders, namely involved and participating schools, local -regional NGOs, consultants /experts RAPAs authorities, etc. These disseminations will be developed and implemented to help the Action achieve the expected impact.

Besides the obvious effect in awareness raising for the importance and values of the Protected Areas in Albania, these interactions with the targeted groups, will easy and sustain intended results, in several project outputs such as:

1. in successfully transposing EU Nature Protection Acquis, particularly Birds and Habitats Directive, via participatory process of the concerned beneficiaries
2. improving PAs management planning tools, particularly management plans, business plans and financial plans
3. development of Manual of Albanian Habitats, GIS maps and SDF, through wide consultations, data collection, and compilations of necessary inputs and metadata
4. PAs monitoring system enabling exchanges for PAs staff, authorities and communities to feel inspired, and r support them to be able to implement and sustained the monitoring programs

Such communications efforts spread into explicit outputs, will contribute into enhancing overall awareness and communications and obtain the support of public opinion to better environmental resource management.

Best practices will be delivered for diverse groups of stakeholders, maximizing the visibility of the EU4Nature project, empowering benefits from its results and building for future challenges, embedding all these elements within the national PAs system.

8. IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

This Action is financed by IPA-III funds and co-financed by Sida. The UNDP will implement the Action in association with AICS (UNDP will manage funds from IPA-III and Sida, while AICS will manage funds coming from IPA-III only). Both funds were committed following an assessment process that took into account the needs of the nature sector as a whole and tackling specific issues. As such, all activities to be funded by both sources are complementary to each other and contribute to the Specific Objective of the Action.

A **Project Steering Committee (PSC)** will be established to steer the project implementation. The SC will include key beneficiaries i.e. the Ministry of Tourism and Environment and National Agency of Protected Areas as well as relevant national stakeholders and beneficiaries, representatives of the Contracting authority and donors. The SC will endorse project progress, strategically steer the project and support project team in solving bottlenecks in implementation.

Organizational structure and the Key project staff of the Action

STAFF	TYPE OF DEPLOYMENT	DURATION	TASKS
Project Manager	Local recruitment	60 months	<p>A Project Manager will be hired by UNDP to plan, organize, supervise, and direct the completion of the Action on time, on budget, and within scope.</p> <p>The incumbent's duties are outlined below and will be fulfilled in line with the prevailing UNDP rules and procedures as well as with due compliance with the UNDP internal control framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring effective project management of the assigned projects by maintaining the delivery of appropriate technical, operational, financial, and administrative outputs, while tracking the project progress through monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. ▪ Maintaining collaborative working relationships among key project partners and donors, through effective communication, consultation, and reporting. ▪ Aligning the project with EU, UN values and UNDP priorities. <p>The Local Project Manager will liaise with all project partners and be in continuous contact with the local authorities (e.g., MTE, NAPA and its RAPAs).</p>
National Technical Expert	Local recruitment	60 months	<p>A senior expert will be hired by UNDP to support the project team by providing updated knowledge on the main topics addressed by the Action. She/he will liaise and cooperate with all international experts hired within the Action, as well as the partners.</p>
Biodiversity Specialist	Local recruitment	60 months	<p>A biodiversity expert will be hired by UNDP to support the project team by providing contribution and expertise to Biodiversity with focus in Natura 2000.</p>
Project Assistant	Local recruitment	60 months	<p>A Project Assistant will be hired locally by UNDP to support project implementation, ensuring quality and results by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing support to projects implementation, guaranteeing quality, efficiency, and effectiveness. ▪ Supporting planning, monitoring and evaluation activities of the project, in articulation with the Local Project Manager.

Project Driver	Local recruitment	60 months	A driver will be hired by UNDP to provide transportation to intended project sites/ or intended project duties.
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Short-term experts

- UNDP			
Biodiversity Experts (EU funded and Sida funded respectively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribute to assessing the ecological and conservation status of targeted areas, updating the MPs, inputs on strengthening PAs and ecosystem management, water resource management, biodiversity conservation - Undertake a detailed assessment for the most sensitive ecological data from the targeted sites; desk studies of the existing data, data gathering on PAs ecology, climate change risk data, zoning and demarcation of sensitive areas, and development of regulatory, management and monitoring strategies/ plans. - Formulate coordinated ecosystems monitoring and assessment approaches / plans to support the implementation of the project. - Analyze climate change risk data to ensure that the definition of PA zones and permissible activities increase resilience to climate risks. - Work with stakeholders to collect inputs and review biodiversity data, technical specifications related to all aspects of the project, to elaborate relevant training content for PA management - Contribute to the project assessment of best practices along projects progress, encouraging an atmosphere of adaptive management in the project. - Support stakeholders and partners in accomplishing ecosystems protection and conservation activities in the targeted sites, and effective management system of pilot PAs, - Facilitate site visits and other activities, support the preparation of work plans and operation plans for the project 		
Natura 2000 experts (Sida funded)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide inputs on the identification, development and implementation of NATURA 2000. - Work with stakeholders to collect inputs and develop SDF. Propose appropriate ways to conserve the species and habitats whilst respecting the local socio-economic and cultural context. - Elaborate relevant training content for NATURA 2000 system. - Provide input on technical aspects related to biodiversity monitoring/BHD and NATURA 2000 process. - Identify & propose exchange of experiences and good practices on the management of different types of Natura 2000 sites. - Identify and promote the implementation of conservation actions for the most threatened habitat & species protected under the EU Habitats Directive - Support stakeholders and partners in accomplishing proposals for NATURA 2000 sites as wells other effective area-based conservation measures. 		
Legal Experts (EU funded and Sida funded respectively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft and prepare the process for adoption of all relevant BHD frameworks - Propose improvement of legislative aspects and regulatory framework relevant to the project. - Contribute to the preparation of the management plans, and other regulatory and bylaws set of documents - Evaluate the alignment with the EU acquis in the field of nature protection, in particular for the BHD, and their transposition status in the Albanian legislation. - Identify changes to existing laws and by-laws in supporting establishment and effective management of PAs. - Carry out an analytical review of the legislation related to protected areas, forestry, agriculture, fishery, aquaculture, biodiversity protection, hunting, wild fauna protection, territorial planning, tourism, and marine water protection from pollution and discharge. - Contribute to establishing a system for surveillance and monitoring of the network of PAs, - Draft specific amendments that remove legal barriers to effectively manage PAs, including stipulations on funding sources for budget allocations, revenue raised by PAs themselves and donor funding and establishing the legal basis for PAs to earn and retain self-generated income. - Organize, in collaboration with other project experts, a consultative dialogue involving inputs from government, non-government and research institutions in order to facilitate legal reform. - Contribute to the development and implementation of management plans, financing sustainability plans and business plan. 		
PA management experts (EU funded and Sida funded respectively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribute to the development and implementation of MPs and a business plans - Work closely with staff from the PA and local stakeholders, following standard consultative methodologies, to prepare the management plan and business plan. - Elaborate conservation recommendations related to climate change risks and increase ecosystem resilience. - Preparing guidance documents (NATURA 2000, monitoring roadmap, etc.) and participate as a trainer for the PAs staff. - Provide inputs to the site missions and development and completion of the SDF for the PA-s territory. 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give the appropriate orientations toward means for cost-containment and new income-generating measures that have proven to be successful in other countries and that can be adapted to the situation in Albania. - Facilitate in the development and implementation of action plans for species and habitats - Identification of conservation targets adequate for the specific PA-s, in collaboration with monitoring and Evaluation Expert and PA managers.
Monitoring and evaluation expert (EU funded and Sida funded respectively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparing a system for joint surveillance and monitoring of the network of PAs to track biodiversity impacts and management effectiveness. - Implement the system and accomplish monitoring activities in and around the PAs, enforcing PA regulations, collecting data on ecological and financial indicators, and collecting data to update the METT. - Secure coordination with relevant institutions (national and local) such as NAPA, RAPAs, and other state institutes that are responsible for monitoring based on the respective regulatory acts. - Document annual reports, monitoring reports, and results of field visits, as well as the findings of independent mid-term and final evaluations. - Identify ecological indicators to assess biodiversity impacts. - Identify financial indicators to track revenues generated and expenditures. - Identification of conservation targets adequate for specific PA-s categories, in collaboration with project Expert and PA managers. - Identification of infrastructure required for the parks administration to undertake monitoring. - Design of the monitoring system in terms of data entry and report generation. - Estimation of financial needs for setting-up the system; as well as elaboration of an inter-institutional collaboration plan (between research and administrative/ management institutions) in order to ensure the highest degree of professional standards.
Socio-economic experts (EU funded and Sida funded respectively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assist the biodiversity expert and PA management expert to consolidate studies for selection of the N2K sites. - Determine the relevance of the economic, social and development factors in the identification of the proposed sites. - Participate in discussions with local stakeholders and obtain their agreement to cooperate on the site's establishment. - Assess and provide a description of the economic development activities that affect the status of biodiversity within proposed sites. - Assess the expected budget of the PA management, analyse the current approach to funding protected areas in Albania and assess whether the available resources are likely to be adequate for meeting conservation needs of the proposed N2K sites. - Develop recommendations for sources of revenue to cover the expected budget.
GIS expert (Sida funded respectively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribute to the preparation of cartography of the targeted pilot sites, with the respective zoning, based on management and conservation principles, buffer zones for the existing sites, and most sensitive areas. - The Natura 2000 potential sites will also be mapped, the initial mapping will refer to NATURAL work, and then updated sites projections will be mapped. - Prepare habitat and species distributions cartographies relevant for the project. - Design digital maps using geospatial data and analyse spatial and non-spatial information, regarding risk assessment, climate change impacts, biodiversity and other relevant aspects proposed by the project manager.
Stakeholder engagement expert (EU funded)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare and/or revise the stakeholder mapping and analyse for the targeted sites. - Provide input to technical aspects of awareness raising and capacity building activities. - Support stakeholders and partners in accomplishing ecosystems protection and conservation activities in the targeted sites, and effective management system of pilot PAs. - Work with stakeholders to collect inputs and review regarding management and action plans. - Elaborate relevant workshop & training content for PA stakeholder engagement - Evaluate the management committees composition and propose revision if needed. Prepare engagement of relevant stakeholder's strategies.
Gender & social inclusion Expert (EU funded and Sida funded respectively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate to implementation of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion strategies throughout the project implementation - Facilitate the develop of the action plan and undertake capacity development activities in the targeted sites - In coordination with project staff, provide support to implement capacity building programmes for NAPA & RAPA-s and other relevant stakeholders - Provide gender analysis in preparing various reports in general and the Annual Report in particular - Prepare a gender and social inclusion action plan.
AICS	
AICS experts	<p>The short-term experts proposed by AICS include an Expert in ecosystem services to support the implementation of small-scale works of ecosystem restoration (A.1.4.5), a Forestry expert to develop multifunctional forest management plans within selected Protected Areas (A.1.5.1), an Expert in nature conservation measures to design, monitor, evaluate the grant program (A.1.6.1) and an Environmental</p>

	<p>expert to support the implementation of 6 nature-based solutions activities in selected Protected Areas (A.1.7.2).</p> <p>Experts involved by AICS will be selected by institutional implementing partners, i.e. University of Trento, University of Genova, Council for Agriculture Research and Analysis of Agro-economy (CREA) and Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests of Italy (MASAF). These four public bodies, as mentioned in Annex I, have been identified by AICS because of their outstanding expertise in their respective fields, and they will enter into institutional agreements with AICS in order to contribute to specific actions of the AICS project component</p> <p>CREA is the Council for Agricultural Research and Economics (Consiglio per la ricerca in agricoltura e l'analisi dell'economia agraria), an Italian public research body. CREA is divided into twelve Research Centres, one of which is the Research Centre for Forestry and Wood. The research action is targeted to five strategic areas, in relation to which the scientific experiences and skills of the Centre are focused: precision forestry; resilient management of forest ecosystems in response to environmental changes; enhancement of forest genetic resources; sustainable, resilient and adaptive forest tree crops farming; multi-objective monitoring and inventory of forest resources and urban green areas. In the frame of the project, the high expertise and competence of CREA will be pivotal for drafting the multi-functional forest plans and the foreseen activities of afforestation and reforestation.</p> <p>The University of Trento will be involved in the project activities addressing nature-based solutions models within inland protected areas and wetlands, through the DICAM - Department of Civil Environmental and Mechanical Engineering (Dipartimento di Ingegneria Civile, Ambientale e Meccanica). The research and training activities of DICAM are developed around various thematic areas in the perspective outlined by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Main topics are quality of the natural and built environment, sustainable management of resources, safety and innovation of products, identification of environmental protection and risk prevention as priority areas, also in relation to the scenarios of climate change, materials and innovative technological and construction solutions, efficient and sustainable structures and infrastructures, renewable natural resources and the efficient use of energy, protection and management of the landscape.</p> <p>The University of Genova will be involved in the project activities addressing nature-based solutions models within coastal and marine protected areas, through the DICCA - Department of Civil, Chemical and Environmental engineering (Dipartimento di Ingegneria Civile, Chimica e Ambientale). The research developed by DICCA is aimed at investigating and characterizing the effects of human-environment interaction and is involved in several projects of cross-border cooperation and technology transfer on environmental issues and related to safety of navigation. DICCA covers a broad spectrum of topics, such as oceanography and atmospheric physics, hydraulics, hydraulic and maritime construction and hydrology, and sanitary and environmental engineering.</p> <p>The MASAF - Italian Ministry of agriculture, food sovereignty and forests of Italy (Ministero dell'agricoltura, della sovranità alimentare e delle foreste) will be involved in the project for the identification of ecosystem restoration activities through the Directorate General for Sea Fisheries and Aquaculture (Direzione generale della pesca marittima e dell'acquacoltura), an institution already active on sustainable fishery policy and management in cooperation with Italian and Albanian organizations.</p> <p>All of the aforementioned institutions were selected not only on the base of their renowned expertise and competences, but also in consideration of their deep and long-lasting knowledge of the Albanian protected areas, consolidated through the involvement in AICS and EU financed initiatives in the last years.</p>
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Other project office costs

An Action office will be set up to perform the EU4Nature activities. In this regard, the Action budget (Project Management) includes the cost for necessary human resources, local office, equipment, supplies and logistics. These include: (i) equipment (computers, printers, camera and projector), (ii) furniture calculated for 5 staff positions as well as other local office costs such as: vehicle costs (including maintenance and fuel costs), travels, office rent, utilities, consumables, communication and audio visual equipment and other services.

Commented [UNDP BO1]: Aligned to the budget

9. INDICATIVE ACTION PLAN FOR THE FIRST YEAR

Activities	YEAR 1												Implementing body	
	Half-year 1						Half-year 2							
	Month 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
Inception phase														
Set up of project office and necessary logistics, hire project team members and relevant consultants for Year 1 activities. All inception phase activities as per DoA														UNDP and AICS
Output 1.1														
A. 1.1.1 Assessment of the level of transposition and implementation of the EU Nature Protection <i>acquis</i> .														UNDP
A. 1.1.2 Support the development of new legislation to achieve full transposition of the EU Nature Protection <i>Acquis</i>														UNDP
A. 1.1.4 Run a capacity and resource needs assessment to ensure effective PA management.														UNDP
A. 1.1.5 Design, develop, and deliver a capacity building and career development certification program tailored to the priority needs of the target groups and aimed at further strengthening the effectiveness of PAs in Albania.														UNDP
A. 1.1.6 Assist the PAs management through the Youth4Nature Program														UNDP
Output 1.2														
A. 1.2.1 Support the revision and update of existing management plans, including business, communication, monitoring evaluation (M&E) plans.														UNDP
A. 1.2.2 Support the development of new management plans, including financial, communication, M&E plans, for all PAs still lacking one														UNDP
A. 1.2.3 Develop and implement specific Action Plans for the most vulnerable/important species														UNDP
A. 1.2.6 Develop new data sets and GIS maps on distribution of habitats and species for 20 selected sites as SCI from the Preliminary list of Natura 2000 sites														UNDP
Output 1.3														
A. 1.3.3 Implement a national-wide PA management effectiveness system (building on the METT-4 methodology)														UNDP
A. 1.3.4 Conduct a training to introduce the Protected Areas Performance Monitoring System to relevant staff														UNDP
Output 1.4														
A. 1.4.1 Identify measures for the conservation and/or restoration of degraded habitats/ecosystems for immediate implementation from the MPs of selected PA level.														UNDP
A. 1.4.3 Provide selected PAs with the equipment/resources needed to ensure effective management, monitoring, and enforcement in the PAs														UNDP
Output 1.5														
A. 1.5.1 Develop multifunctional forest management plans in selected forest formation within PAs														AICS
A. 1.5.2 Design and deliver capacity building activities targeting non-timber forest producers														AICS
Output 1.6														
A. 1.6.1 Design, monitor, evaluate a Grant program in collaboration with MTE to identify and implement mechanisms in nature conservation and sustainable development of the PAs.														AICS
Output 1.7														
A. 1.7.1 Identify activities to be implemented using nature-based solutions models														AICS
A. 1.7.3 Design and deliver capacity building activities on how Nature based solutions reduce/prevent environmental crime														AICS

Commented [EP3R2]: This will affect the totals of forecasts as well.

Commented [VZ4R2]: 1. UNDP has already committed staff and technical experts to be enrolled immediately with the project start. They will be contributing and deliver since the project start the required expertise on all envisaged issues i.e. assessing and identifying information available, collection of missing information, data and metadata, namely review habitat and species data, the data available on all nationwide existing habitats and species of potential community interest will be reviewed to feed into other activities, approaching the sites and updating the information through interviews and meetings with the NAPA/ RAPAs experts /authorities, analyzing the information and cataloguing the data in order to serve for further exchanges, comprehensive information on specific sites, recent relevant studies; simultaneously anticipatory actions will be taken for establishment of partnerships with academic and non-governmental organizations for scientific data collection and analysis
2. Given that the project will be fully operational during the inception phase, operational, logistic and recruitment processes will be part of the work of project unit.

Commented [ZD(2)]: 1. According to this plan, not all experts will be recruited immediately but over the first 3 months. In the budget though, for the first year, 12 months have been forecasted for most personnel. Can this be clarified/rectified?
2. The logical framework below at section 14 of the DoA mentions that various targets will be finalised (validated) during the inception phase. However, here there is no mention of any operational work to be done during inception, only logistics and recruitment. This should be clarified/rectified.

10. SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ACTION

Financial sustainability

Conservation work is largely underfunded and severely limits conservation management. This holds particularly true in Albania where the chronic lack of resources for the adequate management of the PAs is further stretched by the need to increase the PA estate to adequately conserve biological diversity and ecosystem services, and where conservation funding often competes with other development objectives, such as infrastructure, education, and public health. The Action will build on the advancements of previous efforts (such as the GEF-funded “Enabling Financial Sustainability of PAs System in Albania” project) to further build the financial management capacities of the relevant authorities for PAs, while strengthening the mechanisms of the Special Fund for Protected Areas (SFPAs) to ensure its income is used directly for financing the management of PAs. The Action will also measure the Funding Gap for the system of PAs as a preliminary step to the development and implementation of effective strategies to address the funding gap, while individual PAs (20) will update or develop through participatory process detailed business plans, based on actual needs, feeding this information at national level.

Institutional and policy level sustainability

Law enforcement and surveillance are by far the most important management activities to ensure effective PAs, followed by building institutional and governance capacity. Enforcement also shows one of the strongest relationships to management effectiveness. The Action will further strengthen the institutional, legal and policy framework, as well as the capacity of relevant authorities. The Action will also support the development and implementation of secondary legislation, and accordingly build the capacity of PA staff (rangers), to effectively address environmental crimes. The Action will build on the efforts made by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to address measures against environment crimes in Albania, to support the national authorities, CSOs etc, to better understand environmental crimes, to build law and non-law authorities’ capacity, and to develop technical and awareness-raising tools to prevent, fight and prosecute these crimes. The intention is to improve the prosecution of environmental crimes through the cooperation with law enforcement agencies and judicial institutions, as well as to enhance synergies between NAPA and other relevant institutions and justice system.

Environmental sustainability

To maximize the potential of PAs, policymakers, institutions, authorities, and managers need information on the strengths and weaknesses in their management. The Action will set up a Performance Monitoring System that will feed information into the governance and management of the PAs to ensure the overall sustainability of nature conservation efforts. Its implementation requires inter- and intra-sectorial cooperation and engagement, and all relevant Albanian institutions will be called to closely participate. Additionally, the Action is committed to support the implementation of priority conservation and/or rehabilitation measures identified at PA level (within their management plans), as well as of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) proposed by local CSOs in support to the existing or newly established PAs. All deliverables, experiences, and lessons learned within the Action will be made publicly available, indicating the level of efforts and resources required to replicate such measures in the future. The NAPA’s e-learning platform will be the repository of the training manuals, tools, and case studies produced during the implementation of the Action, to the benefit of any conservation actors (CSOs, schools, etc.) in Albania. Transfer of knowledge and development skills shall be ensured by employing a variety of training techniques including workshops, on-job training, exchange visits, demonstration events, etc. and providing detailed training materials and documented toolkits. The project will establish close cooperation with the key beneficiaries, build ownership value to stakeholders and therefore increase staff motivation through institutionalisation of the continuous education and certification program. Full participation in developing tendering documentation as well as during supervision of the implementation of these works will provide useful capacities to institutions and ensure sustainability of performed works. Fostering effective participation and communication with other relevant stakeholders (civil society, local communities, and municipalities) will reinforce the sustainability of the implemented actions and provide long-term support for nature conservation efforts in Albania.

Finally, good cooperation and a strong working relationship between the project team and the direct beneficiaries will ensure a continuous upgrading of the capacities of the PAs' managers as well as a sound maintenance plan for the infrastructure, equipment and tools provided by the Action.

Awareness and Communication Activities as part of the Action sustainability strategy the project will include communication activities to promote the interventions throughout the implementation of activities reflected in the budget.

11. HOW THE ACTION WILL MAINSTREAM RELEVANT CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities

Gender inequality has been widely identified as one of the barriers for conservation and sustainable development¹⁰. Existing gender inequality can be observed in many ways. From the limited number of women in leadership positions, professional jobs, and in field positions such as rangers and protected area managers, to restricted women's access to benefits at all levels, perpetuating poverty and undermining sustainable resource use and management. The Action will operate to ensure detail in reporting and developing a baseline gender needs assessment and by establishing mechanisms that measure cumulative progress toward equal participation of women. This will improve the understanding of gender equality in PA conservation and management in Albania, while helping achieve equal participation in decision-making regarding land/marine use and the fact that women's voices are often absent or underrepresented regarding community and national level political decisions regarding natural resource utilization and climate change adaptation. Lack of equality has indeed proven to affect the quality of long-term planning and the development of diverse approaches to conservation.

The proposed Action will be designed to assess, address, mainstream and promote gender equality in nature conservation. To ensure this aspiration a gender needs assessment linked to the project will be carried out. It serves the following purpose:

- Develop an overall gender analysis during inception phase which all parts of the project can make use of and which will contain: links between nature conservation and gender equality, gender equality and rural development in Albania, gender equality legislation related to local administration (i.e. the quota requirement which impact on consultations), and to the degree feasible identify actors working with a gender perspective (women's right organisations), and actors who have been trained on gender equality already (in other projects).
- Based on the analysis, concrete sets of gender mainstreaming activities will be developed within relevant Action level results and activities presented as a gender action plan (GAP) for the Action implementation. The GAP will provide an assessment of each result, propose lower-level indicators (as needed) which the Monitoring Evaluation and Learning process will monitor and report upon as well as who should do what types of gender mainstreaming activities (internal/external). Some foreseen activities which require mainstreaming are already identified (others will be identified in the needs assessment work), such as: engagement for the development of management plans, promotion campaigns ensuring both women and men, girls and boys are reached, development of policies and of training activities.

Environment and Climate change

By enhancing the capacity of national stakeholders to plan and implement conservation and restoration measures, the Action will help preserve, if not improve, the ecological conditions of the areas with the highest biodiversity values in Albania, while indirectly enhancing the overall resilience of the country to climate change. By seeking public-private partnerships in support of PA management, the Action will address the need to further the engagement of the private sectors in nature conservation as a critical agent of innovative and technological solutions, as well as a source of resources to meet Albanian global environmental challenges.

The Rights Based Approach

Changes in the environment and natural resources have the greatest impact on people living in poverty, whose resilience to such changes is weak. The Human Rights Based Approach provides the legal ground

¹⁰ For example, international conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), have acknowledged the importance of gender equality in biodiversity conservation. In 2014 parties to the CBD adopted decision XII/17, Mainstreaming gender considerations into the CBD which "recognizes the importance of gender considerations to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets."

and principles to guide work for people living in poverty. The Action shall integrate the rights perspective into the planning process, based on existing EU and Albanian legislation, while considering progressive standards. Extensive non-discriminatory consultation and participation is foreseen with allocated time and budget. Emphasis is placed on identifying and involving vulnerable groups. Inclusive partnership with local organizations is supported to empower also the most vulnerable and marginalized groups to expand their democratic ownership over policies and initiatives affecting their lives.

Engagement with Civil Society

The role of Civil Society is essential to build upon existing projects and experience from the field in Albania. Albanian CSOs provide the stability and continuity needed to advance nature protection processes, as well as fill capacity gaps within the public sector in a lean, flexible, and creative way. CSOs can also play a mediator role between the public and the private sector, enhancing collaborations and engagement of relevant businesses in and around PAs. Community resilience will be improved through the creation of platforms for participation in the management of PAs, as a long-term mechanism to ensure participatory decision-making and shared ownership. CSO engagement will also be fostered through training activities, direct investment in nature-based solutions, and other interventions, to the benefit of PAs and local communities, and awareness raising activities.

Conflict resolution

Competing demands for use of and resources in PAs will always lead to some form of conflict. The extent and duration of the conflict usually depends on the context, the diverging interests, and the ability of the PA management bodies to manage such conflicts. In Albania, potential conflicts include confrontation between local communities and conservation groups with hydropower/tourism project developers within PA or sites defined as potential Natura 2000 sites. Potential conflicts will be mitigated by adopting a participatory process to PA management planning. Existing literature has shown participatory process and multi-stakeholder dialogue to be both crucial for successful PA management. Staff of relevant PA authorities will be trained to ensure that potential conflicts at site level are mitigated before the uprising tensions may become violent.

12. PARTICULAR ADDED-VALUE ELEMENTS

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), bring complementary experience in nature protection and project management.

UNDP brings to the Action its ability to clearly articulate the role of biodiversity and nature as part of the global efforts to achieve sustainable development. UNDP can increase public, business, and governmental support for biodiversity conservation, mobilize national and local government actors, and mainstream biodiversity in national and local development, as well as sectoral and fiscal, planning processes and practices. Furthermore, UNDP, with its large country-level nature portfolio (US\$3.2 billion in grant funding and \$12.5 billion in co-financing, supporting 438 projects in 138 countries, - in 2021) - combined with a set of global projects linked to country level work - can connect people on the ground to national, regional, and global decision makers and influencers, while fostering exchange and learning between communities, landscapes, and governments.

The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation - AICS Tirana brings to the Action their understanding of the EU nature protection *acquis* and the EU-accession requirements, providing technical and financial support to accelerate the process of integration to the EU. The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation - AICS Tirana has played a particularly central role in supporting the Albanian institutions on issues concerning PAs management effectiveness, the enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage through eco-tourism, while promoting the socio-economic development of the Albanian society.

Since 2017 ongoing Sida has strengthened the organization and capacities of the MTE, and of relevant authorities, to plan and coordinate the activities needed to reach EU-standards under the Support to Albanian Negotiations in Environment, Chapter 27, "SANE 27" program. SANE 27 also supports the

dialogue between Albanian partners and EUD on IPA-programming and other strategic issues including EU4Nature and EU4 Circular Economy and Green Growth.

13. MONITORING AND EVALUATION, AUDIT

UNDP in Albania and AICS will assume the full responsibility and accountability for the overall management of the Action, including monitoring and evaluation of interventions, achieving of the objectives and specified results, and the efficient and effective use of resources.

The unified Programme Steering Committee (PSC) will be established to oversee and coordinate the operations. Based on the project's initial plan and budget as well as on monitoring data, the PSC oversees the project's implementation and takes all the necessary strategic decisions. It will provide policy guidance and recommendation regarding the Action strategy and objectives, receive, and comment semi-annual reports, approve annual plans of operation and reports. The PSC will convene at least twice a year, and upon necessity.

The monitoring responsibilities (including data to be collected, tools and frequency of monitoring activities) will be managed by the Action team. Annual and final reports will be prepared by the UNDP and submitted to the EU Delegation. Ad hoc updates will be produced during the implementation period.

The UNDP operational system is composed of an accountability framework and an oversight policy. The accountability framework underscores the commitment of UNDP to results-based performance management, as well as to the shared values of accountability and transparency. The oversight policy of UNDP includes conducting independent internal and external audits providing assurances to the Executive Board and the Administrator that functional systems of internal controls are in place, including evaluation of the policy framework, efficient utilization of resources, and adherence to professional and ethical standards. Government counterparts participate directly in the design, as well as in the implementation and monitoring of UNDP activities through joint project boards, regular meetings with action staff to review the results achieved and to take decisions on future actions.

14.LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

<i>Results</i>	<i>Results chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline (value & reference year)</i>	<i>Target (value & 2027)</i>	<i>Sources of data</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
Impact (Overall objective)	To protect and conserve through a well-connected and effective system of protected areas and other area-based conservation measures at least 25 per cent of the Albanian territory (at land and at sea), by 2030, with the focus on areas particularly important for biodiversity.	% of territory (at land) of Albania under a well-connected and effective system of protected areas.	20 %	25 %	Report on assessment of protected areas of Albania/Data on Protected areas in Albania.	<i>Not applicable</i>
		% of territory (at sea) of Albania under a well-connected and effective system of protected areas	1 %	4 %	Report on assessment of protected areas of Albania/Data on Protected areas in Albania.	
Outcome (s) (Specific objective(s))	Outcome 1 - Improved management effectiveness of protected areas.	% of total protected areas under good management effectiveness score (according to METT)	30 %	55 %	Scores of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)	The Albanian Government, in line with the EU accession process, considers nature conservation a priority. The national institutions shall ensure the timely decision-making in the development of the relevant legislation and policy(es). Also, project decisions shall be made in a timely manner to enable smooth implementation. The authorities shall ensure the involvement of local communities, academia, and civil society environmental organisations during the whole implementation of the Action.
Outputs	Output 1.1 - Strengthened capacities of the relevant institutions to effectively manage Protected Areas (PAs) according to the EU acquis and best practices.	Number of trained staff (disaggregated by age and sex) who have improved their professional skills and capabilities.	40	80	Action implementation reports.	The Government of Albania is fully committed to implement the recommendations on improving the institutional capacities and on providing adequate budget allocations.
	Output 1.2 - Revised and new protected areas management plans through assessment of biodiversity values and threats following Natura 2000 requirements.	Number of protected areas with revised management plans with foreseen climate change mitigation and/or adaptation measures.	0	10 ⁱ	Management Plans reports with Habitats maps.	Central government institutions and relevant on-going projects are ready to cooperate and share all the available technical, administrative, and institutional information regarding nature conservation.

<i>Results</i>	<i>Results chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline (value & reference year)</i>	<i>Target (value & 2027)</i>	<i>Sources of data</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
		Number of protected areas with new management plans following the Natura 2000 model, with foreseen CC mitigation and/or adaptation plans	0	10 ⁱⁱ		
		Area (Hectares) of habitats and species mapped.	0	30 000		
	Output 1.3 - Performance monitoring system in place.	Number of annual performance reports by NAPA/RAPA.	0	1 report NAPA 12 reports RAPAs	NAPA/RAPA annual reports.	The main government partners dedicate sufficient time and staff, at all levels, to participate in and benefit from the project.
	Output 1.4 - Conservation and restoration measures foreseen in the management plans are implemented.	Area (ha) where any number of conservation measures have been implemented.	0	10 000ha.	Action implementation report.	There is wide interest, participation, involvement and commitment of the wider stakeholders, professional bodies, academia, municipalities, and civil society organisations. The Government of Albania is committed to fight environmental crime in and out of the protected areas. Relevant authorities are fully dedicated and participate in the implementation of the communication and awareness campaign.
		Area (ha) of restored habitats.	0	Minimum 3 000 ha.		
	Output 1.5 - New management plans for the use of forest and non-timber forest products developed.	Area (Hectares) of forest areas with new management plans with foreseen climate change mitigation and/or adaptation measures	0	10 000 ha.	ALFIS database.	Central government institutions and relevant on-going projects are ready to cooperate and share all the available technical, administrative, and institutional information regarding nature conservation.
	Output 1.6 - Support to civil society for environmental protection and restoration of protected areas	Number of activities implementing environmental protection and restoration of protected areas solution models.	0	6 ⁱⁱⁱ	Action implementation report	There is wide interest, participation, involvement and commitment of the wider stakeholders, professional bodies, academia, municipalities, and civil society organisations. The Government of Albania is committed to fight environmental crime in and out of the protected areas.

<i>Results</i>	<i>Results chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline (value & reference year)</i>	<i>Target (value & 2027)</i>	<i>Sources of data</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
						NAPA/RAPA are fully dedicated and participate in the implementation of the communication and awareness campaign.
	Output 1.7 - Nature based solutions (focusing but not limited to nature protection /conservation and fighting of environmental crime) implemented	Number of activities implementing nature-based solution models	0	6 ^{iv}	Project implementation report	

ⁱ The number will be further validated during the inception phase

ⁱⁱ The number will be further validated during the inception phase

ⁱⁱⁱ The number will be further validated during the inception phase

^{iv} The number will be further validated during the inception phase