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BalkanDetox LIFE project (LIFE19 GIE/NL/001016)

Strengthen national capacities to fight wildlife poisoning and raise awareness about the problem in the Balkan countries

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Balkan**Detox** LIFE: in brief

PROJECT LOCATION: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, North Macedonia and Serbia.

DURATION: 01/10/20 -30/09/25

Coordinating Beneficiary: Vulture Conservation Foundation, VCF

Associated Beneficiaries: AOS, PPNEA, BIOM, Nase Ptice, FWFF, HOS, MES and BPSSS

Co-financers: MAVA, EURONATUR, EPEE – Croatia and Whitley Fund for Nature

Total amount: 1,832,811 Euro **55% EC Co-funding:** 1,004,792 Euro

www.balkandetoxlife.eu



MAIN GOAL: To improve management of poisoning incidents and achieve significant reduction of mortality of vultures and other affected species caused by wildlife poisoning by ensuring real and continued engagement of relevant governmental authorities in combating this issue and labelling it as a socially unacceptable occurrence in the eyes of the general public.



Objectives

- Increase available information on the scope of wildlife poisoning in the Balkan Peninsula
- Secure engagement and increase capacities of relevant governmental authorities in the region for combating illegal wildlife poisoning.
- Increasing the number of detected poisoning incidents by 40% and at least 6 successfully prosecuted cases within the project.
- Raise awareness among key target audience by introducing preventive measures as alternative to poison use
- Reduction of wildlife poisoning incidents by 20 % by the end of the project
- Establish a regional network for cooperation regarding the management of poisoning incidents (investigation, forensic wildlife pathology and toxicology)

VULTURES



Poisoning: overview in numbers

Based on the available data that the Vulture Conservation Foundation and partners have already compiled within the Balkan Anti-Poisoning Project, in the last 20 years, a total of 465 vultures have died from poisoning in the Balkans. The victims involved include 385 Griffon Vultures, 36 Egyptian Vultures, 12 Cinereous Vultures and one Bearded Vulture. These numbers are not estimates but concrete figures obtained from recording poisoning incidents in the region. Therefore, on average, 23 vultures are fatally poisoned annually on the Balkan peninsula. But when we take into account that approximately only 20% of poisoning incidents are ever discovered and documented, the reality appears to be bleaker.



During the project:

2 confirmed poisoning incidents (jackal – Carbofuran, Imperial Eagle – lead poisoning) and 40 presumably poisoning incidents involving corded since the start of the project.

Poisoning: overview in numbers

Within the first 3 months of 2021, two confirmed poisoning incidents have been recorded in **Serbia** (golden jackal - Carbofuran and Imperial Eagle - lead poisoning).

Carbofuran is the most common used poison in the Balkans. Methomyl, chlorpyrifos, cyanide and kreosan are also used.

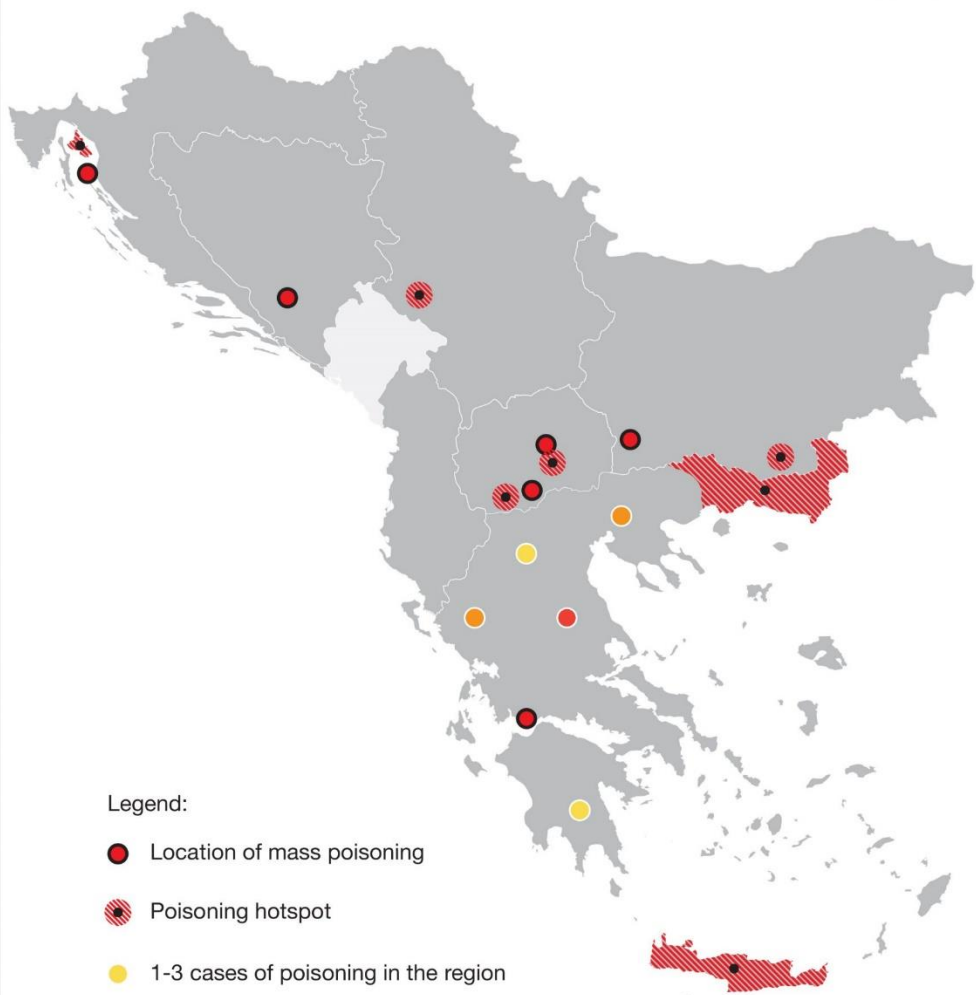
Additional 24 potential poisoning incidents have been recorded, 1 in Bosnia and Herzegovina (dog poisoning), and 23 in Serbia (wildlife poisoning). A total of 4 presumably poisoned incidents were recorded in Bulgaria during the first 3 months of 2021, causing the death of 2 Common Buzzards, one fox, one jackal, 2 ravens, 2 cats and several stray and hunting dogs.

Within the second quarter of 2021, 16 poisoning incidents were recorded in Greece. In one poisoning incident in April in Crete 3 Griffon Vultures were poisoned, while 1 GV was poisoned in Central Greece in June. In other poisoning incidents 1 Common Buzzard, 10 dogs, 3 Beech Martens and 1 badger were presumably poisoned.

Until now, for the confirmed cases, neither perpetrator was found nor further steps were initiated (persecution, sentencing).



Most important vulture poisoning incidents in the Balkan peninsula for the last 20 years.



Legend:

- Location of mass poisoning
- Poisoning hotspot
- 1-3 cases of poisoning in the region
- 4-6 cases of poisoning in the region
- 7 or more cases of poisoning in the region



Poisoning hotspots

In the Balkans, there are several locations where poisoning incidents most frequently occur — these are known as poisoning hotspots. The Balkan Anti-Poisoning Project already defined key vulture and wildlife poisoning hotspots in Balkan countries, and the BalkanDetox LIFE project will further try to identify new hotspots to direct conservation efforts.

At the same time BalkanDetox LIFE aims to further expand the Anti-poison Database to include the remaining project countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia. This database in combination with the online map will provide a clear picture of the extent and impact of wildlife poisoning in the Balkan region.

(online public map: <https://wildlifepoisoning.lifeneophron.eu/>)



Wildlife Poisoning = Wildlife Crime

Currently, poison baits placed in the natural environment is well defined in the existing national legislation in all Balkan countries as strictly forbidden and punishable according to the criminal or penal code of each country. Additionally, the use and proper procedures related to the acquisition and application of various pesticides used in agriculture, which can be a significant source of unintentional poisoning, are well defined within the existing legislation.

Nevertheless, capacities and law enforcement related to wildlife and environmental laws hold very low priority in most Balkan countries, so there are almost no convictions for wildlife poisoning or minimal sentences are executed.

How to fill in the main gaps to fight against wildlife poisoning?

Within BalkanDETOX LIFE we aim at:

- Increasing and improving available information on the scope of the problem in the Balkan Peninsula and negative effects to wildlife and human health.
- Securing engagement of the relevant governmental authorities in the region against illegal wildlife poisoning by:
 - increasing their capacity through specialized training programmes (i.e Wildlife Crime Academy in Spain)
 - formalizing National Anti-poisoning Working Groups (NAWG) in target countries.



Wildlife Poisoning = Wildlife Crime

- Reinforcing operational capacities and coordinative institutional action of authorities relevant to wildlife poisoning by developing and adopting 3 standard operational protocols (for investigation, forensic wildlife necropsy and toxicology)
- Strengthening institutional intervention efforts through adoption of National Road Maps
- Increasing cooperation between governmental institutions and CSOs through joint engagement within National Anti-Poisoning Working Groups
- Reinforcing institutional capacities and prosecution efficacy of poisoning incidents through the provision of specific training programmes
- Establishing a Balkan-pan network for trans-border cooperation in investigation of wildlife poisoning incidents and exchange of experience among most relevant stakeholders (enforcement agents, forensic veterinary pathologists and toxicologists, public persecutors, judges and lawyers)



What should the Governments do?

In line with the action that BalkanDETOX LIFE is carrying out:

- Adoption of Standard Operational Protocols;
- Adoption/integration of National anti-poisoning road maps;
- Clarifying jurisdiction procedures and chain of custody among relevant authorities and giving more priority to convictions for wildlife poisoning;
- Increasing the cross-border cooperation in the Balkan area



Thank you!



For questions please refer to:

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