



WWF

CEE



RESILIENCE IN ACTION

WWF Central and Eastern Europe
FY 2024 | Annual Report
1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

CONTENT

Annual Review for period 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

FOREWORD	3
ABOUT OUR REGION	4
PLANNING AND EVALUATION	6
GOAL 1: ZERO LOSS OF HABITATS AND SPECIES	8
GOAL 2: HALVE THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT	10
GOAL 3: NATURE-POSITIVE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE	12
GOAL 4: MILLIONS ARE ENGAGED AS ACTIVE STEWARDS	14
ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVE	16
REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS	18
FINANCIAL RESULTS	44
FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS	46
ABOUT US	50

FOREWORD

FY2024 was a challenging year for us and others working for the environment and civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. The Russian war in Ukraine continued to cast a dark shadow over our region, directly impacting our work and operations not only in Ukraine but also in other countries as well. From Slovakia to Bulgaria, the political situation remained difficult.

Despite these headwinds, we made good progress against most of our 2025 Targets and FY2024 Milestones, but with concerns particularly related to conservation targets in Hungary, Slovakia, and Bulgaria dependent on government action as well as continuing shortfalls in recruiting recurring donors.

We had several policy successes: in Ukraine: key WWF recommendations were incorporated in the Ukraine Facility Regulation underpinning the €50 billion aid package for Ukraine's recovery and EU accession. Our advocacy efforts also influenced the Ukraine Plan, the governmental strategy for spending the €50 billion as well as the presidential peace plan; in Bulgaria, we pushed the target of reaching climate neutrality by 2050 into the National Energy & Climate Plan; the European Commission's feedback on the Hungarian Climate & Energy Plan reflected many of our comments. Our SWIPE project on prosecuting wildlife crime concluded with several achievements, including a signed agreement with the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine.

Despite heavily politicized cases of conflicts between large carnivores and people in our countries, we managed to maintain the protection status of these animals. A significant achievement has been compiling information on implementing the Pan-European Sturgeon Action Plan in key sturgeon range countries across the continent, providing an overview of the state of affairs and implementation gaps. In Bulgaria, we piloted an approach to map disturbed areas where wind- or solar plants could be placed without negatively impacting biodiversity values.

We launched the next phase of the Living Danube Partnership with The Coca-Cola Foundation and Coca-Cola system, with an expanded scope of partners and focus on promoting collective action for climate resilience, wetland and river restoration, and water stewardship.

Regarding communications, we are on track with 1 million followers and 91 million social media hits. Our overall income was higher than budgeted with €11.5 million, with good progress on income from public and private sector sources and the WWF Network. In contrast, we have had significant shortfalls in Individual Fundraising, reflecting a longer-term shortfall in recruiting recurring donors. We maintained good financial health despite high inflation and respective salary adjustments in all WWF-CEE countries.

Following a comprehensive review, the WWF-International Board affirmed WWF-CEE and approved the establishment of WWF-Czechia. Country senior management teams are well-established and developing. We continued investing in human resources, including people management training, coaching, and psychological support. Recruitment remains a challenge in a very competitive labour market.



SASHA BEZUHANOVA
CHAIRPERSON



ANDREAS BECKMANN
REGIONAL CEO

An aerial photograph showing a river delta with several large, dark green wetland areas. A dense forest runs along the river, and a village with many small houses is visible on the right side. The text 'ABOUT OUR REGION' is overlaid in large white letters on the left side of the image.

ABOUT OUR REGION

Our region is the “Green Heart of Europe” – sheltering many of the continent’s remaining areas of relative wilderness, its natural forests, and wetlands as well as the species that depend on them. It is home to over half the European populations of large carnivores, including brown bear, wolf, and European lynx, and four species of sturgeon. The region includes the Danube and Carpathian ecoregions, two of the 200 most valuable natural areas on Earth, and a string of World Heritage Sites, from the ancient beech forests of Slovakia and Ukraine to Pirin National Park in Bulgaria, as well as globally important wetlands such as the Danube Delta or the Mura-Drava-Danube corridor, “Europe’s Amazon”.

PLANNING & EVALUATION

PROGRESS AGAINST 2030 OUTCOMES: CONSERVATION

While many milestones are on track, there are concerns related to the political context in Slovakia, the war in Ukraine, and a lack of interest and capacity of authorities to mainstream nature and allocate funding to nature restoration and management.

Our planning and evaluation are based on the WWF-CEE Strategic Plan for FY2023-25 and the more detailed annual milestones that we set and track in the WWF-CEE Progress Review Tool. Individual WWF-CEE offices and teams evaluate progress against our 2025 Targets and annual milestones twice per year, and results are consolidated for WWF-CEE as a whole. This annual report summarises results against our four longer-term goals and organizational objectives, our 2030 Outcomes, and our 2025 Targets.

GOAL 1: ZERO LOSS OF HABITATS AND SPECIES



© naturepl.com / Klein & Hubert / WWF

HABITATS (OUTCOME 1)

New protected areas were declared due to our interventions in Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Ukraine. All sanctuary forests in Hungary are now mapped, a milestone towards their protection. WWF-Romania's criteria for designating 10% of forests as strictly protected were widely accepted by stakeholders. There is a clear need for compensation measures for owners of protected forests. Progress on securing legal protection for wildlife corridors and their proper integration into spatial plans remained slow. The political situation slowed progress on removing unneeded dams in Slovakia, while in other countries we made good progress with mapping dams that should and could be removed.

RESILIENCE (OUTCOME 2)

In response to more droughts, we experienced growing support for nature-based solutions. In Hungary, we worked with relevant authorities to release floodwaters from the Tisza River into the Bereg former floodplain and signed a cooperation agreement for floodplain farming at Nagykörű. If successful, these pilot projects could lead in the long term to flood management on 150,000 hectares of restored floodplains along the Tisza River. On the Romanian Danube, 400 hectares of additional open water surface were created at Garla Mare. In Slovakia, the Vojcianske rameno side arm was restored. In the Mahmudia area on the Romanian Danube, 97% of the local population prefers floodplain restoration over agricultural production.

SPECIES (OUTCOME 3)

Politicians and media amplified conflict incidents with large carnivores. Unfortunately, there is no progress in applying sound DNA monitoring. This is why biased political statements continue to promote hunting quotas (e.g. in Romania), the downgrading of wolf protection status, and the potential revision of the EU Habitats Directive. We prepared for translocating bison to Zalissia National Nature Park in Ukraine. We reintroduced 22 bison to the Tarcu Mountains in western Romania – thanks to this and earlier translocations as well as natural population growth, there are now over 200 bison roaming the southwestern Carpathians. The sturgeon poaching report that WWF developed showed a worrying trend. A joint sturgeon bycatch reporting system is now in place in Romania and Bulgaria. The ICPDR supported the development of a basin-wide sturgeon monitoring system. Despite the ongoing war, WWF-Ukraine organised the release of 2,500 sturgeons into the Danube.

SUSTAINABLE USE (OUTCOME 4)

Among our innovative results in FY2024 are an FSC Ecosystem Services certificate in Romania, a Digital Platform for Forest Restoration developed in Ukraine, and new tools for preventing illegal logging in Ukraine and Bulgaria. WWF-Ukraine also strengthened collaboration with anti-corruption agencies and published a timber tracking report. WWF-Slovakia, facing challenges from the new government, shifted its focus towards compliance with the EU Deforestation Regulation. A digital fingerprint for timber transports will be implemented by the Ministry of Environment of Romania under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. We successfully influenced the draft Flood Risk Management Plan in Bulgaria, highlighting the value of Nature-based Solutions. We also developed drought management visions for the Tisza, Prut, and Siret rivers in Ukraine. Thanks to our advocacy, green infrastructure is increasingly considered an option in Hungary.

GOAL 2:

HALVE THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT

CLIMATE MITIGATION (OUTCOME 5)

We mapped potential sites for pumped hydropower stations in Romania and solar and wind in Bulgaria that promise to have a low impact on biodiversity. We issued recommendations for the long-term climate strategies of Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria, focusing on bioenergy to avoid conflicts with forest and nature conservation. In Bulgaria, we developed local solutions for reducing energy poverty and a toolbox for communities to address firewood dependency. We finally have a WWF forest biomass position with buy-in from all relevant teams as the basis for our policy advocacy.

INFRASTRUCTURE (OUTCOME 6)

We managed to limit the negative impacts of two highway projects through the Romanian Carpathians. Our campaign against the Rastolita hydropower project in Romania provoked harsh reactions from Romanian politicians and authorities. Due to the change in the EU Emergency Regulation, hydropower projects in protected areas are viewed as having overriding public interest. We also fear a backlash in Slovakia concerning hydropower development. We took action to raise attention to the Turnu-Magurele hydropower project planned on the Bulgarian-Romanian stretch of the Danube. Despite being grossly outdated, the project was included in a list of EU priority projects – a clear example of what EU and public funds should *not* be supporting. We also sought to modify two navigation projects on the Lower Danube so that they do not harm sturgeon populations.



© Myriams-Fotosa / Pixabay

GOAL 3:

NATURE-POSITIVE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

FUNDS (OUTCOME 7)

In Bulgaria, we raised political attention to the fact that EU agricultural funds for forest and wetland conservation cannot flow as critical GIS data are missing. In Romania, we did not prevent an EU derogation on applying good agricultural practices. In Hungary, we raised farmers' interest in subsidies for water retention. In Slovakia, we managed to stop redirecting €200 million from biodiversity to other purposes. In Bulgaria and Romania, river and wetland restoration measures lost financing from the Recovery & Resilience Fund due to a lack of interest by the respective ministries. WWF's recommendations for the EU's €50 billion Ukraine Facility were largely considered and incorporated.

GOVERNANCE (OUTCOME 8)

Thanks to many years of WWF advocacy, the fishing, possessing, transporting, and selling of wild sturgeon caught outside the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve are now criminal offenses. In Slovakia, new amendments to the Criminal Law were adopted, undermining species protection objectives by raising the threshold for criminalizing offenses. However, citizens have grown more aware of wildlife crime. We contributed to getting the EU Nature Restoration Law adopted. In Bulgaria, we won the second court case against sanitary fellings in Pirin National Park and submitted proposals for the strict protection pledges under the EU Biodiversity Strategy.



GOAL 4:

MILLIONS ARE ENGAGED AS ACTIVE STEWARDS

ENGAGEMENT (OUTCOME 9)

We are on track to hit our FY2025 targets. We are somewhat behind on recruiting supporters (1 million vs 1.15 million target), but with a strengthened focus on engagement, we are confident that we will reach and exceed our FY2025 target. We are ahead of target on unique internet visitors (1.16 million vs 830,000 target), largely on track regarding social media reach (90.87 million vs 95 million target), and somewhat behind on media hits (10,617 vs 12,000 target). We had several noteworthy campaigns, including for lynx in Slovakia, wildlife in Hungary, and Earth Hour in Bulgaria.

BUSINESS LEADERSHIP (OUTCOME 10)

We are on track to exceed our FY2025 targets. We launched the next phase of the Living Danube Partnership with a string of trainings, events, and an international conference on water stewardship. We expanded the core partners in this initiative to include The Coca-Cola Company and the Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company, which will be important for addressing material issues related to supply chains. Our engagement in food and retail continued with publications and events on food and agriculture especially in Czechia. We made progress in positioning WWF on business engagement related to nature. Through business-focused events that we organised or co-organised we directly engaged with over 402 business representatives and reached more than 117,766 people via LinkedIn.



© Picture Alliance / Jan Haas

ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVE

RESOURCES (OUTCOME 11)

Fundraising is on track, with a total income of €11.7 million (105% of the budget), but there are concerns related to unrestricted income from individual fundraising. Our private-sector fundraising at €2.9 million was 4% above budget mainly due to a renewed partnership with Coca-Cola and several new local partnerships particularly in Hungary and Romania. Our income from the WWF Network was 21% above budget mainly due to additional funding for Slovakia and Ukraine. In contrast, we experienced continuing shortfalls in our Individual Fundraising, with an income 16% below budget and a 15% shortfall on recurring donors (7,151 vs 8,370 target).

ORGANISATION (OUTCOME 12)

Following a comprehensive review, the WWF-International Board approved the extension of WWF-CEE's membership in the WWF network for another 5 years. The WWF-International Board also approved the establishment of WWF-Czechia. Despite major challenges from the war in Ukraine and a hostile government in Slovakia, WWF-Ukraine and WWF-Slovakia even gained strength. Country leadership teams are now well-established and developing in all country offices. We continued investing in our people and culture and piloted a much-appreciated psychological support programme for staff.



**WWF-CEE IS CONSIDERED
A CHANGE AGENT WITH
2 MILLION SUPPORTERS,
100,000 RECURRING DONORS,
AND PARTNERSHIPS.**



REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS: FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

In a year marked by droughts and floods, we initiated and continued floodplain and wetland restoration projects across six countries, including large-scale restoration in rural areas as well as smaller-scale restoration in urban centres. In Hungary, we created a broad partnership including municipalities, land owners, protected area authorities, and the water directorate to promote floodplain restoration along the Tisza River. We initiated six pilot projects that, if successful, could be extended to the restoration of 150,000 hectares. In Romania, we worked with local communities to convince national authorities to maintain natural conditions on almost 2,500 hectares of restored floodplains at Mahmudia in the Danube Delta.



© Bogdan Lungu



© Anton Vorauer / WWF

BEARS IN THE FOCUS OF ATTENTION

Conflicts with wildlife, especially bears and wolves, have been growing for many reasons, including increasing human pressure on wild habitats. Politicians seized incidents in Slovakia and Romania to offer simple but unsustainable solutions. We worked to educate and raise awareness about large carnivores, providing facts and science-based information and solutions. In Slovakia, we maintained the protection of wolves and lynx, though not of bears. At the same time, we continued working to prevent conflicts in the first place. We worked with local authorities and stakeholders in the municipality of Tusnad in central Romania to pilot and demonstrate measures for living in harmony with bears. In Hungary, we worked with livestock keepers to pilot electric fences to prevent damage to livestock. We also took action to support bear populations. WWF's Bear Rescue Team captured, cared for, and released three orphan bear cubs in Bulgaria.



© Tomas Hulik



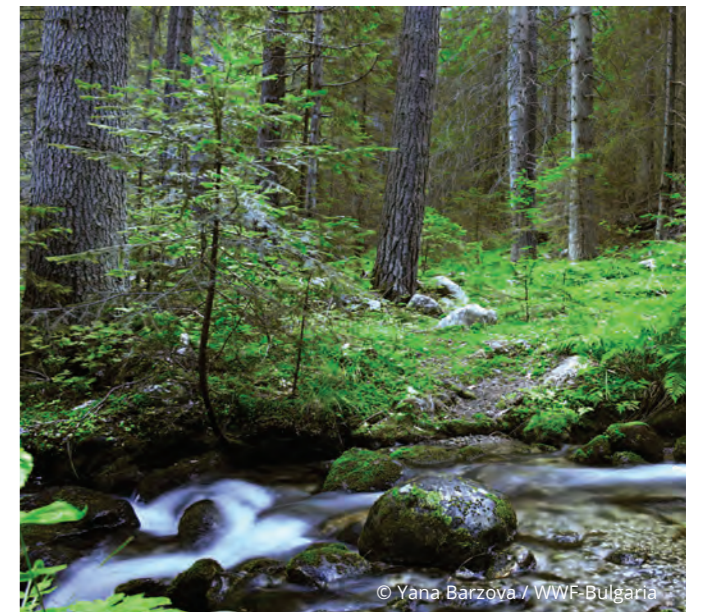
© Bogomaz Conservation Photography WWF-Ukraine

UKRAINE - PROGRESS IN THE FACE OF WAR

Most of WWF's requests – including references to biodiversity, the “Do No Significant Harm” principle, and involvement of civil society – were included in the EU's €50 billion Ukraine Facility and the Environmental Compact under President Zelenskiy's peace formula. WWF also led Green NGOs in presenting their positions at the Ukraine recovery conference in June 2024 in Berlin. WWF recommendations on freshwater management were also included in seven out of nine river basin management plans under the EU Water Framework Directive. We signed a cooperation agreement with the Ukrainian Prosecutor General related to addressing environmental crime and resource management.

TOWARDS 10% STRICT PROTECTION FOR FORESTS

We continued our efforts to secure the protection and sustainable management of forests. In Romania, WWF's criteria for designating the 10% of forests to receive strict protection (as called for by the EU Biodiversity Strategy) were accepted by key stakeholders and incorporated into the methodology for identifying protected areas. A new Governmental Decision established a compensatory financial mechanism for private and community forests under protection. In Bulgaria, WWF partnered with companies and other organisations to establish the “Sustainable Forests” association to promote and support the work and mission of the Forest Stewardship Council, FSC, in Bulgaria. To date, this work has been filled by WWF-Bulgaria; establishing the association will help secure the long-term sustainability of WWF's efforts to promote sustainable forest management.



© Yana Barzova / WWF-Bulgaria



© Veliko Balabanov for WWF-Bulgaria

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS



EUROPE'S STURGEON ACTION PLAN

WWF-CEE is promoting sturgeon conservation across Europe. In FY2024, after years of pushing by WWF, 18 European sturgeon range countries finally nominated national sturgeon focal points to drive the implementation of the Pan-European Sturgeon Action Plan that WWF had leveraged under the Bern Convention and the EU Habitats Directive. At a Council of Europe meeting, WWF-CEE and partners presented the evaluation of how the Action Plan has been implemented so far (result: there is room for improvement). We also shared our best practice guidelines for sturgeon monitoring and breeding. WWF's experiences from the Lower Danube on encouraging voluntary sturgeon bycatch reports and maintaining a bycatch database with a fishing authority and scientists gained much attention at an expert workshop in France.

SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNS

We ran several successful campaigns across our region. In Hungary, our 1% tax campaign "Roomies from the Wild" won 10 creative awards and doubled the number of donors and donations from the previous year. In Ukraine, our "Bison Love" campaign collected support for translocating bison, while our Ukrainian nature exhibit was featured in the Parliament and Kyiv city centre. In Bulgaria, nearly 3,000 Bulgarians pledged 7,446 hours of care for our shared home in our Earth Hour - Hour Bank campaign, the highest number in Europe. In Slovakia, our campaign to prevent the killing of large carnivores mobilised support from over 90 scientists and 4,700 citizens who signed a letter to Members of Parliament.



WATER STEWARDSHIP - BUSINESS RISK AND OPPORTUNITY

We launched the next phase of the Living Danube Partnership, focused on promoting and demonstrating climate resilience, nature-based solutions, and water stewardship across the Danube basin. Through a series of trainings and events and an international conference on water stewardship, we raised awareness and understanding of businesses and business consultancies in the CEE region regarding risks and opportunities related to water. Core partners of the Partnership expanded to include The Coca-Cola Company and the Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company, which will be important for addressing material issues related to supply chains. In addition to floodplain and wetland restoration at nine locations across the CEE region, we started work to improve the freshwater and biodiversity impacts of supply chains in Hungary and Romania as well as best-practice management of watersheds in Bulgaria.



WWF IN CZECHIA

In 2024, the Board of WWF-International formally approved the establishment of WWF Czechia in early 2025. Our work last year focused on areas where WWF has a clear niche and added value vis a vis existing Czech organisations, including work on food and agriculture with the private sector and government. The Czech team concluded its partnership with retailing giant Tesco by launching two well-received guides on soil and sustainable diets. In cooperation with the Association of Private Farming and the Institute of Agricultural Economics and Information and co-financing from the EU LIFE programme, we also started a new agristructure project focused on finding tools and ways to bring landscape elements back into the agricultural landscape. We also started preparing an online course and manual to help businesses adapt their supply chains to climate change.





WWF-BULGARIA

© Neli Doncheva / WWF-Bulgaria

66 POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS REMAINED DIFFICULT.

Parliamentary elections in June 2024 – the sixth such elections since 2021 – formed an antagonistic parliament that proceeded with worrisome, anti-democratic amendments and failed to produce a government. There has been an overall stagnation of political reforms and governance with prolonged periods of caretaker governments. Society is increasingly polarized, radicalized, and apathetic. Inflation slowed in the second half of the period, but prices remained high.

Despite these challenges, we made good progress in most areas. Our total annual financial result is better than the budget by €21,000 due to cost optimizations, high burn rate, and good performance of all income sources, especially national corporate engagement. Key achievements included: a new civic association “Ustoichivi gori” (“Sustainable Forests”) was established to assume the role of the FSC office in Bulgaria, thus ensuring the long-term sustainability of our efforts for sustainable forest management through FSC. We undertook a basic analysis of the potential of disturbed and urbanized areas for renewable energy development in Bulgaria, which has the potential to decrease the pressure on biodiversity-rich areas. We won a second court case against the Ministry of Environment for allowing sanitary felling in Pirin National Park. Despite this successful legal battle, the problem of the lack of observance of court rulings by national authorities needs to be addressed. We implemented a successful campaign, *Give Nature for Our Future*, focusing on the crucial importance of nature for people and the risks for people of its loss. Our Hour Bank campaign was in the top ten campaigns worldwide for given hours. Our bear rescue and release campaigns brought substantial engagement and support.



VESSELINA KAVRAKOVA
CEO, WWF-BULGARIA

HIGHLIGHTS

RETURN OF THREE BEAR CUBS

In 2023, WWF's Bear Rescue Team captured three orphaned bear cubs that could not survive on their own in the wild. They were transported to the specialized rehabilitation center “Arcturus” in Greece, where they found safety and care in conditions that are as close to natural as possible. Once they had sufficiently grown, our team and partners returned the cubs to Bulgaria. In May 2024 they were successfully released into a carefully selected brown bear habitat within Rila National Park.



© Yeliko Balabanov for WWF-Bulgaria



© Yana Barzova / WWF-Bulgaria



© Tihomira Metodieva

SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY

We had several policy successes. The Bulgarian government followed WWF's recommendations for the designation orders for four Natura 2000 sites, including a ban on hydro-technical facilities which can create barriers to migration, and a ban on changing the hydrological regime of river side-arms. This ensures the longitudinal connectivity crucial for the migration of fish species on the tributaries of the Danube River (Ogosta River, Lom River, Timok) and protection for fish spawning habitats at Novo Selo on the Danube. We led the development with NGO partners of a position paper on renewable energy and protected areas that helped shape the environmental permit of the Bulgarian Recovery and Resilience Plan: only renewable energy projects outside the protected area network will be funded (except urban areas and rooftops in Natura 2000 sites). As a result, €342 million of public money and €684 million of private funding will be steered away from destroying nature.



© Alexander Ivanov



WWF-HUNGARY

© Markus Varesvuo / WWF

CLIMATE IMPACTS AMPLIFY ECONOMIC STRAINS: A GROWING CHALLENGE

Hungary's macroeconomic situation remained challenging in 2024, with persistent inflation, a growing state budget deficit, and weakened consumer spending. These economic difficulties were further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, particularly in the agricultural sector. A severe drought, coupled with extreme weather events, led to declining crop yields and increased pressure on water resources. Among other products, corn production was hit, with the national average yield dropping to 5.8 tons per hectare - lower by a third than the previous year. Meanwhile, accelerating industrial expansion is projected to drive a sharp increase in water demand and heighten environmental pollution risks, further straining Hungary's natural ecosystems.

Despite these challenges, our conservation efforts largely stayed on track. Increasing economic and health risks of climate change have prompted key stakeholders to take action. Water management authorities are shifting their focus toward water retention strategies, while in the agricultural sector, integrating water into the landscape is no longer a controversial concept. Local governments, too, are showing growing interest in blue-green infrastructure solutions to enhance resilience.

In 2024, WWF Hungary continued its efforts to strengthen the practice of nature-based solutions. In the Upper Tisza-Bereg region, we are working alongside water management authorities to encourage local farmers to collaborate in shallow flood-based water retention. In municipal SECAP planning, we are enhancing the climate adaptation toolkit. We also partner with corporate and business actors who finance forest, grassland, and wetland restoration projects—in 2024, these efforts took place in settlements such as Geszt, Kállósemjén, Drávaszentes, Tolna, and Pély, among others, in cooperation with the Hungarian National Bank.



KATALIN SIPOS
CEO, WWF-HUNGARY

HIGHLIGHTS



© WWF-Hungary

CLIMATE ACTION FOR MUNICIPALITIES

We promoted sustainable energy and climate action among Hungarian municipalities. We developed and promoted a professional guide that helps local governments create and implement their Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs), offering practical insights on climate adaptation and energy planning. The guide supports municipalities in drafting actionable climate strategies and integrating sustainability into local governance. Together with the Central & Eastern European Sustainable Energy Network (CEESEN), we successfully organized the "Sustainable Municipalities" conference on 6-7 September 2023.

INCREASING RECOGNITION OF NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Our many years of advocacy work seem to pay off: we have brought together a broad partnership around water retention in the Tisza floodplain, including municipalities, land owners, the responsible national park directorate, and the water directorate. The attitude of the Water Directorate has changed very positively.

We completed two field projects that will serve as demonstration sites in the future. In the framework of the WiseDrava Life project, Hrvatske Vode has completed the reconnection of the Heresznye side arm to the main riverbed (Drava River). As the lead partner in the project, we played a major role in ensuring that the habitat improvement was completed on time, despite all financial and organisational difficulties.

In partnership with Coca-Cola Hungary, we built a sluice that has enabled us to rehabilitate the Abrahamszék soda pan (Domaszék, Sandridge).



© Szilvia Ádám / WWF-CEE



© Verő György / WWF-Hungary



WWF-ROMANIA

© Bogdan Lungu / WWF-Romania

“THE POLITICAL SCENE WAS DOMINATED BY EU AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS

followed by campaigns for parliamentary and presidential ones. Increased inflation and cost of living, severe droughts, floods, and bear-human conflicts are the main social issues polarising public debates and attracting people’s attention. Romania’s structural and governance challenges were reflected in slow progress on reforms and investments to stimulate the green transition and low absorption of recovery funds. There were worrying signs of shrinking civic space, including threats to civil society organisations opposing hydropower development and protecting bear populations.

Overall we are on track with most of our conservation, marketing, and operations targets. We were very active in lobbying and advocacy, but made slow progress on individual fundraising. Key achievements included: progress on wetland restoration at Mahmudia, which showed that authorities increasingly recognize the socio-economic importance of restoration in the Danube Delta; implementation of conflict prevention measures, and deployment of early detection systems for large carnivores, along with community engagement in the reintroduction of bison; we also made significant progress in our efforts to influence the National Energy and Climate Plan as well as the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.



DR ORIETA HULEA
CEO, WWF-ROMANIA

HIGHLIGHTS

RESTORING NATURE IN THE DANUBE DELTA

Engaging local communities on the importance of nature restoration in the Danube Delta proved fundamental in convincing national authorities to reimburse agricultural concessionaires and publicly support nature conservation. Intensified advocacy efforts secured an additional 1,200 hectares for restoration in Mahmudia, with informal stakeholder agreement and exploration of juridical solutions, including options for the state to provide compensation to land users.



© Bogdan Lungu / WWF-Romania



© Marius Vasile / WWF-Romania



© James Morgan / WWF

TOWARDS STRICT PROTECTION OF 10% OF FORESTS

WWF’s 10% strict protection criteria have been accepted by key stakeholders and incorporated into the methodology for identifying strict protection areas. WWF provided expertise in working groups and developed strategic approaches to include, alongside Old Growth Forests, other highly natural forests fulfilling multiple protection roles, riparian forests and mosaic silvo-pastoral (agro-forestry) landscapes.



WWF-SLOVAKIA

“SINCE THE SEPTEMBER 2024 ELECTIONS,

WWF and NGOs have been under constant pressure and with limited access to co-financing for EU-funded projects from the Ministry of Environment. Despite significant challenges from the new Slovak government, we continued to progress on our conservation agenda and organisational development. Key achievements included: the potential hunting of wolf and lynx proposed by the government was stopped, and draft legislation on Environmental Impact Assessments and strategic investments was significantly improved. We also implemented a series of measures to protect our team and organisation, including an audit of IT security, office safety, a detailed audit of legal documents, training and psychological support.



DR MIROSLAVA CIERNA-PLASSMANN,
CEO, WWF SLOVAKIA

HIGHLIGHTS

CONSERVING HABITATS AND SPECIES

Our expert position on how to protect habitats of the Carpathian long-horn beetle (*Pseudogauratina excellens*) during salvage logging or how to adapt hunting management to restore the Capercaillie population in Muránska Planina National Park was largely accepted by the Slovak national authorities. We also implemented successful pilot measures with farmers to support pollinators and grassland species, habitats, and connectivity in submontane regions.



© Ola Jennersten / WWF-Sweden



© Marek Ziacik

FRESHWATER HABITATS

The Hronsky Benadik area was protected by the local municipality with WWF's support, inspiring other communities to do the same. WWF also initiated the preparation of new protected areas on the Hron and Ipeľ Rivers. We signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Slovak Water Management Authority and successfully supported the process of amending the National Water Policy.

LYNX AND WOLF HUNTING PREVENTED

In response to a proposal to permit the shooting of large carnivores, including bears, wolves, and lynx, WWF undertook legal analysis and advocacy and mobilised support from over 90 scientists and 4,700 citizens who within 48 hours signed a letter to Members of Parliament. As a result, lynx and wolves were excluded from the legislative proposal and the wording was significantly improved.



© Tomas Hulik



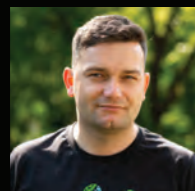
WWF-UKRAINE

© Bogomaz Conservation photography / WWF-Ukraine

“THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE CONTINUED TO DETERMINE THE AGENDA

of the country and WWF's work: political turbulence and insecurity; prioritization of security, economy, and humanitarian needs versus the environment and climate; missile and drone attacks on civilian infrastructure; and intermittent loss of electricity and internet. Some areas of conservation interest have been mined and are dangerous to visit, while others are fully restricted (e.g. temporary ban on visiting forests near border areas). The country – and WWF – faced a dynamic job market and shortages of human resources.

We made progress despite these challenges. Key achievements included: WWF's recommendations regarding sustainable post-war recovery of Ukraine were included in the EU Ukraine Facility and Environmental Compact under President Zelenskiy's peace formula, and presented at the Ukraine recovery conference in Berlin. We re-stocked 2,500 sturgeons in the Danube Delta according to science-based guidance and consideration of poaching risks. We also created the first 786 hectares of rare species protection zones under FSC certification and the first 750 hectares of old-growth forest Monuments of State Importance. The first hectares of close-to-nature forest were planted with SoftServe, an IT company, as part of our Forest Restoration Platform. WWF's recommendations on freshwater management were included in seven of nine basin management plans under the EU Water Framework Directive. Our digital campaign *To Our Nature* reached over five million people and was presented at the Ukrainian Parliament for three weeks.



DR BOHDAN VYKHOR
CEO, WWF-UKRAINE

HIGHLIGHTS

STURGEON

We released 2,500 sturgeon tagged with fluorescent ink for easier monitoring into the Danube. Sturgeon reproduction was complicated as only one restocking center remained operational near Odesa following the destruction of the Kakhovka dam and a sturgeon nursery near the city of Dnipro.



© WWF-Ukraine



© Anton Agarkov

BISON LOVE

As a result of the Russian occupation near Kyiv in 2022, the herd of bison in Zalissia National Nature Park fell by a third, leaving only fourteen females and no males. To save the Zalissia bison population from extinction, WWF-Ukraine organized the fundraising campaign *300 km to Love* to support the translocation of male bison to join the Zalissia herd and inform about the impact of the war on biodiversity.

CLIMATE-SMART FORESTS

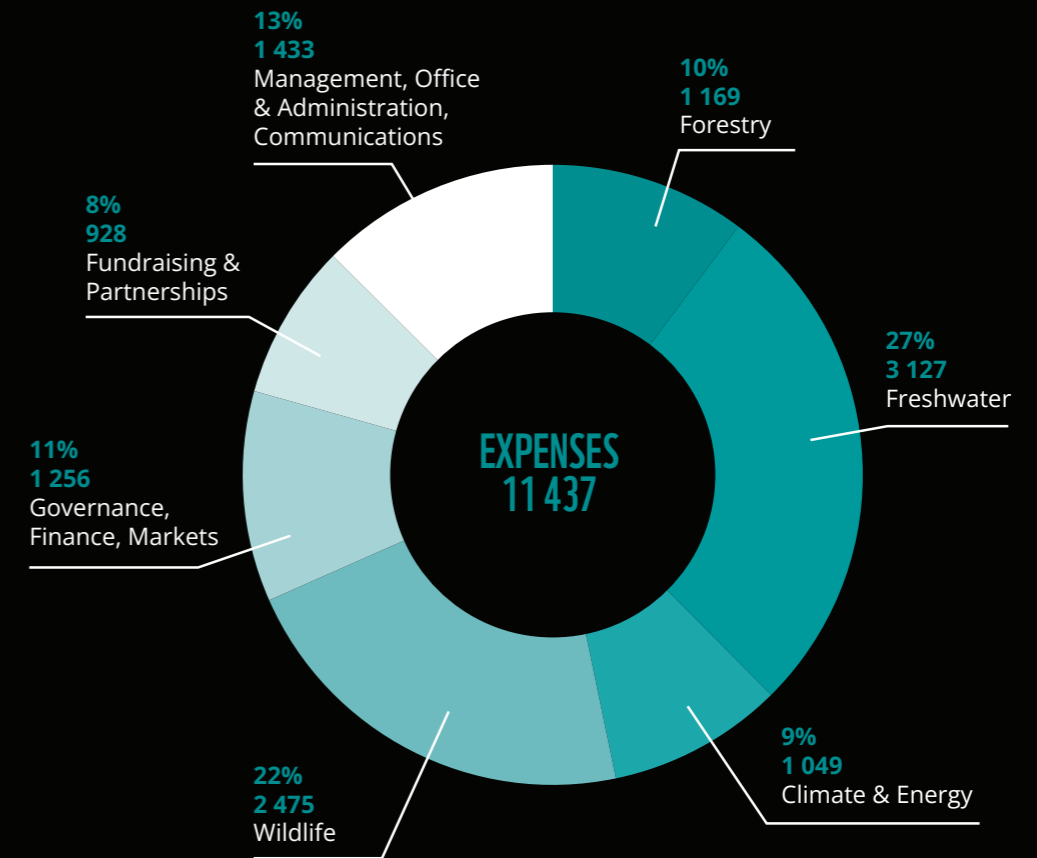
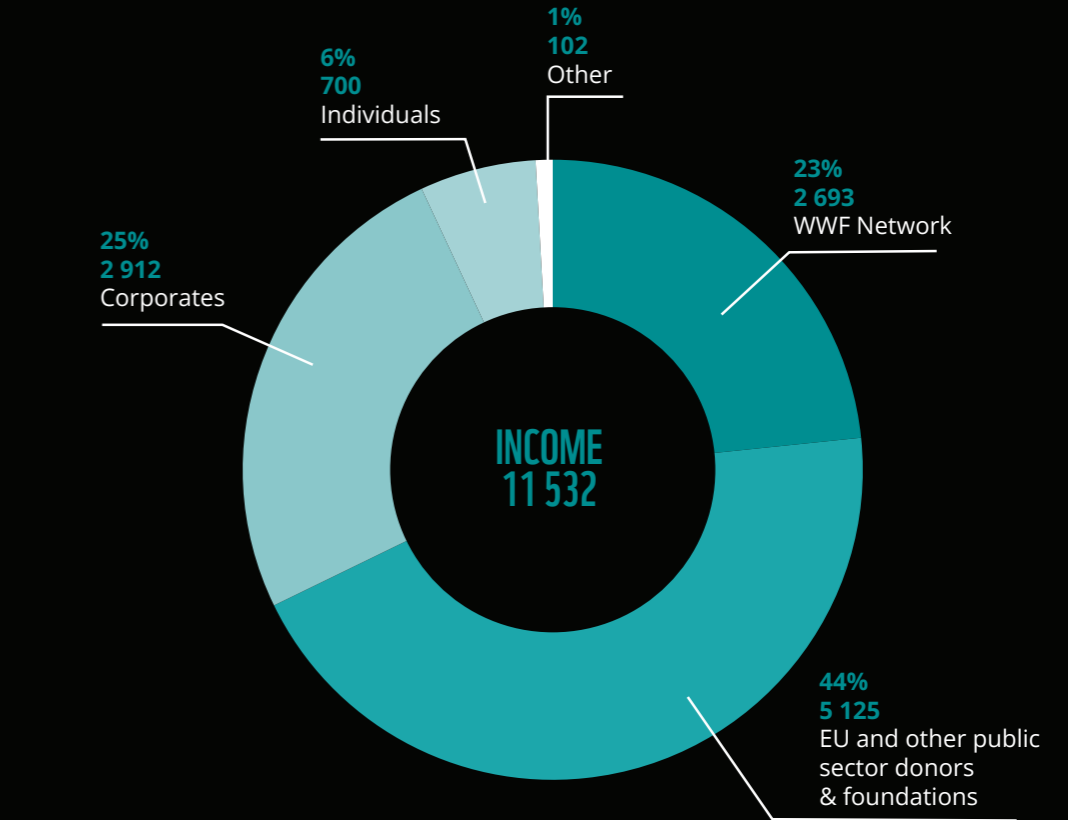
With the support of SoftServe, an IT company, we developed an online platform to support the planting climate-smart forests. In spring 2024, the first hectare of forest was planted near Lviv with the involvement of staff from Softserve and WWF.



© Halyna Kuchmanyh / WWF-Ukraine

FINANCIALS FY2023-2024

(1 JULY 2023 - 30 JUNE 2024)



SURPLUS 95

FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS FY2024

(1 JULY 2023 – 30 JUNE 2024)

PUBLIC SECTOR DONORS

above €250k	European Commission Ministry of Agriculture Hungary
€100-250k	EEA and Norway Grants German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (EUKI) Ministry of Environment of Slovak Republic
€25-100k	n.a.
< €25k	US Embassy in Bulgaria US Embassy in Hungary Dutch Embassy Ministry of Investments and Regional Development of Slovak Republic Global Environment Facility (GEF)

FOUNDATIONS AND NON-PROFIT DONORS

above €250k	The Coca-Cola Foundation European Climate Foundation
€100-250k	Arcadia Fund
€25-100k	America for Bulgaria Pancivis Flex Foundation IUCN Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU)
< €25k	Rewilding Europe Netherlands Helsinki Committee Swiss RE Foundation VMWare Foundation

WWF OFFICES

above €250k	WWF Belgium WWF Netherlands WWF Austria
€100-250k	WWF International WWF Sweden
€25-100k	WWF Poland WWF Germany
< €25k	WWF US WWF France

INDIVIDUALS

€700k	in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine
-------	---

CORPORATES

above €250k	Coca-Cola Services S.A. IKEA
€100-250k	Intesa SaoPaolo/VUB bank JYSK Romania SRL Lidl MNB Bank Tesco CE
€25-100k	Amrest Cofee EOOD Bolton Food Coca-Cola HBC Česko a Slovensko Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company Dennemeyer Dreamix EVN Garanti BBVA Kaufland Bulgaria Raiffeisen Bank Romania Revolut SoftServe SmartWood
< €25k	ADEVINTA CLASSIFIED MEDIA Alfa Önkéntes Nyugdíjpénztár Apidava Aquasource Arrise Live AVESTA KUMMUN EKONOMIENHETEN Benevity CEC Bank Cinema City Dumaszház Kft. Fabrica de Bere Buna GEOX Greenbors Consulting IBTT iCard ICCO Real Estate ING HUBS B.V. Intesa SaoPaolo/VUB bank KPMG Slovakia Lime Melon National Bank of Slovakia Novarto Invest OGOOGA SERVICES Orange Center Oxygen Public Relations Profine Provident Zrt RAN EOOD Reima Schneider Electric Romania Schneider Electric Slovakia s.r.o. Unilever Magyarország Kft UpScale Labs Kft Veolia Vodafone Yettel Zurich Insurance Slovakia

Figures in EUR



**BOARD
MEMBERS**

ABOUT US

WWF-CEE is active in seven countries of Central and Southeastern Europe. It includes legal entities in five countries (WWF-Romania, WWF-Hungary, WWF-Bulgaria, WWF-Slovakia, and WWF-Ukraine) and an Austrian-registered association serving as secretariat. It also manages WWF engagement via consultancies and partner organisations in the Czech Republic and Moldova. WWF-CEE also provides overall leadership and coordination for WWF's engagement in the Danube and Carpathian eco-regions, including engagement with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and the Convention for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathian Mountains (Carpathian Convention).

WWF-CEE BOARD

The WWF-CEE Board is drawn from local leaders and WWF supporters.



Sasha Bezuhanova

Sustainability Investor and Philanthropist who left a 20-year executive career at Hewlett-Packard to devote herself to supporting social prosperity through innovation, education, and collaboration through organizations and initiatives such as MOVE.BG.



Jean-Paul Paddack

Deputy Chairperson, is the Executive Director of Network Development for WWF International and oversees the management of WWF's offices in the Pacific, China, Korea, Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and the Mediterranean.



Andrea Johanides

Chairperson of the Finance Committee, is the CEO of WWF-Austria since 2013. Previously, she was head of finance for WWF-Austria from 2005. Before coming to WWF, she held a number of finance controller positions in various private sector companies.



Antoine Lebrun

(until April 2024)

was CEO of WWF-Belgium before he left WWF in April 2023 to become Director of the Pairi Daiza Foundation and Director of Strategy and Transformation at Pairi Daiza. He has a background in marketing and communications as well as people and development.



Caroline Tsilikounas

(from April 2024)

has been CEO of WWF-Belgium since February 2024. An expert in financial inclusion in conflict-affected countries, she has nearly three decades of experience working across Africa, Central America, Afghanistan, and the Balkans, including most recently as General Manager of the European Microfinance Network and Regional Director for VisionFund International in East Africa and the DRC, where she also sat on numerous boards.



Dr Ladislav Miko

(until April 2024)

was Head of the European Commission Representation in Slovakia until the end of 2021. He has held senior positions in the European Commission and served as Czech Minister of the Environment and Deputy Director of the Czech Environmental Inspectorate.



Katalin Szomolanyi

until recently headed Corporate Sustainability at Magyar Telekom. She founded Planet Fanatics' Network, a sustainability consultancy to support companies and organizations in developing strategy and performance. She has experience in international projects (e.g. ETNO-WWF climate project), co-operating in multinational environments, and organizing sustainability festival conferences.



Jürgen Schmidt

is a major shareholder of memo AG, a company specialising in eco-products for businesses, and advises businesses on strategy and management as a "Sustainable Business Angel". Until 2020, Mr. Schmidt served as a Board Member of WWF-Germany.



Mihai Stanescu

is a licensed psychologist and cultural anthropologist and a seasoned executive advisor and coach in the CEE region. He has worked with more than 200 organizations locally and at European level, mainly with leaders and their teams on redefining strategy, onboarding key roles, executive leadership development, and board advising. He serves as a non-executive director on several boards and holds a certificate in board governance from IMD.



Anna Vronskaya

(until April 2024)

is an international lawyer by training and serves as a judge on the Ukrainian Supreme Court. She is the former Deputy Minister and interim Minister of the Environment of Ukraine.



Viktor Halasiuk

(from April 2024)

is a Ukrainian economist and former politician. He is President of the Ukrainian Association for the Club of Rome, a board member at the Kyiv International Economic Forum (KIEF), and an associate fellow at the World Academy of Art & Science (WAAS).

OUR TEAM

223 STAFF / 210 FTE

142 Conservation

25 Fundraising and partnerships

43 Management and Operations

9 OFFICES IN 6 COUNTRIES

OUR REGIONAL MANAGEMENT

Andreas Beckmann
Regional CEO

Irene Lucius
Regional Conservation Director

Angelika Beranek
Regional Operations Director

Agnes Romet-Balla
Regional Engagement & Resource Mobilisation Director

Vesselina Kavrakova
CEO, WWF-Bulgaria

Katalin Sipos
CEO, WWF-Hungary

Dr Orieta Hulea
CEO, WWF-Romania

Dr Miroslava Cierna-Plassmann
CEO, WWF-Slovakia

Dr Bohdan Vykhov
CEO, WWF-Ukraine

OUR WWF SUPPORTERS

WWF-Austria
WWF-Belgium
WWF European Policy Office
WWF-Germany
WWF-Netherlands
WWF-Poland
WWF-Sweden

CONTACTS

WWF-CEE ● wwfcee.org
WWF-Bulgaria ● wwf.bg
WWF-Czechia ● wwfcz.org
WWF-Hungary ● wwf.hu
WWF-Romania ● wwf.ro
WWF-Slovakia ● slovakia.panda.org
WWF-Ukraine ● wwf.ua



We gratefully acknowledge funding support from the European Commission. All content and opinions are solely those of WWF.

The report covers WWF fiscal year 2024 (FY2024) from July 2023 till June 2024.