

NGO Montenegrin Ecologists Society

Narrative report on activities for the year 2024

Projects and activities

January 2025

Project name	Target groups	Budget (Euro) and Financed by	Implementation period and location
Youth – Capacity building , Action and Responsibility for the Environment	Young people from Montenegro, Albania, Greece, schools, Ministry of Education	312.526 European Union	2023-2025 Montenegro-Albania-Greece

Youth-CARE (Capacity building, Action and Responsibility for the Environment), launched through the Erasmus+ program. This two-year project is led by Beyond Barriers - Pertej Barrierave from Tirana in cooperation with four professional organizations in the field of environmental protection and non-formal education.

They are: ANCE - Greece, TDM 2000 International - Italy, The Door Albania - Skadar, Albania, and CDE as representatives of Montenegro.

The results achieved so far are connecting and getting to know partner organizations and conducting comprehensive training with them on the implementation of this complex project.

Through this project, MES met the Erasmus plus program for the first time, which further improved the organization's capacities. In this calendar year of the project, joint efforts encompassed various activities, including research on non-formal education in the field of nature and environmental protection, case studies, nature education, youth exchanges, youth-led initiatives, training of trainers, creation of practical tools, etc.

Through this diverse approach, hundreds of young individuals, experts and institutional actors were engaged, each in their own way contributing to the creation of a methodology that will enable young people to get to know their environment and contribute to its improvement.

Results of the project/program in 2024 are:

1. Conducted research on informal education in the field of nature and environmental protection, which provides insight into the effectiveness of existing approaches and the necessary guidelines for further development.
2. Developed studies resulting from nature education, including analyses and recommendations for future educational activities and programs.

https://drustvoekologa.me/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Comparative-Study_Bridg.gaps-in-environmental-education.pdf

3. Realised camps in nature that enabled a direct experience of learning about nature and the environment for young people.

4. Organized youth exchanges, through which participants exchanged knowledge and experience and expanded the network of cooperation in the field of environmental protection.
5. Youth-led initiatives that will enable active participation and management of projects that affect the improvement of the environment.
6. Increased awareness and education about sustainability and the pressure that people exert on nature, with special emphasis on problems such as excessive consumption and waste, as well as the possibilities for individual response to these problems.
7. Training of trainers in Durres, Albania to provide the necessary skills and tools to effectively transfer knowledge and raise awareness among young people about the importance of nature conservation.
8. Created practical tools in the form of a guidebook that will enable young people to directly apply the acquired knowledge in everyday life, especially in the context of reducing waste and excessive consumption.

<https://beyondbarriers.org/2024/11/27/euar/>

9. Engaged hundreds of young individuals, experts and institutional actors who, through various activities, will contribute to the development of a methodology for a better understanding of the environment and the reduction of human impact on it.

Project name	Target groups	Budget (Euro) and Financed by	Implementation period and location
Western Balkans Youth for Nature Protection	Young biology and ecology students from the Western Balkans; Local Communities (Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Plužine, Montenegro; Universities	59.996,00 EUR	2023-2024

The project, "Western Balkans Youth for Nature Protection," aimed to enhance regional cooperation, engage volunteers, and develop practical skills among youth in nature conservation in the Western Balkans, aligning with international standards. The primary objective was to equip a minimum of 30 biology and ecology students from the Western Balkans with biodiversity research techniques and nature conservation skills through hands-on field education. This included empowering 10 students from each of the three participating Western Balkan countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, with equal gender representation.

The main achieved results of the project/program:

1. Conducted educational camp in Blagaj. Camp in Blagaj, Bosnia and Herzegovina, had 30 participants and lasted for 5 days. This gave the students a perfect opportunity to participate in fieldwork, educational programs and application of new technologies in order to enrich their understanding of the importance of the protection and promotion of natural resources in the region.

2. Conducted educational camp in Komarnica, Montenegro. From June 5 to June 9, for the first time in Montenegro, a unique scientific research camp, Komarnica, was organized, bringing together 32 students from Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia (14 men, 17 women, and 1 non- binary person). Accompanied by eight expert mentors, these young researchers had the opportunity to experience the wonders of field research, learning about various groups of flora and fauna, research methodologies, and practically applying everything they had studied at university. The camp was preceded by a webinar attended by 24 participants.

3. The publication "Young People of the Western Balkans for Nature Conservation – Scientific Research Camps Blagaj and Komarnica 2024" has been prepared, covering 160 pages that describe the research and results of the scientific camps conducted as part of this project. The publication is divided into two parts:

- Part 1 – Photo reports from the Blagaj and Komarnica 2024 camps
- Part 2 – Scientific research papers from the Blagaj and Komarnica 2024 camps

https://drustvoekologa.me/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Publikacija_Komarnica-i-Blagaj-1.pdf

4. The presentation of the results from the camps and the project was conducted by students from Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Faculty of Biology at the Faculty of Biology in Podgorica on November 19, 2024.

5. Final event of this project was a press conference held on November 22, 2024., at the American Corner in the Cultural and Information Center "Budo Tomovic" in Podgorica.

Project name	Target groups	Budget (Euro) and Financed by	Implementation period and location
Research of subterranean biodiversity and identification of new taxonomic units in Nikšić field, Montenegro	Local community, Nikšić municipality, scientific community, General public	30.000 USD Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund	June 2024. - June 2025.

The project implies conducting research in the key speleo objects in Nikšić karst field in Montenegro in order to identify biodiversity and taxonomic groups and promote the importance of this significant karst area. Focus is on identifying speleo objects of EU importance (Emerald and Natura 2000 ecological networks), as well as speleofauna from Habitat directive, attending an online IUCN assessment course and reaching out to the relevant IUCN groups with collected data. Important segment of the project is capacity building of the organisation and education in the area of biospeleology.

Achieved Results:

1. Through the first part of the project we collected and researched samples from caves in the Nikšić field, with focus on Coleoptera and Amphipoda by actively searching of invertebrate and setting traps in caves, a speleobiological research was carried out at the selected 5 locations. All collected taxa were determined to the lowest possible level, but in more detail in selected taxonomic groups. Field trips were organised with SubBioLab members and the expert from Biospeleological Society of Montenegro.
2. Two meeting were organised with the institutions - Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development and Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro.
3. Through this project we provided a set of measures and information and point the attention to the specific ecosystem of caves in order to raise awareness of the importance of protection of these objects among decision makers and local communities. The result was a brochure containing all information and measures provided.

<https://drustvoekologa.me/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Secret-World-of-Caves.pdf>

4. Through cooperation with SubBioLab, from University of Ljubljana, Slovenia one MES member was sent to be mentored and educated in Ljubljana. She had access to the laboratories and joined the experts in their fieldwork, which enabled her detailed training for research and data analyses in this field.

Project name	Target groups	Budget (Euro) and Financed by	Implementation period and location
Komarnica canyon: a vision for sustainable conservation and development Euronatur ME-24-1077-30	Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development, Environmental protection Agency of Montenegro, Environmental NGOs I lokalne zajednice	62.212 EUR EURONATUR	2024 -2025

The goal of this project is to conserve the Komarnica River and its canyon from planned hydropower plant construction, recognized as areas of exceptional ecological importance. The project builds on the joint efforts of the Save Komarnica Initiative, which brings together environmental organizations, scientists, and local activists.

Through various activities, the project aimed to:

- Ensure the effective conservation of the Komarnica Canyon and completely prevent plans for the construction of a hydroelectric power plant;
- Raise awareness about the importance of preserving Komarnica among local communities, decision-makers, and the wider public;
- Promote sustainable development models that support the conservation of natural resources while improving the living standards of local communities.

The main achieved results of the project/programme:

1. An energy analysis conducted, which encompassed a comprehensive assessment at the national level in Montenegro, with a specific focus on the Komarnica case, including an evaluation of alternative green energy sources.
2. Legal and scientific analysis conducted, aimed at providing strong arguments and developing a legal strategy for the protection of the river.
3. Organised the annual protest-educational camp, created promotional materials, and participated in public discussions and other events dedicated to river ecosystems, with a special focus on Komarnica.
4. Strengthened collaboration with scientists, artists, and civil society groups at both national and international levels to develop a joint strategy for the permanent protection of the river.

Project name	Target groups	Budget (Euro) and Financed by	Implementation period and location
Balkan River Summit 2024	Decision-makers (the ministry responsible for energetics, spatial planning and environmental protection), the wider public of Montenegro, international organizations.	40 000 EuroNatur, Riverwatch	2024

MES played a key role as the local coordinator and host of the Balkan River Summit 2024, a major international event that brought together over 150 participants from across Europe. Held in Podgorica, Montenegro, the summit gathered scientists, activists, journalists, and nature enthusiasts, all united by a shared commitment to protecting the rivers of the Balkans.

The event featured expert presentations, panel discussions, and strategy sessions focused on the urgent threats facing river ecosystems, particularly hydropower projects and pollution. Participants exchanged knowledge, strengthened networks, and collaborated on innovative solutions for river conservation and sustainable water management.

MES's organizational efforts ensured a smooth and impactful event, providing a platform for cross-border cooperation, exchange and advocacy. The event reinforced the importance of science-based policies, community engagement, and international solidarity in the fight to preserve the last wild rivers of Europe.

Four different excursions were organized for participants of the summit to showcase the country's rich natural water resources. Although the organization of this event required considerable effort, it significantly enhanced Montenegro's recognition as a destination with abundant rivers and pristine natural resources. As the host, MES set high standards and solidified its position as a leading organization in freshwater ecosystem protection, earning greater international recognition.

Throughout our work, we have established strong communication with local media outlets and online platforms. Since 2023, media interest in our activities has grown significantly, with frequent invitations to provide statements and participate as guests on various television programs. This increased visibility has been particularly linked to the promotion of scientific research, advocacy for the protection of freshwater ecosystems, and the engagement and education of young people. In parallel, we developed an effective social media outreach system, positioning us among the most active civil society organizations in the field of environmental protection in the country.

Additional initiatives of MES for 2024

At the end of 2024, MES launched two small projects, for which a new part-time employee, a long-time MES volunteer, was hired. This individual was trained in administrative tasks and capacity building. The projects focuses on the protected area of the Zeta River Nature Park and includes:

1. Zeta through Objektiv – Focused on raising awareness and identifying pollution hotspots along the river.
2. Razvrstaj/Recikliraj – In response to numerous challenges in waste management within the Municipality of Danilovgrad, with the goal of improving waste separation at the source, educating citizens, and connecting to the recycling system.

All activities are planned for 2025 and will be included in the next program report.

Montenegrin Ecologists Society

General secretary

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