

# Sustainable Future for Shar-Korab-Koritnik

Implementation of model projects to support sustainable development and nature conservation in the transboundary Shar-Korab-Koritnik region along the Balkan Green Belt

Project duration: April 2020 – January 2024



Figure 1: View on Korab Mountain in Albania (© Sandra Wigger)

## Final Report

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## Content

<b>List of figures</b> .....	2
<b>1. Summary</b> .....	3
<b>2. Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>3. Activities January 2023 until January 2024</b> .....	6
3.1 Model projects .....	6
3.1.1 Implementation of model projects .....	6
3.1.2 Support and monitoring of model projects .....	12
3.1.3 Evaluation of model projects .....	12
3.1.4 Exchange of actors .....	12
3.1.5 Cross-border activities .....	13
3.2 Overarching activities.....	14
3.2.1 Assessments & Guidelines .....	16
3.3 Project management.....	16
<b>4. Public Relation &amp; Communication</b> .....	17
<b>5. Results &amp; Lessons Learned</b> .....	18
<b>6. Conclusions &amp; Outlook</b> .....	22
<b>7. Annex</b> .....	23

## List of tables

Table 1: Overview of the 13 implemented model projects .....	7
Table 2: Overview of achieved objectives of the model projects.....	18

## List of figures

Figure 1: View on Korab Mountain in Albania .....	1
Figure 2: Map of the Shar-Korab-Koritnik mountain range in the -tri-border area between Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia (alphabetical order) .....	4

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## 1. Summary

The Shar-Korab-Koritnik mountain range in the border area of Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia is a cultural landscape with high biodiverse open landscapes as well as large and unfragmented forest areas – it's a pearl along the European Green Belt ([www.europeangreenbelt.org](http://www.europeangreenbelt.org)). The landscape and its flora and fauna depend on an ecological management and usage, and at the same time the local people depend on its resources and ecosystem services to secure their livelihood. Our vision for the region is the long-term conservation by a competent local population that advances the sustainable development of the region based on a wise use of natural resources.

The implementation of the project was very successful and contribute to the sustainable development as well as reduction of threats to biodiversity in the region of Shar-Korab-Koritnik with the local population as main driver. In the frame of this project, we created a strong foundation for our vision along the European Green Belt with the implementation of 13 model projects regarding sustainable agriculture and tourism in the Shar-Korab-Koritnik region. The model projects were implemented by 15 local organizations or businesses between September 2020 and August 2023, involving over 950 further local people in the activities.

The model projects have illustrated different possibilities of using the natural and traditional values of the region for a nature-friendly income generation. The model projects are already a great success with various positive effects for the region through fostering the sustainable use of natural resources, improvement of degraded areas, knowledge generation and dissemination as well as strengthening of the local civil society and cross-border exchange. Through this, we enabled local people to take responsibility and building a sustainable future for the Shar-Korab-Koritnik region.

In total, the preservation of the region requires the protection through adequate protected area management as well as the sustainable use of the natural resources by local people. Biodiversity protection can only be ensured in the long term if local people possess respective knowledge and can secure their livelihood with a sustainable use of the natural resources.

## 2. Introduction

The mountain range Shar-Korab-Koritnik is situated in the trilateral border area of Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia (see figure 2). It is one of the pearls along the Balkan Green Belt. The mountain range possesses a valuable cultural heritage reflected in the specific landscape formed by traditional land use, such as transhumance. The area has a high biodiversity, represented by a large number of endemic, rare and relict species.



Figure 2: Map of the Shar-Korab-Koritnik mountain range in the -tri-border area between Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia (alphabetical order)

The income level of the local population is low and they depend on the use of natural resources in different ways. The assessment done in the previous DBU funded project in 2019 showed that the main problem in the region is the overexploitation of different natural resources (e.g. soil, wild plants & animals, timber) as well as the direct destruction of habitats (e.g. constructions). Pressure on the natural resources is constantly increasing and expanding into the remote areas of the mountain, thus threatening to damage the natural as well as cultural heritage irreversibly. The local population contributes to the main threats due to lack of knowledge, missing awareness as well as education, which leads to an unsustainable use

of the natural resources. This is further intensified through insufficient sources of income for local people and lack of opportunities, leading also to illegal activities as well as land abandonment and depopulation of the rural mountain areas. Additionally, in this region, the traditional practice of seasonal pastoralism is slowly decreasing due to the lack of interest among the younger population to continue this practice, and a constant struggle with market prices and hard mountain conditions for traditional sheep breeding. Consequently, preservation of the region does not only require the protection of biodiversity, but complementary also the sustainable use of natural resources. Only if both are given, local people will be able to secure their livelihood.

The **vision** of the project is to prepare the basis for sustainable development of the region and at the same time enable a sound and long-term conservation of the outstanding mountainous landscape with the local population as active drivers in both regards.

The project **goal** is to contribute to a sustainable regional development, combined with the reduction of threats to biodiversity in the Shar-Korab-Koritnik region with the local population as main driver.

The project has the following **objectives**:

- Support of sustainable regional development
- Increasing engagement of local people
- Reduction of threats to biodiversity
- Improvement of habitats
- Strengthening of transboundary cooperation, learning and exchange
- Increasing visibility of the transboundary area

Main project components are the implementation of model projects by local actors in the topics of livestock and beekeeping, cultivation as well as tourism. Different supporting cross-border activities will further improve the implementation as well as the transboundary cooperation, learning and exchange between the model projects. This will connect the regional level of the respective topic with the local model projects and enhance their positive effect. Additionally, the visibility and development of the region will be supported also on an overarching level to further enhance the transboundary dimension.

### 3. Activities January 2023 until January 2024

In this chapter the activities during the reporting period are described, ordered after the three project components: model projects, overarching activities and project management.

#### 3.1 Model projects

##### 3.1.1 Implementation of model projects

The 13 model projects regarding the topic's cultivation, beekeeping, livestock keeping and tourism were implemented by 15 local organizations or businesses between September 2020 and August 2023.

The following table gives an overview of the model projects and the implementation of activities.

Detailed information of each model project is illustrated in factsheet – see [Annex A](#).

During 2024, a design for the factsheets will be developed and they will be published.

The products of produced in the frame of the model projects are included in [Annex B](#), including different brochures, leaflets, assessment report.

The color code regarding the implemented activities:

- Green:** Activity was implemented
- Yellow:** Different activity was implemented or supported instead
- Red:** Activity was not implemented

Table 1: Overview of the 13 implemented model projects

Country	Organization	Topic	Titel	Spend Budget	Planned activities
AL	Forest and Pasture Use Association, Tomin-Diber; until Nov. 2022;  GLV Integrimi; from Dec. 2022	Beekeeping	Contemporary beekeeping methods as an added value to the Natural Park Korab-Koritnik, Albania	20.208,57	<u>Result 1: Increased knowledge and capacity of local farmers</u> Activity 1.1: Brochure about beekeeping Activity 1.2: Capacity building of beekeepers Activity 1.3: Awareness raising in schools Activity 1.4: Study visit to a good example beekeeper in Kosovo <u>Result 2: Improved conditions for farming</u> Activity 2.1: Support of local farmers with beehives and equipment Activity 2.2: Afforest of agriculture land with chestnut
MK	Association Wild Iris	Beekeeping	Beekeeping as a vital input for sustainable agriculture in the Sharr Mountain region, North Macedonia	22.418,89	<u>Result 1: Increased knowledge and capacity of local farmers</u> Activity 1.1: Situation analyses Activity 1.2: Study visits Activity 1.3: Cross-border exchange Activity 1.4: Brochure about bee keeping → Transboundary information material was supported <u>Result 2: Improved conditions for farming</u> Activity 2.1: Support beekeepers with necessary equipment <u>Result 3: Increased income opportunities for local farmers</u> Activity 3.1: Showcase bee products in Info Center in Tetovo Activity 3.2: Construction of a bee hostel <u>Result 4: Increased knowledge and awareness of general public</u> Activity 4.1: Video production Activity 4.2: Social media content

KS	Bletaria Etniku	Beekeeping	Beekeeping & Biodiversity in the municipality of Prizren, Kosovo	20.241,57	<p><u>Result 1: Improved conditions for farming</u></p> <p>Activity 1.1: Preparation of land</p> <p>Activity 1.2: Improvement of honey processing</p> <p><u>Result 2: Increased knowledge and awareness</u></p> <p>Activity 2.1: Workshops about bees and beekeeping</p>
AL	<p>Forest and Pasture Use Association, Shishtavec - Kukes</p> <p>Association for Environmental Protection and Tourism Development (MMZHT)</p>	Cultivation	Cultivation of the Great yellow gentian ( <i>Gentiana lutea</i> ) in Kukes, Albania	19.467,45	<p><u>Result 1: Increased awareness and capacity of local people</u></p> <p>Activity 1.1: Production of leaflet on <i>Gentiana lutea</i></p> <p>Activity 1.2: Meetings with local communities</p> <p>Activity 1.3: Trainings of farmers on cultivation of <i>Gentiana lutea</i></p> <p>Activity 1.4: Study visit to good examples</p> <p><u>Result 2: Improved conditions for farming</u></p> <p>Activity 2.1: Support of local farmers</p> <p><u>Result 3: Improved protection of natural resources</u></p> <p>Activity 3.1: Planting of <i>Gentiana lutea</i> in the natural habitat</p>
MK	Initiative for Civic Integration (ICI)	Cultivation	Education of an environmentally conscious generation in schools in Gostivar, North Macedonia	26.552,93	<p><u>Result 1: Increased knowledge and awareness of students and teachers</u></p> <p>Activity 1.1: Preparatory meetings</p> <p>Activity 1.2: Visit to the botanical garden of the faculty in Skopje</p> <p>Activity 1.3: Construction and equipment of two botanical gardens</p> <p>Activity 1.4: Cultivation of the botanical gardens</p> <p>Activity 1.5: Formation of two eco-clubs</p> <p>Activity 1.6: Study tours with the eco-club</p> <p>Activity 1.7: Development of a teaching manual → Guide regarding cultivation of herbs &amp; aromatic plants</p> <p><u>Result 2: Increased knowledge and awareness of general public</u></p> <p>Activity 2.1: Information boards for the botanical garden</p> <p>Activity 2.2: Production of a documentary film</p> <p>Activity 2.3: Public final event → Video production was enhanced</p>



AL	Young Environmental Experts Association (SHERM Albania)	Cultivation	Protection and Cultivation of Medical and Aromatic Plants in Diber, Albania	18.394,84	<u>Result 1: Increased knowledge and capacity of local people</u> Activity 1.1: Situation analyses Activity 1.2: Development of a manual on MAP Activity 1.3: Trainings of MAP farmers and collectors Activity 1.4: Study visit <u>Result 2: Increased income opportunities for local farmers</u> Activity 2.1: Supporting of farmers in MAP cultivation
KS	Private Forest Owners Association "Guri i zi" Dragash Kosovo	Cultivation	Protection of MAP and Cultivation of non-timber forest plants in Dragash Region, Kosovo	16.999,47	<u>Result 1: Increased knowledge and capacities of farmers</u> Activity 1.1: Description of Situation Analysis Activity 1.2: Develop a manual on MPAs for farmers and collectors Activity 1.3: Training of MPA farmers and collectors <u>Result 2: Increased income opportunities for local farmers</u> Activity 2.1: Identification of farmers and cultivation opportunities Activity 2.2: Supporting farmers in MPA cultivation Activity 2.3: Training of beneficiary farmers and their collaborators Activity 2.4: Study visit of cultivation farms
AL	Agro-Eco Dibra	Livestock	Connecting livestock keeping and tourism in Diber, Albania	19.567,60	<u>Result 1: Increased knowledge and capacity</u> Activity 1.1: Situation analysis of livestock keeping and agritourism Activity 1.2: Study visit to a good agritourism example <u>Result 2: Improved conditions for local farmers</u> Activity 2.1: Support of local farmers Activity 2.3: Improvement of water reservoirs Activity 2.4: Revitalization of pastures <u>Result 3: Increased income opportunities for local farmers</u> Activity 3.1: Visit of tourism agencies Activity 3.2: Participation in regional fairs

MK	CED	Livestock	Supporting Shar Planina's farmers for a sustainable future, North Macedonia	21.121,81	<u>Result 1: Improved conditions for farming</u> <u>Activity 1.1: Equipment of farmers</u> <u>Activity 1.2: Provide local farmers with solar panels</u> <u>Result 2: Increased knowledge and capacity of farmers</u> <u>Activity 2.1: Study trip to Kosovo</u> <u>Activity 2.2: Workshops for farmers</u> <u>Result 3: Increased income opportunities for local farmers</u> <u>Activity 3.1: Showcase local products in the Info Centre in Tetovo</u>
KS	Farm "Guri-Zi"	Livestock	Bio milk of cow and sheep processing, Kosovo	14.770,00	<u>Result 1: Improved conditions for farming</u> <u>Activity 1.1: Improvement of cheese processing</u> <u>Result 2: Increased knowledge and capacity</u> <u>Activity 2.1: Training of staff in milk processing</u> <u>Activity 2.2: Implement food safety standards</u>
AL	Ecologist for Region	Tourism	Promotion and support of nature friendly tourism in the Korab-Koritnik Nature Park, Albania	19.050,92	<u>Result 1: Improve conditions for tourism</u> <u>Activity 1.1: Marking of tourist trails in Gjallica Mountain</u> <u>Activity 1.2: Reconstruction of the Gjallica Mountain trail</u> <u>Activity 1.3: Construction of a bridge to Tropojan waterfall</u> <u>Activity 1.4: Creating of picnic areas</u> <u>Activity 1.5: Installation of information boards at the picnic areas</u> <u>Result 2: Increased knowledge an awareness of local people</u> <u>Activity 2.1: Development of promotion materials</u> <u>Activity 2.2: Field trip with tourism agencies</u>
MK	Mountaineering Club "Ljuboten"	Tourism	Shara Mountain Info Center in Tetovo, North Macedonia	29.974,07	<u>Result 1: Improved conditions for tourism</u> <u>Activity 1.1: Renovation of information center</u> <u>Activity 1.2: Furniture and equipment of the information center</u> <u>Activity 1.3: Interior decoration</u> <u>Activity 1.4: Promotion materials for the center</u> <u>Activity 1.5: Education materials for the center</u> <u>Activity 1.6: Opening ceremony</u> <u>Activity 1.7: Operation of the center</u> <u>Result 2: Increased knowledge and awareness of local people</u> <u>Activity 2.1: Establishing collaboration with schools</u> <u>Activity 2.2: Education visits to the information center</u> <u>Activity 2.3: Field excursion for students</u>

KS	NGO FINCH Association of Private Forest Gryka e Kacanikut	Tourism & Cultivation	Promotion of natural values in the Sharri region, Kosovo	39.498,00	<p><u>Result 1: Improved conditions for tourism</u></p> <p>Activity 1.1: Improvement of wastewater discharge of the Limth camp</p> <p>Activity 1.2: Construction of an education room in the Limth camp</p> <p>Activity 1.3: Promotion of tourism</p> <p><u>Result 2: Improved knowledge and awareness</u></p> <p>Activity 2.1: Brochures about MAP</p> <p>Activity 2.2: Field trip for school children to the Limth camp</p> <p>Activity 2.3: Promotion event</p> <p><u>Result 3: Increased income opportunities for local farmers</u></p> <p>Activity 3.1: Situation analysis on MAP</p> <p>Activity 3.2: Support cultivation of MAP</p> <p>Activity 3.3: Trainings of farmers and forest owners</p>
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### 3.1.2 Support and monitoring of model projects

The national partner organizations are in regular communication with the actors of the model projects in the respective countries regarding implementation, technical issues and questions. Main communication channel is by phone as well as personal meetings with the actors.

All projects were implemented successfully.

More details are given in the factsheets in [annex A](#).

### 3.1.3 Evaluation of model projects

In the frame of the project, we supported the undertaken evaluation of DBU regarding the previously supported projects in the Shar-Korab-Koritnik region. The project team participated in a workshop, organised by the HNEE, in which a situation model with the MARISCO method was developed.

In order to make the best usage of all the knowledge, including the achievements of the model projects, an extensive evaluation and processing in the frame of an interim project is conducted during 2024. The aim is to scale-up the effects as well as to finish a strategic planning process for further steps to secure a long-term conservation and sustainable development of the Shar-Korab-Koritnik region. In addition, we will be able to identify possibilities for replication of this successful project approach.

The key results of the model projects are illustrated in 5 – Result & Discussion.

### 3.1.4 Exchange of actors

The exchange of actors was always part of organised cross-border and overarching activities (see next chapters for more information). In addition, meetings between actors from the same country were organised by the national partner organisation.

Overall, the actors of the model projects had many opportunities to meet and exchange in different settings – organised by the project team as well as included as activity within the model projects. Therefore, the actors are well aware of all other model projects and actors. In addition, most of them have visited other model projects of the same topic on site.

### 3.1.5 Cross-border activities

The cross-border activities implemented in the frame of the project include the organisation of different capacity buildings, fairs, promotion and awareness raising actions as well as the development of tourism promotion material.

#### Capacity Building

During the reporting period, a cycle of three trainings regarding the sustainable cultivation of herbs and aromatic plants were organised, with the aim to enhance the skills and knowledge of local farmers and landowners as well as to exchange and assess current practices. The trainings also included the visit of concrete examples on site.

Baseline for the training was the conducted analyses regarding herbs and aromatic plants (see report in [annex C](#)).

#### European Green Belt Day 2023

On 22<sup>nd</sup> of September we celebrated the European Green Belt Days with a fair in Kukës, Albania. Main part was to showcase the achievements of model projects supported by the project across three countries. In addition, the model project actors were awarded with certificates using to acknowledge their great work and contribution for a sustainable development of the region. Around 120 people joint the event.

Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTEWPgDdOME>

#### Tourism Brochure

During the project, a tourism brochure was developed including information about especially about nature tourism, mountain & sport tourism, cultural & religious tourism as well as rural tourism. The brochure (see also [annex D](#)) was printed and distributed in the region as well as accessible online:

ENG: [https://issuu.com/euronatur/docs/skk\\_final\\_digital\\_eng](https://issuu.com/euronatur/docs/skk_final_digital_eng)

MKD: [https://issuu.com/euronatur/docs/skk\\_final\\_digital\\_mkd](https://issuu.com/euronatur/docs/skk_final_digital_mkd)

ALB: [https://issuu.com/euronatur/docs/skk\\_final\\_digital\\_alb](https://issuu.com/euronatur/docs/skk_final_digital_alb)

SRB: [https://issuu.com/euronatur/docs/skk\\_final\\_digital\\_srb](https://issuu.com/euronatur/docs/skk_final_digital_srb)

### 3.2 Overarching activities

During the last year of the project, the following overarching activities were conducted:

#### **Transboundary LAG workshop**

On 13 and 14 June 2023, a transboundary LAG workshop was organised by the project team in Dragash, Kosovo.

The workshop had two main components:

- presentation of best practices examples for cross-border cooperation by representatives from PrespaNet and LAG Gjeravica (Kosovo)
- exchange, identification and development of cross-border cooperation between the LAGs

The second part was organised as interactive part in smaller groups and moderated by an expert. Through various exercises, participants shared experiences, explored opportunities, and discussed challenges in fostering cross-border collaboration. The content and results of the workshop were comprised in a report (**annex E**) and shared with the LAGs.

#### **Video production**

A series of 5 short videos was produced, to illustrate the content and results of the project. The videos were shared via facebook as well as youtube by the project team.

The videos illustrate the following topics:

- Cross-border Events – EGBDays Fair 2023:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTEWPgDdOME>
- Beekeeping, Kosovo - Bletaria Etniku:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZSzkMxNbs>
- Livestock keeping, Kosovo - Farm "Guri-Zi":  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-hNUI0b1QM>
- Tourism, North Macedonia - Mountaineering Club "Ljuboten":  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HinZjrlbpAA>
- Tourism, Korab-Koritnik, Albania - Ecologist for Region:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-UIKJa5S\\_ak](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-UIKJa5S_ak)

In addition, two multimedia stories were prepared from Radio Mof regarding the topic beekeeping as well as livestock keeping to increase the visibility of the project and raised main issues related to the topics in the region Shar-Korab Koritnik.

Multimedia story Beekeeping: <https://www.radiomof.mk/medot-ischeznuva-pred-klimatskite-promeni/>

Direct link to videos:

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StLEkv\\_y2ik](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StLEkv_y2ik)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhm2DEPDJzs>

Multimedia Story Livestock: <https://www.radiomof.mk/na-regionot-ne-mu-se-site-ovci-na-broj/>

Direct links to videos:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUj9eBdh4YI>
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBN8\\_mxcBmM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBN8_mxcBmM)

### **Result Reveal Webinar**

On 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2025 we organised a result reveal webinar via ZOOM, in order to present the results of the project.

The presentation was divided in the following parts:

- Welcome and Opening
- Overarching Results of the project
- Result Reveal “Tourism”
- Result Reveal “Agriculture”
- Impressions from locals
- Outlook and Closing

Afterwards, the recording of the webinar was shared with the 57 participants as well as with registered people, who did not participate and further key stakeholder.

Link to the recording of the webinar: [https://youtu.be/HYrMCn8b1\\_g](https://youtu.be/HYrMCn8b1_g)

The agenda and the presentation can be found in **annex F.**

### 3.2.1 Assessments & Guidelines

We had the opportunity to integrate a fellow from the DBU fellowship program into the project. Mr. Xhevahir Docaj has supported the project from September 2022 until August 2023 with an analysis about marketing, branding and local value chains. Two questionnaires were developed– one targeting farmers and the other service providers in the tourism sector. The survey covered the entire Shar-Korab-Koritnik region, with 20 answer from tourism providers and 31 answers from farmers.

The survey (see **annex G**) gives an overview of companies, offers and available products in the region as well as the economic situation (size, branding, customers, etc.).

It is a good knowledge base for further work on the topic.

### 3.3 Project management

**Virtual project partner meetings** were organised approximately every 4 weeks (depending on the needs) to update each other and discuss next joint activities. We had 10 joint project partner meetings and in addition, EuroNatur had many individual meetings with each partner organization, in order to clarify and discuss specific issues.

The **advisory body** (4 out of 5 people) visited the Shar-Korab-Koritnik region and participated at the MARISCO workshop from 28 September to 3 October 2023. This was a good opportunity to get more insides in the region, its values as well as challenges and threats of biodiversity.



## 4. Public Relation & Communication

As part of the **International Waterbird Census 2023**, PPNEA members collaborated with RAPA Diber and regional partners to conduct a monitoring expedition in Dibra County. Urakë and Ulëz reservoirs were visited, which are important wetland habitats in the area.

During May MES project coordinator participated at an **event organized by the UN Environment for Shar Mountain National Park** during a visit of Inger Andersen, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. With this event the key stakeholders involved in the process of proclamation of Shar Mountain were acknowledged.

During July 2023 project coordinator of MES participated as a representative of the civil society from the region Shar-Korab-Koritnik on **OSCE High-Level Conference on Climate Change in Vienna**. The conferences conclusions stressed that OSCE will continue to play a vital part of a broad ecosystem of actors working to address the impacts of climate change. The organization will continue to focus and invest in women and youth to address climate-related challenges, sustainable management of natural resource and promote energy security. The region Shar–Korab–Koritnik was mentioned several times from high level representatives.

During September 2024 **LAG Friends of Shar met with LAG Dikkadyeg from Turkey** at the MES office in Skopje. The newly established LAG from Turkey was eager to understand the collaborative transboundary work of Friends of Shar and the way LAG were functioning..

In October 2023, the Skanderberg Square in Tirana was the central hub for the **#AlbaniansBiodiversity campaign**. The campaign, a co-initiative by PPNEA and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung Tirana, aimed to connect people with nature. On 19<sup>th</sup> October was a public fair centered around the theme of "harmonizing life and community with nature" where all model project actors from Albania participated. The event provided a valuable opportunity for the actors join a larger campaign, network with other stakeholders, and showcase their activities to a broader audience.

An article about activities of the project in Korab-Koritnik, Albania was published in the **SAVE Foundation e-newsletter** 01/2023, page 6-7, Link: [https://save-foundation.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023-01\\_de-2.pdf](https://save-foundation.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023-01_de-2.pdf)

MES has promoted the results of the project on the **national TV MRTV** in the occasion of the International Day of Mountains, Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVCLJ0RS5mM>

Within the **EuroNatur Magazin** 01/2023 an article about the project was published, page 19-23, Link: [https://www.euronatur.org/fileadmin/docs/Publikationen/Magazin/EuroNatur-Magazin\\_1\\_2023\\_ks\\_web.pdf](https://www.euronatur.org/fileadmin/docs/Publikationen/Magazin/EuroNatur-Magazin_1_2023_ks_web.pdf)

In addition, the project partners informed about the project and its activities through different media channels. The lists for each partner organization can be found in **annex H**.

## 5. Results & Lessons Learned

The model projects have illustrated different possibilities of using the natural and traditional values of the region for income generation. In addition, many people were directly and indirectly involved in the activities.

The following table gives an overview of the **objectives achieved** in the frame of the model projects:

*Table 2: Overview of achieved objectives of the model projects*

<b>Objectives of the model projects</b>	<b>Number</b>
Activities	85
Trainings/capacity building/education	41
Study/field visits	17
Participants in activities	959
Engaged experts	13
Beneficiaries (supported people)	45
Improved conditions	34
Increase of production	9
Diversification of income source	20
Increase of employees	1
Increase/improvement of infrastructure	10
Conducted situation analysis	4
Improvement of habitats	3,4 ha
Produced brochures/leaflets	8
Produced information tables	12
Produced videos	4
Public events	3

Following the **key results** achieved in the frame of the mode projects:

### **Tourism**

- Opening of the Tourist Info Center Shara Mountain in Tetovo in May 2022
    - information about trips, activities and accommodation
    - showcase & information of local food products
    - sale of regional handicrafts
  - Improvement of the facilities of the Limth Camp in Sharri Mt.
  - Marking of 4 trail at Gjallica Mountain covering a total distance of 15km
  - Establishment of picnic areas with information boards at 3 touristic sites in Korab Mt.
  - Construction of an iron bridge to the Topojan waterfall on Gjallica Mt.
- ➔ Improvement of tourism infrastructure as well as availability of and access to information
- ➔ Reduction of impact on nature: better tourism management and waste disposal on already well-known spots

### **Agriculture**

- 11 beekeepers were supported with equipment, such as centrifuges, beehives, tools for wax processing, protection suits
  - 14 livestock farmers were supported through: generators, photovoltaic, cheese processing and packing equipment, materials for storage facilities, revitalisation of pastures
  - 15 farmers were supported in cultivation of herbs & aromatic plants through: Preparation of agriculture land, seeds and seedlings, equipment and tools
  - Construction of 1 bee hostel for accommodation was supported
  - Planting of around 635 chestnut seedlings on a total area of 1,2 ha
  - 1 yogurt production facility was created
  - 3 livestock farms were equipped with camping materials, to offer services to tourists
  - 2 botanical school gardens were constructed
  - Cultivation of 15 different plant species were supported
  - Gentiana lutea saplings were planted on 0.2 hectare natural habitat
  - Production of 6 brochures and leaflets regarding ecological practices
  - Divers range of local and cross-border trainings and site visits
- ➔ Improvement of conditions and production capacity of farmers
- ➔ Improvement and diversification of income sources of farmers
- ➔ Availability of and access to information
- ➔ Reduction of impact on nature, through the support of cultivation instead of collection
- ➔ Ban on collection of Gentiana lutea in Korab-Koritnik until 2027

This leads to the following **overall project results**:

- Livelihood of local people is supported by using natural resources in a sustainable way
- Opportunities and diversification for sustainable income generation are brought to a wide range of people
- Working conditions for livestock keepers as well as productions standards are improved
- Pressure on different plant species is reduced, by promoting and supporting cultivation instead of collection
- Degraded agriculture land was brought back into use
- Amount of bee colonies is increased
- *Gentiana lutea* was planted in its natural habitat
- Touristic offers were expanded
- Detailed knowledge about agriculture was generated
- Awareness about protection needs of biodiversity in the local population is further increased
- Knowledge about conservation, protected areas and negative effects on exploitation of natural resources are further increased in the local population
- Local actors took over ownership and responsibility for the sustainable development of the region
- Local actors became ambassadors for sustainable use of natural resources and nature protection
- Local actors improved knowledge and skills on project implementation and communication
- Project team expended the stakeholder network through cooperation and involvement of new target groups
- Knowledge exchange, communication and connection beyond borders is increased
- Local people have increased awareness that there is an appreciation for traditional as well as environmental-friendly products and services, which can even lead to better market price.
- Increase of capacity of model project actors regarding project management, reporting and public relation

The following **lessons learned** were noticed regarding the project implementation:

- Local people are very interested in local and also cross-border knowledge exchange and cooperation; nevertheless farmers have limited time available
- Building trust and networks among project stakeholders is crucial, but it needs time and patience
- Capacity for intensive public relation work was missing
- Regular check-ins and in-person meetings with local actors are important
- A variety of different meetings (different topics, settings, group sizes) strengthen relationship and collaboration
- Capacity and awareness regarding public relation is lacking in many small organisations, so that materials often not meet the set standards
- It takes time, effort and persuasive work to ensure quality of reporting as well as produced materials by small organisations; But this is also an opportunity to increase the capacity and professionalism of the local actors, in order to improve their access to future funds as well as their performance
- Capacity and awareness regarding reporting is lacking in many small organisations
- Measures from which people benefit directly and easily get around quickly and generate interest in the local community
- Clear criteria and reasons for selection of supported people are important
- Sufficient time and resources to establish communication with new target groups or stakeholders is important
- Stakeholders should be engaged as early as possible
- Lack of qualified staff in the region
- To ensure ownership, engagement and responsibility for equipment to ask for own contribution could be helpful
- Support with equipment/materials is a good way to build trust and start closer cooperation
- Monitoring of very remote areas is time consuming and difficult

## 6. Conclusions & Outlook

In the frame of this project, we created a strong foundation for our vision along the European Green Belt with the implementation of 13 model projects regarding sustainable agriculture and tourism in the Shar-Korab-Koritnik region. The model projects were implemented by 15 local organizations or businesses, involving many further local people in the activities.

The model projects have illustrated different possibilities of using the natural and traditional values of the region for a nature-friendly income generation. The model projects are already a great success with various positive effects for the region through fostering the sustainable use of natural resources, improvement of degraded areas, knowledge generation and dissemination as well as strengthening of the local civil society and cross-border exchange. Through this, we enabled local people to building a sustainable future for the Shar-Korab-Koritnik region.

In total, the preservation of the region requires the protection through adequate protected area management as well as the sustainable use of the natural resources by local people. Biodiversity protection can only be ensured in the long term if local people possess respective knowledge and can secure their livelihood with a sustainable use of the natural resources.

The implementation of the project was very successful and contribute to the sustainable development as well as reduction of threats to biodiversity in the region of Shar-Korab-Koritnik with the local population as main driver.

In order to make the best usage of the achieved results, generated knowledge and output from the model projects, an extensive evaluation and processing will be conducted in 2024. It will follow up on the process already start during this project. The evaluation will enable us to scale-up the long-term effects and continue the strategic planning process to detect the next necessary steps to secure the long-term conservation of the Shar-Korab-Koritnik region. In addition, we will identify possibilities for replication of this successful approach along the European Green Belt.

## 7. Annex

- Annex A: Factsheets of the model projects
- Annex B: Materials of the model projects
- Annex C: Analysis on cultivation of herbs and aromatic plants
- Annex D: Tourism Brochure
- Annex E: Summary report of the LAG workshop
- Annex F: Agenda and presentation of the Result Reveal Webinar
- Annex G: DBU-Fellowship Result Report
- Annex H: Media presence of the organisations

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