

BioNET, an independent regional network of 14 biodiversity-related civil society organizations (CSOs) in South-East Europe, is shaping a position paper with a primary focus on the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020, to help SEE countries achieve biodiversity conservation as part of the EU accession process.

The position paper will be finished within the next two months and the BioNET plans to present and discuss it with the Biodiversity Task Force, the regional technical and advisory body of the Regional Working Group on Environment.

The activity is supported within the BioNET2 component of the Open Regional Fund for South East Europe - Implementation of Biodiversity Agreements, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH.

Southeast Europe has committed to biodiversity conservation as part of the EU accession process, and has signed the Convention on Biological Diversity for the most part.

“The set of tasks within an international framework proves to be challenging for implementation. CSOs are capable and willing to play a more significant role in biodiversity conservation, as well as in discussions and decisions on biodiversity in SEE,” according to the information provided by the BioNET working group which is preparing the position paper.

BioNET members are preparing a position paper with a primary focus on the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020, that offers a good framework for action aimed at protecting species, habitats, ecosystems and the services they provide “outside of EU borders” and its post-period ahead of us. The process includes drafting the document and commenting by each of the 14 members, to be concluded by final adoption within the network.

“The position paper shall serve as a guiding document for negotiations and the establishment of cooperation with governments in the region and in the context of international development cooperation,” states the BioNET working group.

Problems are common for all BioNET countries

Milka Gvozdenović, a senior advisor at Young Researchers of Serbia (Mladi istraživači Srbije), said that the BioNET position paper reflects opinions and needs of CSOs related to the strategic planning of biodiversity protection and numerous pressures to natural heritage.

“The key messages are: the need for better cooperation - between countries, between CSOs

and institutions, between different sectors; and the rule of law in biodiversity conservation – that is, political will and governmental responsibility in biodiversity protection, proper development and implementation of biodiversity protection laws, and access to justice,” she said.

The position paper will be presented to decision-makers in order to draw their attention to these topics. Additionally, it will serve BioNET members in planning further action in the Western Balkans region.

“During the development of the position paper it has become evident that problems in nature protection and biodiversity conservation are common for all BioNET countries,” Gvozdrenović noted.

Three BioNET members are steering the process

The initiation of the idea is a result of a joint planning workshop held in February 2019 in Montenegro, where three BioNET members volunteered to steer the process. These CSOs are: Young Researchers of Serbia, the Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania and the Sunce Association for Nature, Environment and Sustainable Development from Croatia (Sunce – Udruga za prirodu, okoliš i održivi razvoj).

“BioNET welcomes open dialogue between governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector on biodiversity conservation as a first step toward successful cooperation,” according to the working group.

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