



*Press release Global Nature Fund*

## **Economic activities for the conservation of biodiversity**

*A new publication by the Global Nature Fund presents business ideas that combine the protection of biodiversity in and around protected areas with successful economic activities. The guide for the development of Pro Biodiversity Business was created in the EcoKarst project and presented to interested companies, regional development agencies and civil society at a final conference in Slovenia in June.*

Bonn, 4 July 2019: More and more rural areas in the Danube basin are confronted with an increasing rural migration. Young people cannot find a job and decide to move to cities, leaving an ageing rural population behind. In addition, the exploitation of natural resources and the destruction of nature due to progressive economic development lead to a dramatic loss of biodiversity.

To stop these negative developments, the Global Nature Fund (GNF) supports the concept of "Pro Biodiversity Business" (PBB). This promotes economically successful companies that at the same time have a positive impact on biodiversity. For two and a half years the GNF has worked on the PBB concept, collected international best practice examples, conducted interviews and presented first approaches in seven pilot regions in the Danube basin. In the new "Development Guide for Pro Biodiversity Business", GNF presents successful examples and ideas for measures for various types of companies, such as farming, processing of natural resources or the sale of organic food. The publication is aimed not only at the participating project partners from Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Austria, Hungary and Romania, but also at a broad audience of entrepreneurs, local residents, conservationists and interested institutions.

The final event of the project, which took place at the end of June in Postojna in Slovenia, enabled entrepreneurs, representatives of regional development agencies and project partners to discuss the impact of the PBB concept on rural areas, its integration into companies and the potential for further activities. "A successful PBB cooperates with local partners and establishes a connection to the region and its specific features. Both components make a PBB sustainable and economically successful in the long run", summarises Ana Bordjan, EcoKarst project coordinator at the Slovenian Forest Service (SFS).

### **PBB ideas in seven protected areas**

In each of the seven pilot regions, the best Pro Biodiversity Businesses received an award. Project partners and companies from the project regions agreed that the award is a recognition of their work and an opportunity to sensitise tourists and local residents to the value of their work and the protection of nature and thus make an important contribution to increasing the attractiveness of rural areas for young people.

Numerous companies with creative measures to protect biodiversity, such as the wood processing company "SC Natural Timber" from Romania, applied. SC Natural Timber



produces nesting aids and shelters for birds, insects and bats as well as wooden articles for domestic use and gardening. With shelters for wild animals, the company contributes to the protection of biodiversity and natural resources in regions with intensive agriculture. A prize-winning campaign from Serbia is the citizens' association "Bios" in the Tara National Park. Their business idea is the traditional production of soap. Local inhabitants are involved in the production and procurement of the natural raw materials. In this way, the citizens' association contributes to the preservation of the cultural and natural heritage and creates income for the people of the region. Many other fascinating approaches have emerged in the course of the project and ensure that biodiversity conservation creates new opportunities for the local population.

### **About ECOKARST**

The Guide was developed in the project "ECO KARST - Ecosystem Services of Karst Protected Areas - Driving Forces for Sustainable Local Development". The project was implemented within the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) and co-financed by the European Union (ERDF and IPA). Further information: [www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/eco-karst](http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/eco-karst)



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